



Dharma Lei

Bishop's Office Newsletter

Soto Zen Buddhism Hawaii Office

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Bishop's Message: Bishop Shugen Komagata

Aloha from the Bishop's Office,

Time flies faster than a speeding arrow! Spring is already here in Hawaii! I pray that you and your family are staying healthy and safe throughout these difficult times. April is a happy month, because it is when we observe Hanamatsuri, transliterated as the "Flower Festival." Hanamatsuri falls on April 8 and commemorates the birth of Prince Siddhartha Gautama (who would later become Shakyamuni Buddha). Flowers adorn the hanamido, a miniature pavilion housing a statue of the infant Buddha. Sweet tea called amacha is poured over the statue, like sweet rain from the heavens. Legend has it that the infant prince emerged from his mother's side, walked seven steps, and said while pointing to heaven and earth, "this is my last rebirth."

I received my second dose of the COVID-19 vaccination several weeks ago (one of the perks of being over 75 years-old) and look forward to traveling soon. However, I know that we are not out of the woods yet, so I will continue to do my best to wear my mask and socially distance in public. I encourage everyone to do the same and take advantage of the first opportunity you get to be vaccinated.

Life at the temple has been a bit challenging over the past twelve months. We had to cancel our Fujinkai conference, Bon Dances, and various other services. At one point, we were not even able to allow people to visit the columbarium to put flowers! However, one of the amazing things I witnessed was our ability to adapt. We had virtual Bon Services, online dharma talks, a virtual temple tour, and even online classes on the Buddhist precepts! In April, the United Hawaii Soto-Shu Women's Association will be hosting a "hybrid" Lay Confirmation Ceremony. Ceremony attendees will have the option to participate in person or virtually.

I would like to thank the ministers, deacons, and Lay Temple Assistants, along with all the temple members and supporters, for "hanging in there" throughout these difficult times. Although navigating through the pandemic has been challenging, I am extremely grateful for their continued commitment to supporting the temples.

Please take care of yourselves and your loved ones.

In Gassho,

Bishop Shugen Komagata



Online Study of *Zen Seeds* to Begin in April

“60 Essential Buddhist Teachings on Effort, Gratitude, and Happiness” by Shundo Aoyama Roshi

Translated by Patricia Dai-En Bennage Roshi

One may register for either group 1 or group 2. Facilitated by Rev. Jikō, these weekly Dharma sessions will offer participants a chance to read the material and share their thoughts, reflections, and life experiences in an online atmosphere that is kind, respectful, and compassionate.

Group 1: Starting April 6, Tuesdays from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Group 2: Starting April 10, Saturdays from 8:00 - 9:00 a.m.

Zen Seeds is a sparkling collection of short stories by Shundo Aoyama Roshi, who is among the foremost Zen teachers in contemporary Japan and a living treasure of Soto Zen. She now serves as advisor to Sojiji Monastery and is the chief priest of a training temple for female priests in Nagoya, Japan.

The book may be ordered online.

Like all Dharma offerings, these sessions are open to all at no charge. Donations to Daifukuji Soto Mission are welcome. <http://www.daifukuji.org/donation/index.html>

For more information or to register, please contact Rev. Jikō at (808) 322-3524, rev.jiko@daifukuji.org.

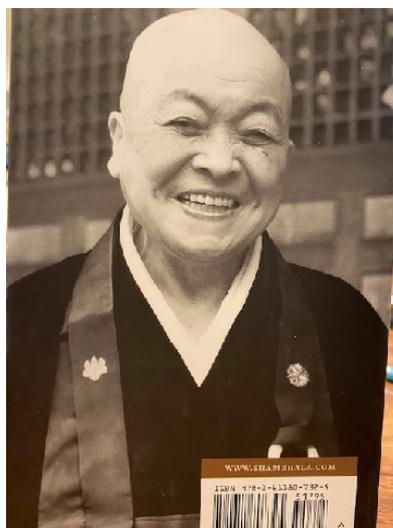
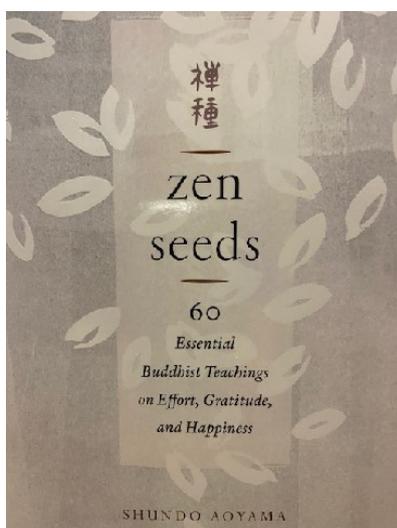


