

# WEST LOS ANGELES BUDDHIST TEMPLE BULLETIN

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Vol. 49, No. 2

February 2006

## FEBRUARY 2006

### MAJOR SERVICE FOR THIS MONTH

#### Nirvana Day Service

Sunday, February 19, 9:30 a.m.

Followed by

### TEMPLE OPEN HOUSE

11:30 a.m.

See details inside

## REV. USUKI'S PAGE

### NIRVANA DAY

..... nirvana is the state in which the fire of defilements has been extinguished. It is also likened to a room that safely wards off the rain and wind of defilements. Nirvana is the refuge that provides shelter from all kinds of fear. It is also called a beach, because the rampaging waters of desires, existence, wrong views, and ignorance are unable to cast it adrift. It is also called the ultimate refuge, because it enables man to realize ultimate happiness.

*Buddha Dharma, page 700*

In addition to this description of nirvana by the Buddha, the Sanskrit term literally means "extinction of worldly illusions and passions." Wherever the extinction of illusions and passions is being achieved, there will be a calm and peaceful nirvana. "Nirvana Day" applies in particular to the death of the Buddha Sakyamuni.

Nirvana Day is observed by all Buddhists on February 15th and we can learn much from it. While observing Sakyamuni Buddha's own entrance into peaceful enlightenment, we also learn that we cannot be completely free from human defilements until our own demise. This

statement may be very difficult to understand, yet the aspect of completely overcoming the three poisons of desire, hatred and delusion is the spiritual goal of every Buddhist.

Sakyamuni Buddha was a unique individual who, unlike most people, was able to live on this earth in the state of enlightenment, even as a human being. Usually, this would not be possible. If one cannot be completely free of desire, hatred and delusion until death, how could Sakyamuni exist in both enlightenment and in defilement? Well, he was the only "living" Buddha as we know it and we have not seen another one like him since.

(Continued on page 2)

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## REV. USUKI'S PAGE (Continued from previous page)

Until his final moment of death, Sakyamuni Buddha continued to encourage his disciples, "Until now, I have continued to lay down the norms of conduct and teach the doctrine. From now on, however, after I am gone, you must honor both and like a man discovering light in the dark or a poor man finding treasure, you must revere them. Oh disciples, accumulating wealth, cultivation of land, divination, and computing wealth are all activities in which you must engage with caution."

He asks us to make his teachings the light that will shine in the dark and tells us to rely upon this Dharma. What our body and mind crave is the best of happiness, yet we must be careful not to overindulge and suffer the consequences. Our desires are difficult to overcome,

much less manage, and we continue to seek things that provide pleasure while denying the pain caused by them.

Allan Watts, a famous religious writer said; "We seem to be like flies caught in honey. Because life is sweet we do not want to give it up, and yet the more we become involved in it, the more we are trapped, limited, and frustrated." This is the cycle of frustration of which Buddha speaks. Our lives should be guided by the Dharma.

The next time you are overcome by anxieties of desire, hatred and delusion, let's think of Nirvana Day and our mission to attain buddhahood.

Namo Amida Butsu



### SHINSHU CORNER

#### **Ma-yoi**

*Ma-yoi* is a very interesting word consisting of two parts. The latter part *yoi* means the state of drunkenness or nausea. When man drinks liquor and gets drunk, he acts abnormally. This is easily corrected when the effects of alcohol wear off. When man is seasick, he gets nausea and forgets his daily concerns. But this too is eventually cured when he sets foot on firm ground. When the emphatic particle *ma* is prefixed to *yoi*, we have *ma-yoi*, a state of drunkenness which cannot be readily overcome.

In Buddhist language *may-yoi* is the existential state of drunkenness or nausea, caused by blind and ignorant self-centeredness and extending over many aeons of timeless wandering. The purpose of Buddhism is to awaken man from this stupor and return him to reality as is.

*The Awareness of Self – Rev. Gyodo Haguri*

#### **The Gate of Religion**

##### **Religion and Life**

Religion is one aspect of spiritual life that is unique to man. By spiritual life is meant man's yearning for higher things: for Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Inner Peace. Religion symbolizes man's search for Inner Peace.

Man leads a group life that is different from that of other living things. This group life is called society. If we should take a married couple as the first unit of human society, it can be seen that the man and his wife not only live together in the same house, but that they lead a spiritual life of trusting each other and shar-

ing the same wish for a long and happy life together. In the parent-child relationship as a unit in society, children are reared by parents; but unlike other higher animals, the children do not forget their parents as soon as they are able to cope for themselves. Man continues to live a spiritual life in which parents keep thinking of their children's welfare and children keep thinking of their parents. Nor do the brothers and sisters of one family ever forget to help one another all through life; even after each has a home and family of his own, they lead a spiritual life of mutual trust.

