

JUNE 2023 ISSUE

# KALAVINKA

A NEWSLETTER OF EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

SPECIAL  EDITION

ASIAN AMERICAN NATIVE HAWAIIAN  
AND PACIFIC ISLANDER (AANHPI) HERITAGE MONTH  
IN REVIEW



Ekoji's Nen Daiko Team Performs at The National Harbor

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### EKOJI'S SUMMER 2023 OBON FESTIVAL!

**Saturday, July 8, 5-9 pm**

Japanese Folk Dancing

Live Music

Games

Delicious Food

Taiko Drumming Performances

Beautiful Candlelit Garden Service



**VOLUNTEER**



**BUY TICKETS**



## A PERSONAL REMINDER OF THE DHARMA IN YOUR HOME CAN BE EFFECTIVE AND BENEFICIAL

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By Rev. Kurt Rye

The Buddhist teachings, traditions and rituals do not follow the typical patterns of other religious traditions in the United States. I know this from personal experience. When I entered the Seattle Betsuin for the first time, I was taken aback by the beauty of the Onaijin (alter) and the unique service. It was so unlike any experience I had had attending Christian services when I was younger. After years of attending the Seattle temple, the Onaijin came to mean more to me. I began to understand everything within the Onaijin had specific spiritual meaning that represented the teachings of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.

I also changed my perception of the Obutsudan (home Buddhist alter). I had been following the Buddhist teachings for over two years before I got my first Obutsudan in Japan. I had resisted purchasing one for it felt peculiar to have a “shrine” in my home. Was I to pray to it? What was the point of offering flowers or food?

Traditionally, the Obustudan houses the GOHONZON (principal object of reverence). This object can be a statue or portrait of Amida Buddha. It can also be the Myogyo, which is the six Kanji characters for “NAMO AMIDA BUTSU”. All of these symbols have the same meaning and significance in our tradition.

A candle is used to represent the light and radiance of Amida and the Dharma. A flower vase is used to hold fresh flowers to symbolize the impermanence of life, the teaching that things are in constant change. A small pedestal is used for holding a food offering, usually Obupan (rice ball). It can hold other foods that do not spoil easily, such as bread or sweets. This is not an offering to a deity. Rather, it expresses the interconnectedness of the Buddha and ourselves. Finally, a basic Obutsudan set has an incense burner used for offering incense.

Does one need to have a traditional Obutsudan to be a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist? No, but the importance of having a material object that reminds us of the Dharma in our homes is effective and beneficial. With our busy daily lives it is so easy to get caught up in our mundane concerns and troubles. It is easy to forget the Buddhist teachings and how they can guide every aspect of our lives.

If we have a Buddhist object of reverence, it might catch our eye during a typical day and refocus us from our self-preoccupation to the essence of the Buddha and the teachings. This reminder does not have to be a traditional Obutsudan. It could be a picture or statue of the Buddha or something that is a personal reminder of the Dharma.

The form of our Buddhist reminder is not important, rather it is a way for us to remember the Buddha and the gratitude for our lives. It is a motivating way to start the day, by lighting the incense and saying the Nembutsu. Similarly, it is a comforting way to end the day, calmly reflecting upon all that had gone on during the day, and again offering incense.

# EKOJI'S OBON COMING JULY 8 – 9

## TIME TO GET READY, TIME TO HELP

By Ken Nakamura

Remember the festive Japanese folk dancing, the power of the Taiko drumming, the music of Japanese folk songs, the Hawaiian music of the famous Aloha Boys, the food, the vendors, the moving evening Garden Service at the end of the festival? And the Sunday Obon Service as we remember, with humble gratitude, our loved ones who have passed away.

That was Obon 2022, Ekoji's first in-person Obon since 2019, and it was an exciting, exhilarating, and moving affair. We bonded with other Sangha members as we worked side-by-side.

We were so thankful that the rain stopped an hour before the Saturday festivities began, and we were awed when close to 1,000 people came out to enjoy Obon. And really tired!

### **WE ARE GOING TO DO IT AGAIN!**

Obon 2023 will be coming next month – July 8 and 9 – and as with every Obon, it is a massive undertaking for a small temple. We will need all the help we can get, before, during, and after the event.



The famous Aloha Boys

With all the activities around the festival, sometimes the religious meaning of Obon gets lost. Obon is observed throughout Japan. It is also observed in Hawaii as well as BCA and other temples in the continental U.S. It may be observed in many different ways by the various Japanese Buddhist traditions.

In our Jodo Shin tradition, we think of Obon as a memorial service. Whether in the garden lit by candles, or when we go before the altar and offer gassho, it is with loving memory and gratitude as we remember our loved ones, who led us to walk our Buddhist path.

