

APRIL 2023 ISSUE

KALAVINKA

A NEWSLETTER OF
EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE



84,000 THOUGHTS - 04

**CELEBRATING SIDDHARTHA'S BIRTH
WITH OUR EASTERN DISTRICT TEMPLES - 06**

SPOTLIGHTS ON OUR SANGHA - 08 & 13

APRIL & MAY CALENDAR - 20

TABLE OF CONTENTS

84,000 THOUGHTS - 03

VIRTUAL SEMINAR - 05

CELEBRATING SIDDHARTHA'S BIRTH
WITH OUR EASTERN DISTRICT TEMPLES- 06

FROM YOUR BOARD - 08

SHOTSUKI - 10

EKOJI MEMBER SPOTLIGHT - 11

SANGHA SCOOPS - 13

CALENDAR & EVENTS - 15

DANA LIST - 16

YOUR TEMPLE LEADERS - 17

KALAVINKA - 17

JOIN OUR TEMPLE - 18

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS AND WRITERS - 19



84,000 THOUGHTS

RISE OF THE JODO SHIN BUDDHIST DENOMINATION

By Rev. Kurt Rye

For those who identify as Buddhist, we know our connection to the Dharma (Buddhist Teachings) is a very personal one.

The Buddha said there were as many ways to understand the Dharma as there are people in the world. Yet Buddhism is divided into many schools all with different interpretations of the sutras (doctrines), rituals and practices.

What are the differences in the various Buddhist schools? All schools have a common core of Buddhist ideals such as the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

Moreover, the different schools tend to focus on a particular Sutra that then becomes the focal point of doctrinal thought for each school. For example, in the Tendai and Nichren Schools, the Lotus Sutra is the primal doctrine. For Jodo Shinshu, the Three Pure Land Sutras are the main Sutras revered and studied.

Jodo Shinshu is one of the schools referred to as the Pure Land School. The Pure Land School is part of the Mahayana Buddhist movement.

Unlike Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism redirects the focus from the practices that Sakyamuni performed to reach enlightenment, to a spiritual model that focuses on the essence of enlightenment itself.

It incorporates many different non-monastic practices to reach this end.

Honen Shonin (1133-1212), a Tendai monk, had difficulty finding spiritual gratification in the traditional monastic Tendai School in which he had studied for many years.

At this time, Honen and other Japanese monks of this era vitalized the concept of one practice.

RISE OF JODO SHIN BUDDHISM DENOMINATION, CONTINUED



—◆—
"Let us be grateful for the causes and conditions
that allowed the early Japanese immigrants
to bring the Shin teachings to the United States."
—◆—

Instead of spending years to master many different spiritual practices, individuals could instead focus on one practice. This made it more realistic for the average person to master. Honen solely focused on the Pure Land practice of nembutsu recitation.

Our founder, Shinran Shonin (1173-1262), was also a Tendai monk who left the Tendai School and monastery and began his study with Honen. Shinran was one of many disciples of Honen. Shinran agreed with Honen's concept of one practice: the nembutsu. He dedicated the rest of his life to the study and propagation of the Pure Land teachings.

Shinran did not intend to start a new school of Pure Land Buddhism. Yet after his death, others used his collected writings (known as the Kyogyoshinsho), which contained his in-depth analysis of Pure Land Buddhism and formalized what became Jodo Shinshu.

After Shinran's death, a mausoleum was established in Kyoto that further focused attention and help to establish Jodo Shinshu as a new school of Buddhism.