Photo Tour of SE Asia - Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam

April 18, 2021

10:00 a.m. via ZOOM

by Betsy Kairen Morrigan

Please take a trip with me and experience the Buddhist temples, amazing ancient sites and modern cities, and the people, places, and food of Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In January and February 2020, I traveled to S.E. Asia for the first time. Thailand is an emerging bustling economy, very tourist oriented, with all signs in Thai and English, both Buddhist and Muslim. Angkor Wat, a major Buddhist temple complex located in Cambodia, is the largest religious temple in the world in a desperately poor country. Vietnam continually surprised me in its religious and geographic variety as I travelled 1500 miles north from Ho Chi Minh City (old Saigon) to Hanoi by bus and sleeper train. I went to Vietnam partly to do penance for the atrocities our country committed there during the twenty year Vietnam War.

I'd like to invite you to join me on this trip through a Zoom presentation lasting about an hour on April 18 at 10:00 AM. Reverend Jiko will send you a Zoom link and all you have to do is click on it to enter. There will be plenty of time for your questions and responses.

If you would like to receive the Zoom link, please give Rev. Jiko your name and email address (rev.jiko@daifukuji.org).



Zooming Through the Precepts by Rev. Jiko Nakade

“What a delightful surprise studying the precepts with a Zoom sangha has been! I appreciate the diversity of the sangha: ages teens to 80+ year olds, the diversity of experience in practicing Buddhism, from “I grew up in it but don’t know much about Buddhism” to “having studied and practiced for decades.” The Zoom sangha gives us an intimate, sacred space to share our thoughts and our life experiences as we contemplate the precepts. I am grateful for this opportunity to learn, share, and grow together.” **Mary Park**

I echo the sentiments expressed by Mary Park. Studying the precepts with an online Zoom Sangha has been a delightful surprise.

In March of 2020, just a few weeks after a group of Daifukuji members began studying the precepts together in person, the temple had to close its doors due to the Coronavirus crisis. Disappointed and saddened by this turn of events, we thought we would ride out the pandemic and meet again in a few months. As the pandemic stretched on and worsened and the hope of meeting any time soon began to diminish, I began to think that I could at least offer a course of study using Zoom, a video communications platform which was being widely used.

Not knowing how effective using Zoom would be, I decided that it would be worth a try using it to teach the sixteen precepts. Remembering that Bishop Shugen Komagata had announced at a ministers meeting that he wished to offer Soto Zen Buddhist Lay Confirmation ceremonies at our various Hawaii temples once it becomes safe to gather, I asked our bishop if he would like me to open up my classes to other Hawaii Soto Zen sanghas, since using Zoom would make this possible. Bishop Komagata gave his support and encouraged me to do so.

Shortly thereafter, I heard from Mrs. Jaymie Komagata that the United Hawaii Soto Shu Women’s Association (UHSSWA) was considering having a virtual precepts ceremony, to be officiated by the bishop, for interested Fujinkai members in lieu of the association’s annual conference, which had been cancelled due to the pandemic. She asked if it would be okay for Fujinkai members from our various Hawaii temples to join the Zoom precepts sessions. Gladly, I decided to offer a second series of sessions for this group.

Word went out and responses came in. Twenty-three people registered for the 8:00 a.m. Saturday classes, and seventeen for the 1 p.m. classes. Each group was comprised of a mixture of people from various temples.

“When Rev. Jiko started up a new series via Zoom this year I asked to sign up for the Saturday afternoon session. The class is very inclusive and encourages participation. I have met a new supportive Sangha from other islands and my understanding of the Precepts is growing. The informational emails we receive have been thought provoking. I am very grateful for this opportunity to study the Precepts again with Rev Jiko.”

Susie Weaver

What is delightful is not only having members of the various Fujinkai women’s groups join the afternoon sessions, but several men as well, among them Glenn Tango and Carl Kawauchi of the Soto Mission of Aiea Tai-heiji.



