



DELTA DHARMA

The Walnut Grove
Buddhist Church Newsletter
December 2023



HOST OF HOLIDAYS

This month brings many holidays from many different religions, filled with the meaning of giving and receiving. For Buddhists, on December 12 we celebrate Bodhi Day, when Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment. We recognize both the receiving of enlightenment and the giving (sharing) of that with all beings. Jodo Shinshu teaches us that total enlightenment is not possible in our corporeal lifetime, but the teaching of the Buddha guides us on the path and helps us to navigate the potholes, hold steady on the loose pebbles, and choose the right fork. The WGBC wishes everyone an enjoyable season filled with the meaning found in all the holidays.

YEAR'S END AND NEW YEAR SERVICE

The Year End Service will be streamed at 4 PM December 31 from the Stockton Buddhist Church. Please look to your email for the link.

On January 1, we will have an in-person New Year Service at 10:30 AM. Hope to see you there!

NEW BOARD

We hope all members had the time to return their ballots for the election of the 2024 Church Board. The old board will meet on December Tuesday December 5 at 7 PM to appoint the officers and chairs. Please see the out-going message from President Craig Nakahara. We thank him for his year (and many past years) of service. As one of the few not-retired members of the board, his term was very busy and must have been challenging at times. We appreciate you, Craig!

Mission/Vision Statement

To nurture a temple that celebrates a warm sense of our rural community and works together towards understanding a path of gratitude, interdependence and meaning guided by Shinran Shonin's teachings.

President's Message

Here it is already December, and I will soon end my term as president. It has been a pleasure and an honor to serve the sangha of WGBC. After serving multiple terms as president over the years, this year seemed different from the others. During my first term over 25 years ago, I was guided, taught, humored and scolded by the few well-meaning issei and the many nisei. Thanks to these people, the rookie president did well enough to be elected for future terms.

Now the issei are long gone and the nisei are much fewer. I have fewer elders to ask for guidance. I do understand we live a life of impermanence. I also understand that when one is gone, that is a state of permanence. No longer can they share their knowledge or impart their lifetime of wisdom. I hope I listened and understood their words enough to make a difference during my years on the board.

During church activities, people come to me looking for answers. (I hope they don't consider me an elder!) I certainly don't have all the answers and I lack even more in the wisdom department! But I will assist you any way I can. Keep asking. Show me your interest. Show me you care. We will do our best to keep the doors of Walnut Grove Buddhist Church open.

We are entering a new era at WGBC. A new, modern strategic plan developed by a committee led by chairperson Sharon Yokoi is being implemented. It will guide the board's decisions in the future. It is a well thought out, very tangible plan. The plan will be done in stages over several years. It should make your church more pertinent for today's sangha. If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to ask questions. This plan is fluid and adaptable to changing situations.

I mentioned elders who have guided me in the past. I also want to thank very much the 2023 board who have guided and assisted me in every way possible during the year. This capable, dependable, and knowledgeable board always, always had my back and I am so appreciative. And thanks to Reverend Candice Shibata for her dedication to Walnut Grove Buddhist Church and our sangha. The next president will be fortunate to work with this board and with Rev. Candice.

Well, that's it for me. Thank you again for your support, and tolerance. Stay healthy, stay involved, and stay in touch! Happy New Year!

In Gassho,
Craig Nakahara

HOONKO SERVICE OBSERVED

The annual HoOnko service was held November 19. Members of the WGBC gathered to observe the death of our founder Shinran Shonin. In the words of Wikipedia “the word *hōonkō*; 'hōon' means "return of gratitude" and 'ko' means "to clarify the meaning of" or "gathering". Shinran’s youngest daughter Kakushinni initiated this observance to express our gratefulness of the life of Shinran. It is through his teachings that we come to understand the Nembutsu path.

The service in WG was chaired by Sharon Yokoi, who gave a brief but important history of Shinran’s life. Reverend Candice Shibata officiated, and Reverend Bob Oshita was the guest minister. “Rev. Bob” talked more in depth of Shinran’s life and teachings. He exemplified Shinran’s honesty and humility using the simple children’s song “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” to symbolize the nembutsu journey; the simple activity of gently rowing down the stream of life with gratitude (merrily, merrily, merrily), each day, every day. He described the soft feeling of naturalness as we row our own boats, not upstream but gently downstream with the flow of life. He described many Buddhist imageries in this simple song. Shinran rowed his boat through the choppy waters of his life with humility and honesty. He recognized the Three Poisons, which led him to understand the nembutsu path as the seed of enlightenment. No thing can last forever and yet all things are one. Namo Amida Butsu.

ADULT DHARMA STUDY

Adult Study was led by Reverend Shibata in the morning before the HoOnko service. We began with a simple, seated meditation followed by a thought-provoking discussion on grief, funerals, aging and the passing of time. She helped us recognize that grief is a form of suffering and like the use of glitter; you never really get rid of it. It comes and goes. How do we use Buddhism to work through grief? By practicing the recitation namoamidabutsu, the simple but challenging act of taking a deep breath, pausing and being mindful of the present. It is through recognizing what we are doing that helps us to feel grateful. This meaningful discussion was followed by a walk through historical Walnut Grove and a delicious local lunch enjoyed by all.