Please volunteer and come join us!



Photo by Evan Michio Cantwell

On Saturday, Ekoji's Obon Festival will run from 5-9:00 pm. In reality, the preparation will take all day Saturday, and food prep will begin even before that. On Sunday, the Obon Service, including the Hatsubon Observance, will start at 11:00.

Andrea and Maya are General Chairs again. Planning Committees have been organized, and we will soon start hearing the calls for help.



Photo by Evan Michio Cantwell

## HATSUBON – JULY 9

HATSUBON. During the Sunday Obon Service, there is a special time set aside to remember those loved ones who passed away between the Obon service last year, 2022, and this year's Obon.

Participants will be called to come before the Naijin, light a memorial candle for their loved one, and do gassho.



If you wish to participate in this year's Hatsubon please contact the temple at [ekoji.info@gmail.com](mailto:ekoji.info@gmail.com) or contact Erick Ishii or Andrea Chapman by Sunday, July 2.

### UPON THEIR SHOULDERS EKOJI'S PAST – OUR PRESENT

The first Sunday of every month, Ekoji conducts a *Shotsuki Service* in memory of those people whose date of death (meinichi) falls in that month.

The Kalavinka provides a list in remembrance of Ekoji's members and friends who passed away during the month of the issue.

Your Ekoji Buddhist Temple exists because of their devotion and efforts as they become a part of Nembutsu history.

This Service is not for those who have passed away, because they are already taken care of by the fulfillment of the 18th Vow. But it does provide us an opportunity to remember, express our gratitude, and reflect on their continuing influence on our lives.

Traditionally special family memorial services are held on specific years following the death of a loved one. It helps us, as a family, to once again remember those who passed away, and to hear the Dharma together.

Special Family Memorial Services may be arranged by contacting Ekoji at [ekoji.info@gmail.com](mailto:ekoji.info@gmail.com).

#### REMEMBERING WITH GRATITUDE:

##### MAY

Rev. Dr. Yehan Numata  
4/2/1897 – 5/5/1994

Claire Minami  
1/12/1915 – 5/24/2009

Jon Craig  
5/25/2019

##### JUNE

Kimi Kawamura  
6/11/1992

Mary Nobuko Okamoto  
8/14/1920 – 6/12/2017

##### JULY

Mitsu Yasuda Carl  
10/22/1924 – 7/13/2001

John Malcolm  
7/2/12

#### SPECIAL FAMILY MEMORIAL SERVICES OF 2023:

2022 – 1st Year	2017 – 7th Year	2007 – 17th Year	1991 – 33rd Year
2021 – 3rd Year	2011 – 13th Year	1999 – 25th Year	1974 – 50th Year

# LIFE OF NEMBUTSU

## JOINT CELEBRATION – 850TH ANNIVERSARY OF SHINRAN’S BIRTH & KYOTO, JAPAN

By Jane Blechman



I was lucky to be in Kyoto (on a tour) and attended the celebrations at Hongwanji-ha of Shinran's birth and the 800th anniversary of the establishment of the Jodo Shinshu teachings.

It was amazing to be on the grounds of Hongwanji-ha, but to attend the services, I can't tell you how special it was. The temple is very large and can hold thousands of people. Our group sat 6 rows back from the Naijin and in the middle. It was a perfect view for the service.

The Gomonsu's message was to embrace our teachings and the Primal Vow. The world has endless issues due to our ignorance and blind passions, and the Monshu asks us to make an effort to live up to our abilities of compassion and up to the Buddha's wish of living in a society where we can all live a fulfilled life.

The service included Gagaku music: traditional court music done with 3 different flutes (Sho, Ryuteki, and a Hichiriki) along with a Shoku (a brass metal disk), a Taiko Drum and a Kakko. These instruments created such a sound which was high-pitched and beautiful. Gagaku music is considered an adornment of Amida Buddha's Pure Land.

Although the service had many different aspects to it, it was familiar and meaningful. We chanted and sang Ondokusan. Monshu Ohtani summarized the essence of the "Our Pledge" in hopes that it is used during engagements and gatherings. I include it here:

### "OUR PLEDGE"

Breaking out of my shell  
I shall carefully share a warm smile and speak gentle words  
Just like the kind Buddha.

Not becoming lost in my greed, anger, and ignorance  
I shall be open-minded and act accordingly.  
Just like the calm and peaceful Buddha.

Not putting myself first  
I shall share in the joy and sadness of others  
Just like the compassionate Buddha.

Realizing the gift of life we have received  
I shall live each day to its fullest  
Like the Buddha who continues to emancipate all.

