

Guiding Light

March 2015

佛心



TORONTO BUDDHIST CHURCH
a Jodo Shinshu Temple

1011 Sheppard Ave West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3H 2T7
(416) 534-4302 www.tbc.on.ca



Remember to Breathe

One who has gradually practiced,
Developed and brought to perfection
Mindfulness of the in-and-out breath
As taught by the Enlightened One,
Illuminates the entire world
Like the moon when freed from clouds.
-Theragatha 548

There are some very basic fundamental things that all people need to do to stay alive, and we do them unconsciously. We do not need to repeatedly remind our hearts to beat, we do not need to remind our taste buds to taste, and we do not need to remind our skin to feel temperature changes. Barring some kind of a physical condition, it happens automatically. However, there is one very important thing that we all occasionally should remember. Remember to breathe.

Every so often in our lives something happens that rattles us to the core. It shakes us out of auto-pilot and takes our breath away. Sometimes it is the loss of a loved one. Sometimes it is health related. Sometimes it is a shocking event. For some people it might just be a tiny little thing that triggers a realization. These are the moments in our lives that are often the hardest to bear because they mess with our equilibrium and therefore we are not prepared; we don't know how to react and even simple bodily operations become a chore. When we are anxious, upset or nervous, our breathing becomes shallow, and at this point it becomes very easy to think "I don't know what to do."

During these times when we worry things are almost too difficult to process and are unsure of what the next course of action should be, the first thing to do is breathe. Breathe deeply and breathe consciously. Why? Because we are human, and breathing is what we know for certain we are supposed to do. First make sure you are doing that right, and then you can start considering everything else.

I often speak with people who are suffering because of loss, stress, and confusion and one of the common qualities I see is that they are so busy trying to figure out what to do that they forget to just stop and breathe. I have also been that person. When things are too much to process and I just want to hang a big sign over my face that reads "Sorry Out of Order". And that is precisely the point where we need to remember to breathe. Breathe, because as Stitch says in the Disney film Lilo and Stitch, we are broken "but still good."

Stop...Breathe...and slowly you will feel the Light of Amida Buddha again.

Namo Amida Butsu



Message from Jeff Wilson Sensei

I don't know what the temperature will be when you read this, but if it's around the time in March when this issue of *Guiding Light* comes out, it's a pretty good bet that it will be cold outside. Right now, we're enduring another lovely Canadian Winter. We've reached the point where both of my children have asked "Why is there Winter?" I don't think this is just childhood curiosity. It seems to me their real questions are "Why does there have to be Winter? Can't we get along without it?"

I have every sympathy with those unspoken questions. But the truth is, Winter is a condition beyond our control, a condition of life that we must learn to live with. And there is more to it as well. The answer I give my kids is that Winter is when the Earth is sleeping. In order for us to work during the day, to play and enjoy our time with each other, we have to sleep during the night and regain our energy. If we worked and played all the time without stopping, we would run out of energy and be unable to continue. In the same way, Winter is the necessary time when life prepares to spring into action. It isn't a time of death, but of re-gathering energy and anticipating the right time to Spring forth once more.

That explanation doesn't necessary stop their complaining. But at least it offers a different perspective that they can try to use to frame the situation. So much of our suffering in life is caused not by the conditions themselves, but by how we choose to react to them. Rev. Hozen Seki told a story about when the New York Buddhist Church was being built in Manhattan. Construction went on day after day, with banging, clanging, churning, shouting, and so on. A neighbour came to him and said, "I can't stand it anymore! If that noise doesn't stop, I'll go crazy! I want to move away to somewhere else." But another neighbour, an accomplished koto player, also came by the talk to Rev. Seki about the construction. "I'm so happy to hear the construction every day," she said. "As I hear it I know that people are doing good work, and that it will benefit the whole community when the temple is built. It inspires me to write a whole new piece of music, which I call 'Hopeful Construction.'"