No Class in December, and we will be deciding the dates for 2024 this month. We would like to extend many thanks to Reverend Shibata for a wonderful year as our caring and knowledgeable teacher.

December Shotsuki

Joyous Monthly Memorial



Deceased

Kurasuke
Kumao
Tatsu
Ichiji
Tetsuji
Umetaro
Tani
Kane
Misuyo
Isao
Tsuguo
Niichi
Louise Tome
Mineyoshi
Ben
Yoshio
Kiichi
Moto
Misao
Itsuji
Fumio
Tamotsu
Toshiye
Sharon
Richard
Kaz
Mikio

Higashi
Miyakawa
Miyakawa
Iseri
Hirakawa
Hamada
Hamada
Hamada
Oto
Oto
Nakaoka
Nakayama
Sano
Okamoto
Kusaba
Kusaba
Matsumoto
Shoji
Nakahara
Sakogawa
Nakahara
Kawahara
Eastburn
Carrington
Faulk
Omoto
Nagoshi

Chief Mourner

Steve
Roy Aki
Roy Aki
Iseri

Toshiko
Toshiko
Toshiko
Clifford
Clifford

Emiko
Kenneth

Dale
Dale
John

Frances
Ronald
Nancy
Janice
Shizue
Carol
Leslie
Omoto
Shizue

Hori
Miyagawa
Miyagawa
Family

Hamada
Hamada
Hamada
Oto
Oto

Ishimoto
Sano

Kusaba
Kusaba
Matsumoto Jr.

Nakahara
Shigio
Nakahara
Clintsman
Nagoshi
Tang
Faulk
Family
Nagoshi

Want to contact the Walnut Grove Buddhist Church?

We are located at 14105 Pine Street

Our mailing address is PO Box 336, Walnut Grove CA 95690

Our phone is 916 776-1312

Our email is walnutgrovebuddhistchurch@gmail.com

Our website is walnutgrovebc.org

Reverend Candice Shibata is available for guidance regarding church services at 209 810-5601

December Reflections

It's quite hard to believe that I am writing my last Karma article of 2023. Each year seems to pass more quickly than the previous year, which ultimately means that each day, week, and month feels like it passes by so swiftly for me. I often fret while thinking that there are not enough hours in the day to complete necessary tasks or enough days in the week or month to spend time with family and friends. I also often wish to change those circumstances and anticipate that each new year will bring about a sense of renewal and change. However, I feel like I fall short of those changes, especially in December when reflecting on the past year.

Today I would like to approach these thoughts and feelings about my shortcomings a little differently and ask myself, "What would the Buddha say about this swift passing of time? How would the Buddha address my feelings of falling short in my daily tasks and my wish to spend more quality time with my family and friends?"

I believe that the Buddha would remind me that I have karmic conditions of my life that make my life possible and what it is today. It includes the individuals of my life who are a part of my family and the circumstances that allowed me to meet and create the cherished friendships that I have today. Of course, other conditions and circumstances of my life also color the lens in which I view the world, like my mother's passing, which informs my view of loss and grief.

Because of all of this, the Buddha would also remind me that "hard it is to be born into human life, and now I am living it," which is a statement from the *Three Treasures*. And to be born into human life also means that I am subject to aging, sickness, and death too. Perhaps the Buddha would also say that yes, time passes by quickly so do not wait to use his teachings as a tool to reflect upon my life to make the changes that I would like to see to lessen my suffering (of procrastination and anxious thoughts).

With the help of Venerable Rennyō's (the 8th head priest of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism) words from his letter called *White Ashes*, he also reminds me that "life swiftly passes, and who among us can maintain their form for even a hundred years? Whether I go before others, or others go before me; whether it be today, or whether it be tomorrow; who is to know?...By so understanding the meaning of death, we shall come to fully appreciate the meaning of this life which is unrepeatable and thus to be treasured above all else."

With these words, I believe that Venerable Rennyō would encourage me to take time out of my day and express my love and gratitude to my friends and family. He would also encourage me to spend that quality time with them because we never know when we will be separated from them because of circumstances of life, including death.

With these realizations, I know that I do not need to wait for each new year to make changes in my life, but I am given a precious opportunity for reflection and change when I am so fortunate to wake up each morning.

In Gassho,

Rev. Candice Shibata



The Walnut Grove Buddhist Church

Gratefully Acknowledges the Following Donations

SHOTSUKI

Joyce Sakai	
IMO Tsurue Tatsuhei Goto	50.00
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IN MEMORY OF TOSHIKO SAKATA

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SPECIAL DONATIONS

Fred & Rose Nagao	
IMO Edward Nagao	300.00
Marilyn Jarboe	
Newsletter	25.00
Tracy Nagao	
IMO Edward Nagao	250.00





**Sunday 3 1:30 PM Shotsuki & General Service
(In Person)**

Tuesday 5 7:00 PM Board Meeting

No Adult Study

Sunday 31 4:00 PM Virtual Year End Service



THUS HAVE I HEARD:

“Like a caring mother holding and guarding the life of her only child, so with a boundless heart of loving-kindness, hold yourself and all beings as your beloved children.”

— Shakyamuni Buddha

WALNUT GROVE BUDDHIST CHURCH
PO BOX 336
WALNUT GROVE CA 95690