Human society was formed from family units which united into tribes forming villages, towns, and gradually nations. The tribal units fixed rules of conduct to govern individual behavior, so that each individual could lead a spiritual life of mutual trust and aid. The beginning of religion is said to have been the setting apart of these rules of conduct as something sacred and not to be violated. Thus the religion of primitive times was in itself the laws which governed society. As society grew larger and became more complex, the separation of religion and government came about naturally. Religion's domain was the spiritual life. Philosophy, to explain the existence of a higher spirituality; morality, to define "good" as observance of sacred laws; creative arts, to express the spirit of reverence for the sacred – all are outgrowths of the religious domain. Religion provided the motivating power for creating the cultural life of today.

*Jishin Kyonin Shin*

(to be continued in the March Bulletin)

#### **APOLOGIES**

In the previous issue of the Bulletin, the 2005 Eitaikyo donation list showed a 5-dollar donation from Beverly Yahata. In manipulating long lists to compose the many donation lists we publish, we dropped a zero accidentally—the 5 should have been 50. We profusely apologize to Beverly for subjecting her to any embarrassment.

## REFLECTION    Jeff Wilson

(Editor's Note: Mr. Jeff Wilson is a PhD candidate in Buddhism at the University of North Carolina. Jeff and his wife Kristen are East Coast natives and were active participants at New York Buddhist Church before moving to the WLA area in June, 2005. Jeff is currently working on his PhD dissertation and Kristen works at UCLA. Jeff has written and edited numerous Buddhist publications and is a contributor to the well-known Buddhist magazine *Tricycle*. One particularly interesting booklet written by Jeff is *A Journey into Other Power*, a publication of the *American Buddhist Study Center Publication Series*. He was also the featured speaker in English at our very first WLA Fall Ohigan Seminar this past September. During the coming Spring Quarter, Jeff will be teaching a course in Buddhism at North Carolina State.)

In *Tannisho*, Shinran writes that he has never once said the nembutsu for the sake of his mother or father. This is the sort of statement that is easily misunderstood if taken out of context. Didn't Shinran love his parents? What kind of ungrateful son was he? Actually, Shinran is trying to teach us the true nature of the nembutsu, and in the process he teaches the true nature of parenthood as well.

Before Shinran's time, the nembutsu was always seen as *doing* something. People chanted nembutsu to ward off ghosts, or to make it rain, or to get Amida's attention so he would take them to the Pure Land. Often people chanted nembutsu for the sake of their parents—they believed that saying the nembutsu built up a store of good karma, which could be dedicated to their parents so they would be reborn in the Pure Land.

But Shinran changed how people thought about nembutsu. He taught that saying the nembutsu didn't *do* anything. Rather, the nembutsu expresses something that has already been *done*: Amida has already guaranteed that

we will go to the Pure Land, so our nembutsu is an expression of joy and gratitude at this gift. This is the true nembutsu, the nembutsu of sincere thankfulness, according to Shinran. As I understand it, we don't need to say nembutsu for the sake of our parents, because Amida has already taken care of them.

Like Shinran, I don't say the nembutsu for the sake of my parents, but I do often say the nembutsu because of my parents. When I reflect on how much care and attention they have given me, as a child and even now as an adult, I am moved to say nembutsu. In the same passage, Shinran also points out that because we have been revolving in the wheel of life for countless eons, all creatures have been our mothers and fathers at some point. This is something amazing to think about. When I meditate on how all beings have been my parents, and that even now all beings and things together contribute to my life in so many unacknowledged ways, I feel deep gratitude toward everyone and everything. And I am grateful to Shinran for pointing out to me a way to express my thankful feelings, through *Namu Amida Butsu*.



## WLA TAIKO GROUP CELEBRATES

Only about one year ago the West Los Angeles Taiko Group was created, and we celebrated our one year anniversary on Wednesday, December 14 with a Taiko Party held in the Social Hall of our Temple. We were all pleased (even surprised!) by the substantial turn-out of so many members of our Sangha who joined with us to lionize the event.

It began shortly after dark with a delicious dinner both provided and served (buffet style) by **Beverly Yahata** and **Connie Yahata**, hard-working members of our Group. Ummm!

Then our Taiko Group performed with grand style and much "Ka-Boom" that made the cups on each table "rock 'n roll" to the music.