The sounds of the construction were not truly musical in themselves, and they were an inescapable condition of the area where all three of these people lived. For one person, the condition was intolerable, while a different person found a way to react with gratitude and to turn the difficult condition into the cause for something beautiful. This is the attitude I try to have toward things too, especially Winter. Winter will be cold, whether I hate it or love it. But I can choose to approach it as a sign of hope for good things on their way in due time, and to appreciate that although it is cold outside, I am enabled to be warm, safe, and loved in my home.

Nirvana Day

This year we had a very active schedule planned for Nirvana Day. Of course, Nirvana Day coincides with Sangha Day, and as such we thought it might be nice to take this auspicious occasion to recognize community. We held the Sangha installation, the Temple Board of Directors installation, recognized the newly appointed Dana Board, discussed the importance of supporting our temple members, and then decided it would be nice to expand our understanding of our place in the greater global community by learning about another religious sect prominent in the world: Islam.

From the Temple Board we had Roy Kusano, Darlene Rieger, Dawn Anzai, Martin Cartledge, Mas Matsuyama, and Michael Tamaki. Each of them lit a candle and vowed to try their best to uphold the Jodo Shinshu teachings and support the Temple. Their candles were lit from the flame burning on the Onajin in front of Amida Buddha, and it was a nice reminder that Amida's light reaches all beings, and as recipients of this light we are responsible to let it shine as brightly as possible.



After the service we all received a bento prepared for us by the Sangha group, and it was just as delicious as always. Everyone always looks forward to these lunches because experience has taught it is never disappointing. At 1:30 pm, with our bellies full, we had the great honour of enjoying a talk on Islam by the esteemed scholar and Imam of the Peel region Muhammad Afzal Mirza. It was a wonderful discussion where he explained to us the foundations of the Islamic faith, daily practices, and entertained all of the questions our group raised with regard to the Islamic tradition. No topic was out of bounds for him and he welcomed clarifying things for us, particularly with regard to some of the difficulties Islam is facing on the world stage and in the media. His discussion was thought provoking and informative and we look forward to the opportunity to have him visit us again.



Sangha Day 2015

To paraphrase an old saying, the Sangha exists by the grace of the Temple for the service of the temple. I am continually impressed by the giving nature of the volunteers of the Sangha at our Temple; it literally seems to be the well that doesn't run dry.



The Sangha literally means community. Sangha volunteers to support and works towards the betterment of the Temple and its extended community. February 15th was designated Sangha day. It is a day where we welcome new members to the Sangha volunteer group and recognize our volunteer leaders. Further to that, I had the pleasure of welcoming newest superstar volunteer - Michael Tamaki.

Recently, Michael has been doing stalwart work helping to catch up on the long list of maintenance items at our Temple.

I welcomed Michael to the Sangha with a gift of Nenju

I was also pleased to have the opportunity to recognize our Sangha leaders (see previous GL for the full list of Sangha Executive Board members).

Whereas other organizations might take the opportunity to fete themselves on a day of celebration, Martin Cartledge, Nobby Shiraishi, Joanne Kataoka and myself worked the day before to prepare a delicious bento



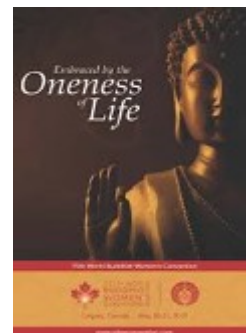
lunch for our congregation. Endo Sensei graciously took time from his busy schedule to provide assistance.

I was grateful that close to 90 Temple members braved the extreme cold to attend Sangha Day and we were able to provide them with bento lunches including a vegan option consisting of Teriyaki Tempeh and fresh Tofu in place of the Miso Salmon and Teriyaki Chicken.

Additional thanks to Jenny Choi, Rachel Kataoka, Abigail Kataoka and Koji Goto for assistance in serving. Many thanks to all those who pitched in to help in the clean up without being asked.

On behalf of the Sangha, I thank you, our Temple Members for the continued opportunity to be of service.