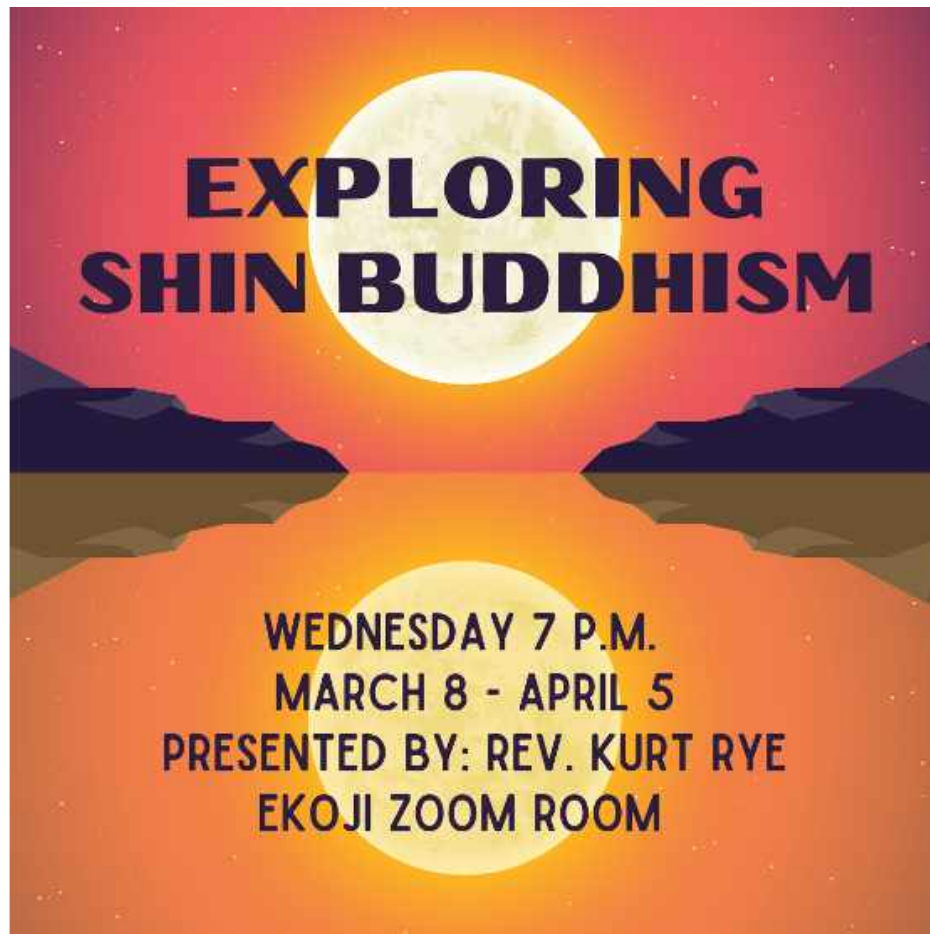
With the institutional support of his family, and the work of Tendai monks using the Kyogyoshinsho as a guide, the Jodo Shinshu School slowly became established. It then took several hundred years for the institution we know as the Hongwanji, our head temple in Kyoto, to develop.

The Ekoji Buddhist Temple was founded in 1981 and continues to share the Buddha Dharma as envisioned by Shinran Shonin over 700 years ago.

Shin Buddhists continue to develop in order for the Shin teachings to remain a relevant guide for those living in the 21st century.

Let us be grateful for the causes and conditions that allowed the early Japanese immigrants to bring the Shin teachings to the United States, for our current Sangha as well as future generations.

JOIN US FOR A 5-WEEK VIRTUAL SEMINAR!



Listen, discuss, and consider key concepts of Shin Buddhism.

Learn about Shinran Shonin, the founder of Shin Buddhism.

What were the causes and conditions that shaped Shinran and his thoughts?

PLENTY OF TIME FOR DISCUSSIONS, AND Q&A!

[REGISTER HERE](#)

CELEBRATING SIDDHARTHA'S BIRTH WITH OUR EASTERN DISTRICT TEMPLES

HOSTING THE BCA'S EASTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL (EDC) MEETING

By Ken Nakamura

Ekaji's Hanamatsuri Service celebrates the day that the historical Buddha, Siddhartha, was born in Lumbini Garden, Nepal. It is traditionally a busy time for Ekaji.

We will be joined (virtually and in-person) by delegates of the BCA's Eastern District Council (EDC). The EDC delegates will meet on both Saturday and Sunday, April 15 and 16.

In preparation for Hanamatsuri, we symbolically recreate the story of Siddhartha's birth. That story tells us that Siddhartha's mother, Queen Maya, was going to her parent's palace to give birth to the baby she was carrying, as was the custom.



On the journey, she saw a beautiful garden, Lumbini. She stopped her retinue to rest and admire the garden. While resting in the garden, she reached for a branch, and Siddhartha was born.

With Siddhartha's birth, it is said that sweet tea rained down on them in joy. Infant Siddhartha is said to have walked 7 steps, proclaiming,

"Below heaven and above the earth, I am the world-honored one."

For our service, we symbolically recreate Siddhartha's birth. In front of the Naijin, there will be a Hanamido covered with flowers to represent the beauty of Lumbini Garden.

In the center stands a statue of baby Siddhartha with one hand pointing to the sky and the other pointing to the earth, making his proclamation.