“We’ve learned that the 16 precepts are guidelines for living a ‘good’ Buddhist life. They are all presented together in one place. They are guidelines and not commandments, so should help us live good Buddhist lives if we can follow them. We are also learning other aspects of Soto Zen Buddhism: e.g., what is meditation and how do we do it; karma and the six realms of existence; how we should generally live our lives; discussions on abortion and homelessness.” **Carl Kawauchi**

“I have enjoyed the precepts Dharma class because it has given me a chance to contemplate the precepts and express my thoughts on the precepts. Usually, it is just the minister or a reading through which you get an interpretation of a precept. It has been most interesting to hear what my fellow Buddhists have to say. I like this Zoom format because it gives a feeling of semi privacy. We are facing each other if you have your video on, but we are in our own comfortable private setting. I feel that I can be more open.” **Glenn Tango**

Although being together on Zoom is not the same as being together in person, people have found that Zoom Dharma study has its benefits, such as not having to drive and deal with traffic, being able to stay in the comfort of one’s home, being able to better hear what others are saying by controlling the volume on one’s personal device, and being able to focus on whoever is speaking without the distractions found in large group gatherings since everyone, except the speaker, is muted. Also, being able to attend a meeting without having to wear a mask.

“Studying the precepts with Rev Jiko via Zoom is lovely. While I’m not yet comfortable chatting on the medium, my own personal expansion of understanding has exploded. The convenience of not leaving home, coupled with the opportunity to join with others far away physically is absolutely wonderful. Internet-created sangha. Go Buddha nature, limitless, eternal, always connected. I’m grateful for my companions, walking each other home.” **Laura Brown**

“It has been my great good fortune to be a part of the Daifukuji online precepts class. I am not a tech savvy person and I would have never expected that this type of class being conducted online would have meaning to me - but it does. If anything, the online experience has been even richer than it would have been in person due to the time and energy saved by not having to take the long drive to and from the temple on a weekly basis.” **Dan Gordon**

With more and more people getting vaccinated, I am looking forward to once again holding in-person Dharma study sessions at Daifukuji Soto Mission. I would also like to continue offering Dharma study through Zoom. Through the sharing of their thoughts and reflections on the precepts, as well as their life experiences and challenges, the members of the Zoom sangha have bonded and are enjoying the sweet joy that spiritual friendship brings.

“The online Zoom Dharma sessions have been so far very enlightening. Each week is a new and important perspective of being a Buddhist. Having an opportunity to share the Buddhist precepts with others brings about right understanding. I am happy to have this chance and feel welcomed by the Sangha. Seeing people grow in the teachings while sharing is a very joyful experience.” **David Fiedler**

I can honestly say that I look forward each week to opening these Zoom meetings and to hearing the Zoom doorbell chime ring as, one by one, Sangha friends join the meeting from living rooms and kitchen tables throughout Hawai‘i. Seeing the faces of teenagers, young adults, mothers and their children, older adults, and seniors on my computer screen, all making time in their lives to study the Teachings of the Buddha and Dharma ancestors fills my heart with unspeakable joy and wonder. I wish to express my warmest mahalo to all of the members of the Zoom sangha. I also thank Bishop Komagata for supporting this endeavor.

Namu kie butsu, namu kie hō, namu kie sō. We take refuge in Buddha, we take refuge in Dharma, we take refuge in Sangha.



I'll do it

“俺がやる *Ore ga yaru* (Japanese proverb)”

Story by Rev. Daito Noda

“I’ll do it.” “I’ll take care of it.” Hearing these words makes anyone feel good. And when one enjoys doing something one is good at, these words come out naturally. But what if it’s work you don’t like?

There is a phrase which Zen monks often say, “Don’t pass on to someone else, work that is yours to do.” For Zen monks, this means that “I have been tasked to do this work as a part of my Zen training. To pass on some work to someone else because I don’t like doing it, is the same as robbing me of my zen training. There’s no way I’ll let that happen.”

I remember an incident that happened shortly after I entered the monastery. A fellow novice was assigned to clean the toilets for the next three months. I expected him to grumble how he, a college graduate, didn’t come all the way to these remote mountains to clean toilets.

To my surprise, he said, “Don’t pass on to someone else, work that is yours to do.” Then with a determined look, he said, “All right. I’ll make the toilets spotless until they shine.”

For me, his words and attitude were like a thunderclap in a cloudless sky. For the first time in my life, I had heard this Zen expression.

From then on, I repeat that phrase to myself, “Don’t pass on to someone else, work that is yours to do.” In today’s world, if you truly want to develop spiritually, rather than staying in your comfort zone and doing what you are good at, wouldn’t it be better to face the “now” in your life, that which you dislike, what you would like most to escape? How about practicing this from this day?

SDGs Lecture by Rev. Konjin Godwin

We invited Rev. Konjin Godwin, the Director of Soto Zen Buddhism International Center and held the event to learn about how Buddhism relates to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on February 21, 2021. Following is the video of the link.

<https://youtu.be/nraIpJsLS8Y>



Online Dharma Message