The day after the celebration, we went to the Kyoto National Museum to see a special exhibit on Shinran's life and legacy. We saw his original writings and scrolls and many statues of Shinran and Buddha. The two days brought contemplation, hope and a reaffirmation of my Buddhist Path. May we all continue to work towards the Monshu's hope for a peaceful and compassionate world.

## WHAT'S THAT MEAN?

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BUDDHA SIDDHARTHA AND AMIDA BUDDHA?

The following is adapted from *The Heart of the Buddha-Dharma* by Rev. Kenryu T. Tsuji, pp. 5-8

When the Buddha (Siddhartha) reached eighty years of age, he began to feel the fatigue of a lifetime of spreading the Dharma. At thirty-five, he had attained Enlightenment and for the following forty-five years, he wandered on foot the whole breadth of northern India, teaching the Way of Wisdom and Compassion.

When he finally felt he could no longer continue his mission, he asked his disciples to accompany him on his last visit to Vaisali, a city he loved. The Buddha, however, could not reach Vaisali and had to stop to rest in Kusinagara. There, in Kusinagara, he passed away quietly between two sal trees.



Figure 1: The Death of Siddhartha

As he laid down between the trees, his disciples gathered around him, knowing that the Buddha's end was near. To his disciples the Buddha said,

"My disciples, my last moment has come, but do not forget that death is only the passing of the physical body... the true Buddha is not a human body, it is Enlightenment. A human body must die, but the wisdom of Enlightenment will exist forever in the truth of the Dharma and in the practice of the Dharma."

And then he said, "Make of yourself a light. Rely upon yourself, do not depend on anyone else."

In these immortal words, the Buddha taught us that there was something greater than the physical body. He was pointing to the power of Enlightenment, a power that all beings possess. This is the true energy of human life that never perishes. The physical body dies but the energy never dies. Make of yourself a light. These are powerful words.

We must search for the inner light, which is the infinite Buddha within. Nobody can find the Buddha for us. Each person must find the Buddha within him or herself. And when we find the Buddha, we realize that it was this Buddha – the great power of Wisdom and Compassion – that has been operating within us throughout timeless time.

In the Jodo Shinshu school of Buddhism, Amida Buddha symbolized the timeless, unending power of wisdom and compassion operating throughout the universe. Amida stands for Amitabha and Amitayus. Amitabha is Infinite Light and Amitayus is Infinite Life. Light is the symbol of Supreme Wisdom and Life is the symbol of Infinite Compassion. Infinite here means "all embracing."



Figure 1: Amida Buddha statue  
Photo by Evan Michio Cantwell

By the very nature of the power of wisdom and compassion, Amida Buddha completes the enlightenment of sentient beings. Why is it that we are incapable of completing our own enlightenment? Essentially, because we are tainted by egocentricity and selfishness, therefore one must come to a realization of their existential limitations and awaken to the wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha.

With this religious insight comes a deeper dimension of existence. From the lower level of the small individual self of everyday life consciousness, we rise to a higher level of consciousness to become fully awakened to the universal consciousness of Amida Buddha. This faith in Amida, this inner light of wisdom, becomes a dynamic force within our lives.

## FROM YOUR BOARD JUNE 2023 REPORT

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By Andrea Chapman, President of Ekoji

- Advantaclean has completed its mold remediation work in Tsuji Center. Volunteers are needed to help paint the 8900 sq ft of interior wall space the first weekend of June.
- At the May meeting, the Board approved a motion to re-establish the Young Buddhist Group at Ekoji. Our gratitude to Wyatt and Nick for spearheading this initiative and to Frank for serving as the BOD advisor to the group.
- The Wagashi Making Workshop has sold out. Many thanks to those who purchased a ticket to this June 10 event which is a fundraiser for the temple. We are looking forward to seeing you then.
- Approximately 75 volunteers are needed to staff this year's Obon festival. Please sign up for a shift today! Team captain(s) are still needed for our candle sales and specialty beverages. If this is something you would enjoy taking the lead on, please contact Maya or Andrea or email the office at [ekoji.info@gmail.com](mailto:ekoji.info@gmail.com)

## SANGHA SCOOPS

By Ken Nakamura

*In the life of a temple and its Sangha, there are happy and joyous occasions, and ones that are truly sorrowful. And as we learn of things, we will try to report on both saying Namo Amida Butsu.*

This May, tens of thousands from the Jodo Shin Buddhist World gathered at our main temple, the Nishi Hongwanji-ha in Kyoto, Japan, to celebrate the 850th Anniversary of the birth of Shinran Shonin, and the 800th Anniversary of the founding of the Jodo Shin Buddhist denomination. Ekoji, too, was unofficially represented at these ceremonies by **Trustee Jane Blechman, husband Frank, and daughter Hannah**, along with **Ekoji's Senior Minister's Assistant, Erick Ishii**. Along with attending the ceremonies, they were also part of a **"Foodies Tour of Japan"**, led by Ekoji's long-time supporter, **Rev. Brian Nagata**. Jane commented that she has never eaten so much fish, especially raw fish, in her life, but she also found the tour delightful. Erick, while vacationing, attending the services, and eating up a storm, seems to have also been on assignment for **Rev. Rye**, checking this and that out.