As we approach the Naijin, instead of burning incense, there will be ladles to pour sweet tea over the baby Buddha statue (representing the sky raining sweet tea on the future Buddha.)

HANAMATSURI WEEKEND, CONTINUED

The BCA's Eastern District

It is fitting that the EDC will be meeting the weekend of Ekoji's Hanamatsuri.

The purpose of the district is to support its temples in continuing the teachings that Siddhartha shared with us some 2,500 years ago.

The BCA's Eastern District is one of eight districts dividing up the continental United States. While the Eastern District is the largest geographic district, it is probably the smallest in the total number of Jodo Shin Buddhists.

BCA's Eastern District is composed of temples in New York, Seabrook, NJ, Ekoji (Virginia), and Chicago. It also has small fellowship groups in Albany, Cleveland, and the Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul.

There are many challenges to address from growing Sanghas, to meeting finances, to most importantly, how to share the Dharma.

Because of the geographic distances between Sanghas, and not knowing people in those Sanghas, it is easy to become islands unto ourselves.

The District Council works to develop a sense of a larger Sangha where we are not separate islands, but rather support each other.

And for their hard work in meeting these challenges, we owe them our thanks.

Please join us to celebrate the birth of the Buddha and to welcome the EDC delegates to Ekoji.

**" The District Council works
to develop a sense of a
larger Sangha where
we are not separate islands,
but rather support each other."**

**Ekoji's hybrid Hanamatsuri
service will be on
Sunday, April 16,
at 11:00 am.**

FROM YOUR BOARD

By Tom Cray



My name is Tom Cray and I began coming to Ekoji in April of 2017. I currently serve as Secretary of the Board.

I was raised in the Catholic faith in Maryland but fell away from it during my time in college.

It was in college that I took a religion class that covered various religions, including Buddhism. Buddhism sounded interesting, but I never really pursued it.

Life cruised by and I married my wife, Maria, and we had a son, Torin. It wasn't until Torin joined Cub Scouts that the idea of Buddhism really came back to me.

Cub Scouts had a requirement to attend a religious service, but Maria and I did not practice any religion at the time. I was pretty sure that I did not want to introduce my son to Catholicism, so I decided it would be a great reason to visit a Buddhist temple.

Fortunately, Ekoji was just a short ride from Springfield. I was nervous before our visit, but in hindsight that was not necessary. I believe there is not a more forgiving place than Ekoji.

The opening meditation was serene, the chanting was meditative, the Dharma talk was enlightening.

I left Ekoji that Sunday in a peaceful state, and I continue to come back for that same reason.

I attended Buddhism 101 courses to find out more about Buddhism, volunteered in the garden, and helped with Open Mic Nights in the Tsuji Center (before the pandemic came along and brought everything to a halt.)

FROM YOUR BOARD, CONTINUED

I was very grateful for Andrea, Maya, Ed, and Rev. Hayashi who were able to construct a virtual service for us while we could not visit Ekoji.

The virtual service kept the sangha connected and even allowed people who had moved away to experience the service again.

However, I did miss the peacefulness of the temple and was excited when we were able to reopen. I appreciated the efforts of the skeleton Board of Directors during Covid, and volunteered to join the board as secretary.

I continue to enjoy the dharma messages that are brought to us each week, and really appreciate the reflection of the discussion group after service.

**" I believe there is not a more forgiving place than Ekoji...
A life of Nembutsu is a life surrounded by caring people."**

I do believe I have the "smoked salmon" approach to Buddhism that Bishop Harada recently described - absorbing little bits over a long period of time.

I still keep the pamphlet I received on one of my first visits to Ekoji. It contains this quote from the former Bishop of BCA, Bishop Umezu:

"A life of Nembutsu is a life surrounded by caring people.

The Nembutsu life gives us strength and courage to live with confidence, joy, and appreciation.

We do not need to envy or blame others. There is no need for praying. We live our lives as we are and do our best in each and every moment.

The Nembutsu teaching becomes our source of energy for living."

I hope that Ekoji can be a safe landing spot for many others as we try to grow our worldwide sangha and spread the Buddha's teachings.

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.