In Gassho,



WBWC UPDATE March 2015

Several BTSA members are on the roster of workshop presenters at the Convention with themes based the Eightfold Path. John Harding, Chair of [Religious Studies](#) and Coordinator of [Asian Studies](#) at the University of Lethbridge, will discuss **Right Effort: Buddhism in Canada, Past and Present**. He notes that Jodo Shinshu dominated the first half of the history of Buddhism in Canada and “Right Effort” among Buddhists here in Southern Alberta played a surprisingly central role for Buddhism in Canada.

Andrew Ichikawa’s presentation **Right Mindfulness – Why Music?** will explore the role of music in everyday life and how music can support our efforts towards right mindfulness. His practice, Pathways Music Therapy, provides music therapy services in Lethbridge to children in early childhood settings, to children and adults with developmental disabilities and to older adults in continuing care.

Lorita Ichikawa will facilitate a workshop on **Right Meditation: Naikan**, a structured form of self-reflection that can help us to find gratitude in our everyday lives. Developed by Yoshimoto Ishin, a devout Jodo Shinshu Buddhist, Naikan is an accessible approach to meditation, a way of reflecting on the teachings of the Buddha. Lorita, a retired psychologist, has led Naikan and related classes at BTSA.

Rev. Yasuo Izumi, BTSA minister will also be presenting a session in Japanese. Watch for all Workshops to be posted soon. Visit our website at www.wbwconvention.com

There are still a few spots available! Go to the website to register, to volunteer, to purchase banquet only tickets or to order a custom designed monto-shikisho.

All Canadians attending the convention reminders:

1. Make your hotel reservations
2. Attire to wear to the convention: a white collared shirt, denim/blue bottoms and wearing a coordinating Canadian scarf (optional for men) – if you have not received a scarf, please contact Donna at jdubbelboer@shaw.ca to arrange to pick up yours
3. Convention and banquet only attendees to bring 6 small gifts/omiyage (value of \$5 USD or less each) to exchange with people from visiting districts sitting at your banquet table on Saturday.

As proud Jodo Shinshu Buddhists and Canadians, let’s come together as ‘one’ and be
“Embraced by the Oneness of Life”



Zumba Practices

To all those going to the WF convention:

Don't forget practices are every Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. and for those who can't attend during the week, there is also practice every 2nd Sunday of the month after service in the mezzanine. Please wear something comfortable and rubber soled shoes.

The convention is quickly approaching so we need to practice, practice, practice!!

Workshops have been cancelled till further notice

Shin Fujinkai Update



On a wonderful winter morning in February, eight Shin-Fujinkai members enjoyed a delicious Winterlicious lunch at Le Papillon on Front. It was an excellent way to start 2015 with great food and fabulous company.

The next social event is being planned. So Shin Fujinkai members, watch your email Inbox for the next announcement. If you're not a member and are interested to receive information on the Shin Fujinkai or would like to join, please contact

Myra Takasaki or Diane Mark (tbc@tbc.on.ca).



Toronto Buddhist Church Keiro Kai AND SPRING HIGAN Sunday March 15, 2015



Following a long tradition, our temple members who will reach **77 years (KIJU), 88 years (BEIJU) and 99 years (HAKUJU) or more** during this calendar year will be honoured during the Joint Higan Service starting at 11:00 a.m. During the service, each honouree will be recognized and presented with a gift from the temple. In order to participate in the service, each honouree **must** submit the application form to the Temple before **March 5, 2015**.

After the service a special luncheon will be held for our honourees. **All honourees and all other senior temple members who are 77 years old or more this year will each receive a complimentary bento.**

Everyone else may purchase a bento for \$10.00.

Bento tickets will be available for purchase in the lobby prior to the morning service. **Tickets will be sold on a first come, first served basis. Regrettably the number of bentos will be limited.**

Following lunch in the Social Hall, there will be an enjoyable entertainment programme. We look forward to seeing everyone there.