Also traveling this May were **Ken and Nori Nakamura**, along with Nori's sister and brother-in-law, **Rev. Eijun and Toshiko Kujo**. They joined 200 people in a Pilgrimage to the World War II incarceration camps for those of Japanese descent in **Jerome and Rohwer, Arkansas**. These two camps, with a population of about 6,000 and 8,000 people respectively, were about 40 miles apart.



At the beginning of World War II, **Kiyomi Nakamura and Ayako Noguchi** were living in Central California, and **Rev. and Mrs. Shingetsu Akahoshi** were living in Gardena, California, where **Rev. Akahoshi** was serving as the resident minister of the Gardena Buddhist Church. **Rev. Akahoshi** was quickly arrested by the FBI and sent to a Department of Justice camp in Santa Fe, New Mexico. **Kiyomi Nakamura and Ayako Noguchi** were sent from Central California to the **Jerome Camp**, and **Mrs. Fusako Akahoshi and Nori's 5 siblings** were sent to the **Rohwer Camp**.

**Ken and Nori** went to both sites where the camps were, as well as attending several seminars, lectures, and especially listening to the other participants, now mostly senior citizens like **Ken and Nori**.

The pilgrims mostly talked about what they had heard and learned about the camps from their parents and other relatives. While most were descendants, there were also a few who experienced the camps personally. **Ken's mother and Nori's father** had made the Pilgrimage almost 3 decades ago, and this time it was **Ken and Nori's** turn to learn and to imagine what our family went through as we stood on the very sites they did.



Original monument at Rohwer in  
memory of the incarcerated.  
Open fields all around.

In life, birth, old age, sickness and death are part of our human reality. There are those in our Sangha that we know are or have been experiencing health issues. And of course, there are even more who we do not know about. It is difficult to know whether to write about them or not.

While we may be silent in this column, know that the Sangha joins in wishing you strength and support, and that we believe you are always part of Amida's Compassion.

## IN GASSHO – DANA LIST

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Ekoji Buddhist Temple thanks the following individuals for their generous gifts during  
March & April 2023:

Joy Aso  
Lynn Black  
Loredana Calin  
Chrissy Chow  
Mahkameh Doroud  
Matthew Doubrava  
Christopher Fisher  
Stanley Fujii  
Yoriko Fujita Armstrong

Marisa and Tamon Honda  
Micheal Huff  
Emily Ihara  
Miye Jacques  
Norm and Gail Kondo  
Sandra Lukic-Dapoigny  
Thea Maggard  
Bert and Nancy Motonaga  
John Mruk

Ken and Nori Nakamura  
John Nix  
Donna Omata  
Jack Perry  
Edward Sams  
Roger Scott  
Ajit and Samanthie Silva  
Charles Uyeda (Sumi Uyeda)

# NEN DAIKO'S BUSY 2023 PERFORMANCE SEASON

By Emily Ihara

Thank you to all who have come out to support Nen Daiko and Dounen Daiko during the National Cherry Blossom Festival this year!

We had six performances between March 25 and April 15, at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Sakura Taiko Fest, the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation Freedom Walk, Sakura Sunday at National Harbor, Bloomaroo at the DC Wharf, and the NCBF Sakura Matsuri Festival.



Sakura Taiko Fest. Photo by Tonia Sine

The spring brought some volatile weather with rain and windy conditions forcing two events to be postponed and last minute reorganizing. It was a great reminder about letting go of attachments to our well-crafted plans (our phrase for this is “max flexibility”).

Several of our new Dounen members (Connor, Kai, Sayuri, and Sofia) made their debut at Sakura Taiko Fest on the Sylvan Theatre stage.

Ten Dounen members joined us for our annual performance at the NJAMF Freedom Walk where they played their signature song, “Anthem.” The rain held off just long enough for us to have excellent audience participation for Ei Ja Nai Ka at that event.

May is Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month. It was an honor to perform for the National Museum of Asian Art's Centennial Celebration on May 13. Despite the rainy conditions, we appreciated the opportunity to be part of this historic moment for our community.