REMEMBERING WITH GRATITUDE:

MARCH

Reiko Matsumoto
3/12/2016

Frances Ushiro
3/10/2021

APRIL

Junichi Kamikawa
11/11/1922 – 4/2/2003

Robert Thomas Miyashiro
4/7/2003

Geraldine Hamai Cantwell
8/13/1944 – 4/6/2007

Ralph Ishii
4/16/2007

Masaru Ushiro
4/26/2008

Rev. Shojo Honda
6/25/1929 – 4/13/2015

MAY

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

Claire Minami
1/12/1915 – 5/24/2009

Jon Craig
5/25/2019

SPECIAL FAMILY MEMORIAL SERVICES OF 2023:

2022 – 1st Year 2007 – 17th Year

2021 – 3rd Year 1999 – 25th Year

2017 – 7th Year 1991 – 33rd Year

2011 – 13th Year 1974 – 50th Year

EKOJI MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

By Michael Huff



In 2021, Ekoji Buddhist Temple was indeed a gift of light in my life, a bright path between dire straits, like the rivers of fire and water in the Pure Land parable.

Amid the isolation that we all faced in the global pandemic, I was very much adrift, angry at my circumstances:

My twenty-year marriage had recently come to an end, and I had been forced to retire from my career in the Foreign Service due to a serious health condition.

Living apart from my family and no longer able to work, much of what had given my life meaning had been stripped away.

Those losses were only compounded by the pandemic's solitude. Grieving and seeking to heal, I first turned to the perennial spiritual literature I had first read in my youth.

Back in the 1970's, while in high school, I had stumbled upon the work of the American poet Gary Snyder. Through his poetry I had my first encounters with the Dharma. From that point on, I was very much drawn to the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha.

I joined a mindfulness meditation group in university, but that is as far as my practice went in those days. There were no Buddhist temples near my home. My world opened widely when I joined the Foreign Service, and I spent most of my career in East and Southeast Asia.

My travels brought me into contact with Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhists, with their rites and celebrations. And while living in Tokyo, I had my first experience at a Jodo-shu temple and began to read widely in the stream of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism.

EKOJI MEMBER SPOTLIGHT, CONTINUED

Having come back to these readings which resonated deeply with me but which I never truly practiced, I searched for Pure Land temples in Virginia and came upon Ekoji's website.

Like many religious bodies during the pandemic, Ekoji had started offering its services over Zoom. In the late summer of 2021, I started to join Ekoji's hybrid services, first as an observer, and then finally as a participant in the Dharma discussions.



"I have discovered, in my Buddhist journey, that the refuge of the Sangha is critical to my understanding of the teachings."

By the beginning of 2022, I had joined Ekoji as a member of the Sangha. Soon, I had a butsudan in my apartment, and I was practicing daily, saying the nembutsu often throughout the day.

I came to Ekoji looking for help with the suffering brought on by divorce and chronic illness, but I have found so much more. What has kept me at Ekoji is the focus on householder practice, and on finding a place for the Dharma in my daily life.

Ekoji's hybrid service model has allowed me to be part of the Sangha. That sense of belonging has enriched my life beyond compare.

I have discovered, in my Buddhist journey, that the refuge of the Sangha is critical to my understanding of the teachings.

So, for anyone seeking refuge in the Buddha and the Dharma, I cannot stress how important it was for me to become a Sangha member.

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 the Namo Amida Butsu.

Congratulations and thank you to **Truc Vo**, who went through the Ekoji Dharma School system, and BCA youth programs to be certified as a Junior Minister's Assistant in 2011. Graduating from UVA with both a Bachelors and MA degrees, Truc is now a Program Manager with Cambium Assessment. Recently, Truc both led the Sunday service as Chosho, and then gave her first Dharma Message. Way to go Truc!

These past few Sundays, **Kim Nguyen** seems to be walking better, albeit still hobbling, but walking more steadily after her foot surgery. Glad things are coming along nicely, but still not the time for Irish Clog Dancing.

Ekoji's condolences to **Ken Nakamura** on the passing of his cousin, Irene Takemori, on March 16, in Pasadena, CA. When Ken was active with the BCA nationally, he often saw Irene and her husband, Ed, who were both were active in the Pasadena Buddhist Church, the BCA's Southern District, and BCA on the national level.

Irene never hesitated to tell Ken when he was "screwing up", pass on gossip, and watch his back as families do. For Ken, Irene was all that one could ask for in a relative, and in a delightful person.

Ekoji extends its heartiest Thank You and deep Gassho to **Rev. Ron Miyamura**, of the Midwest Buddhist Temple in Chicago, IL.

Rev. Ron has been Ekoji's supervising minister when we were without a minister. He is always a wise and dedicated advisor, and defender of Ekoji's interests.