Thank you,
Special Projects Committee

Eshinni Day Service

We celebrate and give thanks to Eshinni, wife of Shinran Shonin, founder of our sect of Buddhism. Shinran broke his vows of celibacy by marrying the nun, Eshinni in 1210. It is understood that Shinran viewed marriage as a turning point when he abandoned the traditional life of a Buddhist priest.

Eshinni did not depend on her husband for a living, instead, she supported Shinran financially and materially. Eshinni clearly followed her husband's view that marriage was not an impediment to being a nun and to following her religious beliefs.

Congregations began to follow the couples example, whereby men and women led Shin temples as husband-and-wife teams. Many regard Eshinni as the "Mother" of Jodo Shinshu.

Adapted and taken from Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada - Living Dharma Centre, The National Headquarters of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada

<http://www.bcc.ca/jodoshinshu/eshinni.html>

Date: April 12, 2015

Time: 11:00 am

Where: Toronto Buddhist Temple



The TBC Buyo Group
will be holding its
annual Food and Bento Sale
Sunday, April 5, 2015.
Your support is much appreciated
Thank you!

DANA/SHIN FUJINKAI FOODFEST A SUCCESS!

The Dana and Shin Fujinkai held their annual Foodfest on Sunday, February 1st, 2015. Thank you to all the donors for your generous contributions of bento, baking, preserves, tostitos, manjus and other delicious food items that were put into the bentos and to everyone who supported this annual event with your purchases.

TORONTO DANA 2015 Membership Dues Reminder

This is a reminder that the 2015 Dana membership fee of \$15 per member is now due.

The assessment has been increased to defray some of the costs of the upcoming 2015 World Buddhist Women's Convention in Calgary.

Please send a cheque to the Temple for \$15 payable to the Toronto Buddhist Church Dana, or give it to any of the Dana executive or insert your membership in the Dana mail slot in the Temple office before April 1st, 2015.

OBITUARIES

The Toronto Buddhist Church wishes to extend its deepest condolences to the families, relatives and friends of the following individuals who have passed away during the past month.

<i>Mrs. Masayo Tsujiuchi</i>	<i>83 yrs January 1, 2015</i>
<i>Mrs. Karen Akemi Amano O'Shea</i>	<i>58 yrs February 3, 2015</i>
<i>Mr. Edward S. Tsuji</i>	<i>88 ys February 10, 2015</i>

Kids Sangha Program

Despite the chilly weather in February the kids had a great time visiting our local fire hall and learning to play the taiko drums at the Temple.

On first Sunday of the month we spent time at the fire hall next door learning about the equipment and what the fire fighters go through when they are called to a fire. The kids learned about safety and had a chance to try on some of the clothing, and asked lots of questions. It was a great experience and a good reminder of the importance of fire fighters and how much of their time is given to support and help their community.



On the third Sunday we had a fun workshop with the Isshin Daiko group. The kids learned about Taiko and had a chance to try different instruments; drums, bells, blocks and gongs. They were taught how to play a few different pieces of music together and enjoyed the expert instructions from the Isshin Daiko group.



SUNDAY MARCH 15, 2015 is Keirokai and Spring Higan

Following a long tradition, our seniors who will reach 77 years (KIJU), 88 years (BEIJU) and 99 years (HAKUJU) or more during this calendar year will be honoured on this day with a special service, luncheon and entertainment.

Over the past few years the Kids have participated in the entertainment by singing a song or doing a play, this year we would like to combine the Kids Sangha with the choir group. The choir group have chosen a song called Homeward Bound (see attached). We would like the kids to sing the beginning and end parts alone (where it says solo) and the rest of the choir will join in during the other parts. We will also have a few solo parts available for any kids who would like to sing on their own. Depending on how many kids are participating in this event, we will also incorporate a short play at the end of the song.