Sakura Sunday at The National Harbor. Photo by Tonia Sine

Looking ahead, there's much more taiko fun in June and July (stay updated by checking out our calendar at [www.nendaiko.org](http://www.nendaiko.org)). And don't miss the special event at the 2023 Smithsonian Folklife Festival: “Creative Encounters: Living Religions in the U.S.” On July 1, Nen Daiko will be performing and focusing on Buddhist Taiko as part of this program. We hope to drum up interest in attending Ekoji's Obon on July 8 and Seabrook's Obon on July 15!

## JUNE 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### WEEKLY

#### Sundays

11:00 am: Hybrid In-Person/Virtual Service  
Hybrid discussion group meets in the Hondo and [Ekoji Zoom Room](#) after service.

#### Thursdays

7:30 pm: In-person Meditation Group  
In the Hondo

### MONTHLY

#### First Sunday, June 4

10:00- 10:45 am: Temple clean-up

11:00 am: Shotsuki

Sangha members who have lost a loved one during that particular month (in any year) are invited to go before the altar. Chant, gassho, and burn incense in loving memory and gratitude for the person who has passed.

#### Third Sunday, June 18

2:00 pm: Buddhist Movie Group, meets in [Ekoji Zoom Room](#).

June's movie is *Stranger Than Fiction*, available on [Amazon Prime](#).

### SPECIAL EVENTS AND HOLIDAYS

Details at [Ekoji.org](#).

#### June 4

9:30 am: Children's Dharma School 2022-2023 year end party!

#### Friday June 2-4

Facility interior painting party  
In the Tsuji Center

#### Saturday June 10

Wagashi (Japanese Sweets) Making Workshop  
In the Tsuji Center  
Session 1: 2:30-3:30 pm  
Session 2: 4:00-5:00 pm

#### Sunday, June 25 and Sunday, July 2

1:00-2:00 pm: Obon Dance Lessons  
In the Hondo

#### Saturday July 8

5-9 pm: Obon Summer Festival


### MINISTER'S OFFICE HOURS

Wednesdays, 1:00 – 2:00 pm:  
Schedule a Zoom or phone meeting with  
Rev. Kurt Rye:  
(703) 239-0500  
[Rye.ekoji@gmail.com](mailto:Rye.ekoji@gmail.com)

**EKOJI**

**Join Our Temple**

We are committed to growing a worldwide Sangha and invite you to join our diverse community. Explore the benefits of membership by visiting our membership portal at <https://ekojobuddhisttemple.wildapricot.org>

**FOLLOW US**  [@ekojobuddhisttemple](#)

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

### FOLLOW US!



# WHAT IS A KALAVINKA?

A *Kalavinka* is a mythical bird with the head of a human and a long, flowing colorful tail. It lives in the Pure Land. It has a beautiful voice that sings praises of the Buddha, the sutras, and the words of the Buddha.



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

## YOUR TEMPLE LEADERS

### VIRTUAL EKOJI MINISTER & ADVISOR:

Reverend Kurt Rye

### YOUR TEMPLE BOARD

PRESIDENT	Andrea Chapman
VICE PRESIDENT	Frank Swithers
SECRETARY	Tom Cray
TREASURER	Maya Horio
AT LARGE	Pilar Uelman
AT LARGE	Roger Scott

## SERVICES

Rev. Kurt Rye, Virtual Minister to Ekoji

Rev. Erick Ishii, Minister's Assistant with Ordination (Tokudo)

Bob Shimokaji, Certified Minister's Assistant

Pilar Uelman, Lay Dharma Leader

Truc Vo, Certified Jr. Minister's Assistant

Ken Nakamura, Certified Minister's Assistant (Ret)

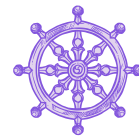
Molly Kuramoto, Lay Dharma Leader

Ed Sams, Lay Dharma Leader and Service Chair Coordinator

## KALAVINKA

### A NEWSLETTER OF EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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CALENDAR & EVENTS	Pilar Uelman
FROM YOUR BOARD COORDINATOR	Andrea Chapman
OUR VIRTUAL DHARMA	Molly Kuramoto
NEN DAIKO	Emily Ihara



The *Kalavinka* is currently accepting creative content for monthly publications.

If you would like to contribute your articles, letters, artwork, or especially photographs, please submit content to:

[Ekoji.info@gmail.com](mailto:Ekoji.info@gmail.com)

or

Ekoji Buddhist Temple  
6500 Lakehaven Lane  
Fairfax Station, VA 22039

For more information about Shin Buddhism and the Ekoji Buddhist Temple, please visit [EKOJI.ORG](http://EKOJI.ORG)