



Dharma Lei

Bishop's Office Newsletter

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Bishop's Message: Bishop Shugen Komagata

Aloha from the Bishop's Office!

I hope that everyone is doing well and has had a happy 2018 thus far. While most of us were fortunate to have dodged several bullets in the form of hurricanes and tropical storms, some people were not so lucky. Let's send our prayers to those who were affected by heavy rain, strong winds, flooding, and in Lahaina—fire.

As we now approach autumn, we look back upon another successful Bon season at our Hawaii Soto-Shu temples. At one of the Bon Dances I visited this year, I saw a young couple, both dressed in *yukata*—the cotton kimono often worn at summertime festivals—offering incense in the temple. They seemed to have recognized me and approached me to say hello. The young lady said to me, "Before we begin dancing at any Bon Dance we attend, I always make it a point to first go into the temple, put my hands together in *gassho*, and offer incense to the Buddha and all my departed relatives."

My brief conversation with this couple made me think about the importance of visiting the temple, and why we find comfort in putting our hands together in *gassho*. When we examine the meaning of *gassho*, we can say that one hand represents us, and the other hand represents a loved one, and that the two hands coming together as one reminds us of the coming together of two hearts. In Japanese, the lines and wrinkles on our palms are called "*shiwa*." The action of putting our palms together is called "*awasu*" or "*awase*." Therefore, when we form the *gassho* with palm against palm, wrinkles against wrinkles, we can say in Japanese, "*shiwa wo awasu*," or "*shiwa awase*." In an instance of a play on words, "*shiwa awase*" sounds a lot like "*shiwawase*," which means "happiness."

I'd like to think that the young couple I met in the temple felt happiness by visiting the temple, and were comforted by the presence of the spirits of their departed loved ones at the Bon Dance. It's no wonder that the kanji for the word, "*gassho*," means "hand and hand in togetherness." Even if we are physically separated from another person, we are never alone. Additionally, the Buddha stated, "Life never dies..." emphasizing the spiritual connection we maintain with loved ones long after they pass. With hands together in *gassho*, we are always able to share with others our thoughts, actions, and most important of all—LIFE.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for their participation at the many Bon Services and Bon Dances held throughout the islands. As we look forward to the end of this year, I hope to see all of you on Sunday, November 4, 2018, at the Soto Mission of Aiea's Centennial Celebration to be held at the Dole Cannery in Honolulu.

Bishop Shugen Komagata



Rev. Ryohei Ishii: New Minister at Waipahu Taiyoji



Aloha, everyone!

My name is Ryohei Ishii, I am the resident minister at Waipahu Soto Zen Temple Taiyoji from April 1st, 2018. I would like to share about myself and my family. I moved to Hawaii with my family, my wife Ikuko, my daughter Yu and my son Tesshu in December, 2008. I had been working at Soto Mission of Hawaii Betsuin, Shoboji for 9 years and 3 months. I was born and raised in Saitama, Japan. I went to New Zealand where I met Ikuko to study English and got a degree of Interior Designs and architecture. I trained at Sojiji-temple, Head Monastery in Kanagawa, Japan for 2 years and 5 months, where I met Reverend Yodo Oyama who was the resident minister at Taiyoji before and I was under Rev. Oyama for 6 months at Fukyo section of Sojiji. When I was at Betsuin, I really enjoyed doing Zazen (Zen meditation) with Zazen-kai members. Through the practice of Zen meditation, I met more people, and talked about more Buddhism and I could face myself. I will open Zazen sessions at Taiyoji from Sesshin(one week intensive meditation) in December 2018. I would like to spread Zen meditation more here in Waipahu. My wife, Ikuko she graduated from Bukkyo(Buddhism) University in Kyoto and has a Buddhist study degree. She started to learn Goeika at Betsuin and took Baika exams from instructors from Japan. She went to Japan for 60th Baika Conference with Betsuin Baika-ko members. She sang Goeika at several Zen Centers in mainland from Jizokukai educational trip. Also Ikuko started to learn taiko from Hawaii Matsuri Taiko and experienced many performances under Faye Komagata and taught and supported taiko for Soto Academy these past three years and now she practices and performs under Somei Taiko. My daughter, Yu(15) is a swimmer and she has gone swimming for mainland age group championships many times. She swims for her school and a swim club. Yu also started to learn taiko from Faye Komagata at Betsuin and she has performed with her many times. She has learning experience of Okinawan Sanshin, Koto, viola, ukulele and saxophone. Tesshu(12) plays violin and he is in the advanced strings orchestra at school this year. He has played violin for temple's events. He is participating in golf and cross-country afterschool program. He usually joins Jr. PGA golf match during summer break.