SANGHA SCOOPS, CONTINUED

Rev. Ron has recently announced his retirement from the active BCA ministry, effective November 2, 2023.

Thank you for your help and guidance these past 40 years!

Congratulations to **Nen Daiko**, Ekoji's affiliated taiko (Japanese drumming) group on a great start to its Spring performance season.



It started this Mar 25 with two performances at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, as part of Washington's Cherry Blossom Festival. And on Mar 26, together with Nen Daiko's youth group, **Dounen Taiko**, they played at the Sylvan Theater during the Sakura Taiko Fest with several Taiko groups from the East Coast.

Performance season will continue through Ekoji's Obon in July. To get Nen Daiko's performance schedule, please contact Nen Daiko on [their web site](#).

APRIL & MAY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WEEKLY

Sundays

9:30-10:30 am: Children's Dharma School
(No class on April 30th, the last Sunday of the month)

11:00 a.m: Hybrid In-Person/Virtual Service

Hybrid discussion group meets in the Hondo and Zoom Room after service.

Thursdays

7:30 p.m: In-person Meditation Group

MONTHLY

First Sunday (April 2nd)

10:00 a.m: Temple clean-up

11:00 a.m: 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

2:00 p.m: Buddhist Movie Group

April's movie is The Dark Knight. Meets in the Ekoji Zoom Room.

SPECIAL SERVICES AND HOLIDAYS

Sunday, April 16 at 11:00 a.m: Hanamatsuri

May 14th @ 11:00 a.m: Eshinni and Kakushini Day (Founding Women of Jodo Shin Buddhism)

May 14th @ 11:00 a.m: Gotan-e (Shinran Shonin's Birthday)

BUDDHIST EDUCATION

March 8 – April 5, Wednesdays @ 7:00 pm:

Exploring Shin Buddhism Seminar, Ekoji Zoom Room.

Wednesdays, 1:00 – 2:00 pm:

Minister's Virtual Office Hours via phone or Zoom

(703) 239-0500

Rye.ekoji@gmail.com

IN GASSHO– DANA LIST

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

Jane Blechman	Arlene and Wayne Minami
Joseph Crilley	Bert and Nancy Motonaga
Mahkameh Doroud	Ken and Nori Nakamura
Christopher Fisher	Joyce & Robert Oshita
Heather Frey	Jack Perry
Stanley Fujii	Lani Pham and Pierre Karen
Kaeli Gardner	Bishop Marvin Harada
William Garrett	Edward Sams
Marisa and Tamon Honda	Roger Scott
Maya and Brant Horio	Bob Shimokaji
Michael Huff	Ajit and Samanthie Silva
Emily Ihara	Joran and Ann Stegner
Norm and Gail Kondo	Frank Swithers
Mary Lou Lomaka	Pilar Uelmen
Sandra Lukic-Dapoingy	Charles Uyeda
Thea Maggard	Richard Wolford
Erica McCrea (in memory of Clarence Lewis)	
Christina McQuirck	

JOIN OUR TEMPLE!

EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE



We are committed to growing a worldwide Sangha and invite you to join our diverse community.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Explore the benefits of membership by visiting our [membership portal](#).

FOLLOW US



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

WHAT IS A KALAVINKA?

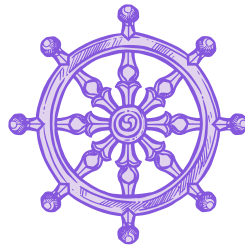
A Kalavinka is a mythical bird with the head of a human and a long flowing colorful tail. It lives in the Pure Land. It has a beautiful voice that sings praises of the Buddha, the sutras, and the words of the Buddha.



Image courtesy of Matthew Myer at Yokai.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS AND WRITERS

ADVISOR	Rev. Kurt Rye
EDITOR IN CHIEF	Ken Nakamura
PRODUCTION EDITOR	Chloe Bell
TREASURER'S REPORT	Maya Horio
DHARMA SCHOOL	Maya Horio
CALENDAR AND EVENTS	Andrea Chapman
FROM YOUR BOARD COORDINATOR	Andrea Chapman
OUR VIRTUAL DHARMA	Molly Kuramoto
NEN DAIKO CONTRIBUTORS	Emily Ihara



SUBMISSIONS WELCOME!

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

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

EkojiKalavinka@gmail.com

or

Ekoji Buddhist Temple
6500 Lakehaven Lane
Fairfax Station, VA 22039