In order to rehearse with the choir group we hope parents can bring their kids to the Temple on **Sunday March 1st and 15th at 10:00 am** during this time they will rehearse with the choir group, we will also use our activity time (11 - 12pm) to practice the lines and work on the play.

So on March 1st and 15th our activity for both those days will entail getting ready for the performance.

On March 15th after the activity we will order pizza for the kids so they can eat lunch before their performance. Bento lunches can also be purchased for \$10.

Please let me know if your kids are interested in performing for Keirokai and are able to make rehearsal time at 10:00 am on March 1st and 15th.

Kids Service will be at 10:30 am in the Hondo.

yonseisanseinisei

Toronto Buddhist Church Sangha Presents:

Hanamatsuri Family Banquet

Join us at our annual event filled with
entertainment, bingo and prizes your
entire family will enjoy

Feast on our famous Roast Beef*
dinner with your family and friends.

Saturday April 18 @ 5:30pm

Toronto Buddhist Church

1011 Sheppard Ave. West

416.534.4302 www.tbc.on.ca

Donations for Door Prizes are appreciated

Adults ~\$12 Youth ~\$6 (13 to 17)

Kids Sangha (under 12) ~ Free

Tickets available from Sangha members or TBC office

*Vegetarian or any other dietary needs are available upon request

isseiniseisanseiyonsei

LIVING DHARMA CENTRE (LDC) COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**(JANUARY 2015)**

(to Temple Presidents, Ministers, Temple Boards, Temple Newsletter Editors, Dharma School Leaders, Temple Youth/Young Adult Leaders)

The Living Dharma Centre (LDC) is a volunteer based organization which assists the Bishop and the temples in strengthening temple resources, increasing Jodo Shinshu scholarship and helping to spread the Buddha Dharma. The LDC has had a very busy and productive nine months since the 2014 AGM in Vancouver.

We are subsidizing partial tuition rates for two participating Canadian candidates of the Jodo Shinshu Correspondence Course with the intention and hopes that their local temples will benefit from their increased knowledge of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. We encourage other serious prospective students to make enquiries to the LDC.

The LDC has subsidized several youth and young adults to attend interesting and engaging Jodo Shinshu conferences which are meant to help them understand and further appreciate the Dharma. Subsidies for studies or travel to some conferences may be available so please contact myself by email at: wakisaka.a@gmail.com for further details.

We have a major Dharma School activities module project underway which is ably and kindly spearheaded by Brenda Ikuta of BTSA. The parameters of the project have widened as it became apparent that the Dharma Schools and leaders across the country need not only lesson plan ideas but also an instrument which would allow them to network, discuss and share ideas, concepts, encouragement and successes with each other. There is also a need for new strategies on how to set up and operate Dharma Schools in the country. We believe we need to help parents with the challenges we face in today's world from a Buddhist view and would appreciate more volunteer help in this area. Please contact myself (wakisaka.a@gmail.com) or Brenda Ikuta of BTSA (brenda.ikuta63@gmail.com) to find out more information or to offer to assist.

There have been several Dharma retreats across the country which the LDC has been able to help sponsor which have "Dharma-cized" or "Dharma -energized" many members and potential new members alike. These include a youth retreat at the Toronto Buddhist Church, a Dharma retreat at the Steveston Buddhist Temple with the previous Bishop of the BCA, Rev. Ogui and a workshop and public lecture by Dr. Kenneth Tanaka at our Fall Interim Meetings for ministers, the JSBTC Board, local area temples as well as the general public.

Our increased efforts on the LDC Facebook site have resulted in increased popularity. Even Dr. Kenneth Tanaka, a well known Jodo Shinshu author ("Ocean"), scholar and professor, is a member! There are 221 Facebook friends who now follow our Facebook site. Dr. Tanaka's workshop and public Dharma lecture are posted on the Living Dharma's YouTube channel with at least 130 views! Our @shinbuddhism Twitter account currently has over 500 followers who are interested in reading quotes from Shin Buddhism. These new LDC social media opportunities are gaining a wider exposure and larger following!