Shushogi, Chapter 1 : Verses 1 - 3

By Rev. Shoryu Fukagawa



Aloha everyone.

I hope you are safe during the hurricane season.

The Shushogi was written by Dogen Zenji, the founder of Soto-Shu in Japan, who lived in the 13th century of the Kamakura Period. The Shushogi is mainly comprised of extracts taken directly from the Shobogenzo (the True Dharma Eye). The Shushogi teaches us how to practice this teaching mindfully in our everyday life and how to elevate our life of faith. Shushogi is a scripture consisting of 5 Chapters with 31 verses.

I will introduce Chapter 1: Verses 1,2 and 3.

Shushogi, Chapter 1 General Introduction

Verse 1:

[The most important issue of all for Buddhists is the thorough clarification of the meaning of birth and death. If the Buddha is within birth and death, there is no birth and death. Simply understand that birth and death are in them-selves Nirvana; there is no birth and death to be hated nor Nirvana to be desired. Then, for the first time, we will be freed from birth and death. To master this problem is of supreme importance.]

What is life? What is death? It is most important to anyone who is trying to practice the Truth to understand the life and death existence, especially of one's self on this earth. Life and death go hand-in-hand. One cannot go without the other. If you can understand the Truth of living and dying, you can live in this world in peace. Only you can attain this by yourself.

Verse 2:

[It is difficult to be born as a human being; it is rare to encounter the Buddha-Dharma. Now, thanks to our good deeds in the past, not only have we been born as humans, we have also encountered the Buddha- Dharma. Within the realm of birth and death, this good birth is the best; irresponsibly abandoning them to the winds of impermanence.]

The fact that we are here at this place, at this time, in this enormous universe is a miracle. There are many reasons for this life that we have. Life should not be taken for granted. We need to make the best of our precious lives and not frivolously waste it. Eventually, we will be met with the impermanence of death.



Verse 3:

[Impermanence is unreliable; we know not on what roadside grasses the dew of our transient lie will fall. Our bodies are not our own; our lives shift with the passing days and cannot be stopped for even an instant. Once rosy-cheeked youth has gone, we cannot find even its traces. Careful reflection shows that most things, once gone by, will never be encountered again. In the face of impermanence, there is no help from kings, statesman, relatives, servants, spouses, children, or wealth. We must enter the realm of death alone, accompanied only by our good and bad karma.]

Changes take place from the moment of birth—like the leaves of a tree, the young leaves of spring become autumn leaves in autumn, and in winter, they wither, die and fall. Where is that rosy cheek youth of yesterday? We, also, exist in the doctrine—like leaves, we are born, blossom, wither and die. We cannot stop time. We cannot stop this cycle of Life.

Reflecting upon my life, I realize that, once passed, time will not return. No human power—financial, political, scientific, medical, family, nor all the treasures and riches in the world—can stop or reverse time and the impermanence of life. The fact remains, when the time comes, we will all die alone and enter the realm of death accompanied with the deeds accomplished in our physical life.

On August 15, 2018, my wife and I became the proud parents of the newest member of our family—Taisei Owen Fukagawa.

The feeling, at the moment when my wife gave birth and I was able to see our son, is indescribable beyond words. The most overwhelming emotion that engulfed me was LOVE. It was an endearing, tender feeling of love mingled with joy for this tiny child. I thought, “How beautiful you are. How I love you. You have made my life complete. I don’t need anything more. How is it possible for me to be filled with such an emotion?” This was a one-time feeling. It has passed and I will not experience this exact feeling again.

On the day that our son was born, a famous Japanese manga artist, Momoko Sakura, passed away in Japan. A life entered our world and a life exited our world.

Everything has its predestined moment. Every affair, every living thing has its appropriated time. There’s a time to be born and a time to die; a time to cry and a time to laugh; a time to sleep and a time to awake; a time for war and time for peace. Our days are few and fleeting. We are like shadows passing through them. As you read this Dharma Lei, somewhere in this world, someone is being born and someone has met death.

Shushogi Chapter 1: Verse 1,2,3, teaches us about “Life”. In this teaching, we see the reality of life and death. What happened yesterday is now gone and is but a memory. What is very real today may be utterly gone the next day. Yet, when we think of and remember our departed loved ones, they appear in our hearts and mind so vividly. What had gone from us yesterday may seem very real today. In reality, we are all continuously living together in a great circle of changes that occur every moment. We only change from one state to another and all of us will sooner or later enter this great change called death. As the moon sets, yet never leaves the universe, we may die, but will always remain part of the universe that is shared by all.