Bon Odori 2015

Cold enough for you? Maybe the thought of Japanese folk dancing and Obon in July will warm you up. Practices will be held on Tuesdays and Fridays at the TBC. Newcomers are welcome as step-by-step instructions are given. Those who haven't done odori in years will recognise and remember many of the dances. Bon odori is for all ages and genders.

This year, Friday practices will start at 7:30 pm. We are hoping that this earlier time will be more convenient for new participants.

Tuesday nights, 8:00 – 9:30 pm, starting April 21, 2015

Friday nights, 7:30 – 9:00 pm, starting April 24, 2015

Hope to see you there!.



UPCOMING LECTURES AND CLASSES

Evening Service

Thursday nights at 7pm

Rev. Christina Yanko will be holding regular Thursday evening services for anyone who wants to come for a mid-week boost of Dharma!

The format will be:

Silent Meditation

Chanting

Dharma Dialogue

It is Dharma “dialogue” rather than “talk” so that people who attend can feel free to participate, ask questions, and we can all learn together.



Why do we chant?

No prior knowledge of Buddhism is required. Everyone is welcome!



March 22nd = Let's Talk Dharma

“If we have been reborn time after time, it is evident that we have needed many mothers to give birth to us. It should be mentioned that our births have not been limited to the planet Earth. According to the Buddhist point of view, we have been going through the cycle of birth and death for far longer than our planet has existed. Our past lives are therefore infinite, as are the beings who have given birth to us. Thus, the first cause bringing about “bodhicitta” (= enlightenment) is the recognition that all beings have been our mothers.” From the book “An Open Heart “ written by the Dali Lama.

Our March LTD will happen on Sunday March 22nd. We meet upstairs in the mezzanine @ 12:30 PM right after the English service. Have your coffee/tea in the social hall and then join us for an interactive discussion. Bring your thoughts, questions and opinions. Let us teach one another.

Honobono Club

The Honobono Club has started up again and they held their first movie night on February 15th. The movie featured was Kazetachinu (The Wind Rises). There were 20 people who attended the movie which was in Japanese with English subtitles. Everyone enjoyed the movie and from the survey taken they were happy the Honobono Club has started again. Most who attended the evening were new to the Honobono Club. Refreshments were served at the end of the movie and new friendships were made.



Many thanks must go out to Reverend Endo and Bob Nishikawa for all the work they put into making the evening a success. Another Movie Night will be held in April, date and movie title to be announced in the April Guiding Light and other media. We hope that you will all attend the next showing and will bring your family and friends.

The Honobono Club was also created to promote Jodo Shinshu Buddhism; as an addition to the evening a short mediation session will be held prior to the movie.

TBC DANA SCHOLARSHIP INVITES APPLICATIONS

The Toronto Buddhist Church Dana Scholarship Committee invites all qualified, graduating students to apply for a scholarship.

Eligibility:

Students who are first time applicants and who are members or who are children or grandchildren of members of a temple/church in the Eastern District of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada and who will be attending their first year of post-secondary education at a recognized institution such as a university, college, institute of technology, etc.

All applications must be submitted in writing and accompanied by a Letter of Reference. The amount of the scholarship is dependent on monies available each year end and is at the discretion of the Committee.

The selection criteria will be as follows:

Academic results	50%
Church activities	30%
School and Community Involvement	10%
Essay (min 300 words)	10%
Total	100%

If you wish to apply for a scholarship, please contact the office at tbc@tbc.on.ca or 416-534-4302 and an application form will be forwarded to you as soon as possible.

**** DEADLINE for the scholarship application is Sunday, April 12, 2015 ****

All scholarship winners will be honoured at the scholarship presentation and luncheon which will take place on Sunday, June 7, 2015 (at the Monthly Memorial/Shotsuki Service at 11:00 am).



MEDITATION CLASSES

Come join our meditation classes and experience an hour of peace, tranquility and relaxation. Leave all the stresses of the day behind.

*Next Classes: Monday, March 9th 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Monday, March 23rd, 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.*

A LOOK BACK AT THE *GUIDING LIGHT*

SANGHA DAY MARCH 2006

Sangha News

On February 19th, 2006 Sangha held its Annual Sangha Day service and luncheon. On this occasion, Sangha is happy to welcome two new members; Mr. Lloyd Ito, and Mr. Steve Motomura. As well, the Sangha is most proud to announce the addition of Mr. Tadao Kitagawa as a Lifetime Member to the Sangha Organization. Sangha congratulates the three individuals honoured and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our members for your continued support and dedication to our temple.

On the same day, Sangha also held its candlelight installation ceremony of the new officers of the Executive Board of Directors and we were so happy to see such a good attendance by the board members for this ceremony. Again, thank you to the members of the Executive Board for your dedication to our organization.



Message by Rev. Fujii, March 2006

Thoughts on Ohigan

We are holding the spring Higan service in March. For myself, this is the first year in Canada as a minister. Every event is a first time experience, and I am constantly being surprised and befuddled by my new encounters.

As we will be commemorating the Higan service later this month, I would like to explain a little about the term. Higan is an abbreviation for the word Tohigan, which means reaching the opposite shore. The world we live in is called Shigan, or this shore. This shore expresses our present world of existence. It is a world in which we have greed, anger and jealousy, and these feelings never stop for even a moment. In Buddhism this world is known as the world of suffering and delusion.

A LOOK BACK AT THE *GUIDING LIGHT*, cont'd

Message by Rev. Fujii, March 2006, cont'd

Thoughts on Ohigan, cont'd

In the Pure Land there are seven rows of balustrades, seven rows of decorative nets and seven rows of trees. They are made of four kinds of jewels and extend over the whole land. There are seven jewelled ponds filled with water of the eight excellent qualities. The beds of the ponds are gold sand and from the four sides of each pond rise stairs of gold, silver, beryl and crystal. Above these stand pavilions adorned with gold, silver, beryl, crystal, sapphire, rosy pearls and carnelian.

This scene is described in the Amida-Kyo, the sutra we chant at our monthly memorial services. In Amida Buddha's world there is no greed, no anger and no jealousy, of course no fighting and no wars. All beings in the Pure Land think beautiful thoughts and do beautiful deeds as they hear the Dharma for Amida Buddha. It is said that the sun sets directly in the west during the Spring and Fall Higan. Since the Pure Land is located in the west, therefore the Nembutsu followers bowed low to the sunset at both Higan periods desiring to be born into the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. This is said to be the origin for the Higan Service.

The Pure Land is described in the teachings as being made up of gold, silver, beryl and crystal. When I first learned about the many jewels of the Pure Land, my initial reaction was I wondered how much it was worth? And didn't anyone fight to get more possessions? I also imaged what a beautiful view and great conditions it would be to live in such an existence. I realize that I thought in terms of monetary value as well as benefit to myself, I had forgotten the true meaning of sutra. In the Amida Sutra, gold and other precious stones did not only represent the monetary value, this pales in comparison to the teachings of Amida Buddha. Everyone realized that Amida's teaching is the most important asset in the Pure Land. Amida-Kyo represents the truth for us.

Yet despite receiving this wonderful teaching, we are unable to abandon our selfish viewpoint and continue to focus on ourselves. We don't see things straight, or for what it truly is. In Buddhism, this viewpoint is called delusion or 'mayoi in Japanese. The Higan, or Pure Land is filled with beauty and purity. In contrast, Shigan or our world overflows with suffering and delusion. Amida Buddha illuminates us and allows us to see our egocentric self. It is like the sun illuminating us and showing us our shadow. Shinran Shonin showed us the way to become a Buddha through Amida's great working in the world full of delusions.

Let us try to have Amida's teaching at the center of our lives and try to do right deeds following his teachings

Gassho
Fujii Tomofumi