(WLA President Yuki Sakurai is second from left and senior member Leo Tanaka (90) is ready to beat on the right. As you can see, the WLA Taiko group welcomes young and old.)

Many of those attending were persuaded to join the Group by playing along with them and the

spirit and good cheer increased with each beat. Both **Rev. Usuki** and **Rev. Patti** attended to spur the Group on.

Naturally, our own Taiko "carpenters" (Rev. Usuki, **Masao Sasaki**, and **Ichiro Ouchi**) were on hand to cheer, as was our mentor, **Narcisco "Chico" Jiminez** and his wife, **Isabelle Jiminez** who were so instrumental in assisting Sensei in learning how to make our own Taiko. Thanks to all of the many people who helped that evening but whom I have neglected to mention.

Finally, we honored our selfless Taiko teachers, **Elaine Fukumoto**, **Joyce Layne**, and **Audrey Nakasone** who responded with most creative gifts for our Group members: Small (about 3" in height") replicas of Taiko made by using jars of baby food wrapped with brown paper resembling the wood of a Taiko and finished off with colored yarn/string as mementos of the year. Thank you for your thoughtfulness.

We look forward to another year of great fun, laughter, and learning. Ka-Boom!

- Rick Stambul



# ANNOUNCEMENT

## THIS IS YOUR FIRST “THIN” BULLETIN

### “Thin” and “Thick” Bulletins

In the last issue of the *Bulletin*, we announced that it will be published monthly starting this year. This is being done without a corresponding increase in Bulletin staff, so the WLA Board approved a plan that calls for “thin” issues every other month with “thick” ones in between.

The thin issues will contain the minister’s monthly message and “time-sensitive” information only, for example, the monthly calendar. The thick issues will contain the minister’s monthly message, reports of past events, donation lists and everything else that is not time-sensitive.

If thin issues can be made thin enough, we will attempt to mail them together with the notices you get for our special services six times a year. These go out in first class mail, so if we include the thin Bulletins with them, we will have solved the problem of late delivery that some of you are experiencing (at least, for half of the Bulletin issues you get).

Making thin Bulletins is more difficult than it might first seem. For example, to stay within one ounce to avoid extra postage for the second ounce (24 cents), a thin Bulletin must be only

two sheets (four pages). We couldn’t get down to that limit in this issue.

As another example, where should photos appear? Obviously, photos record events that are already past, so should they be in thick issues only? It is argued with some justification that photos appearing too long after the event are too stale. So, you will find some photos in this thin issue. This then leads to the problem that photos often need some text accompanying them to make them interesting to most readers. We experiment in this issue by leaving out some stories that would usually be with the photos, except perhaps for few short captions.

As a final example, what about corrections or additions of donation lists published in thick issues? Shouldn’t they be in the next thin issue instead of waiting for the next thick issue? We agree with this and this thin issue includes corrections/additions to lists in last month’s thick issue.

Please let us know your reactions as we experiment with different ways of improving your Bulletin. Contact us at addresses listed at the top of the front page.



### PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE      Yuki Sakurai

Looking back over year 2005, I feel that we’ve accomplished a great deal. Thanks to the spark of fire lighted by **Rev. Fumiaki Usuki**, our WLA BT sangha has re-ignited. We have added weekly Sunday services followed by study sessions, Thursday study classes, and weekly taiko practises. We also have a new Web site where you can obtain up-to-date information on activities and organizations. Our Open Door policy has made it easier for members and non-members to come to the temple.

My year as president of the WLA BT Temple has been a wonderful experience and I am looking forward to another year. The Board of Directors, departments and organizations have been very supportive and made my work easier. Let’s continue working together for the betterment of our WLA BT.

Our New Year Party and Installation of our 2006 Cabinet on January 8, 2006 brought out many members to celebrate the start of the Year of the Dog. Everyone enjoyed the delicious box bento prepared by Aki Restaurant, and fresh sashimi donated by Rev. Usuki. Entertainment MC’d by **Sam Hada** was provided by talented representatives of our various organizations. This was a day of greeting old and new friends and toasting the New Year 2006.

Your suggestions are always welcome. We’ll be delighted to hear from you. Call me at (310) 820-3237.

### BWA NEWS      Kiyoko Teramaye

As the 2006 New Year begins, BWA is faced with a very busy schedule. We will be working like 'DOGS' throughout the year.

To begin with **Chiyo Nishina** and her committee were responsible for table decorations at the New Year Party and BWA was toban for Honoko Service in January; in February BWA will fold the Bulletin; and in March BWA will be doing Shrine Omigaki (3/5) and preparing chirashi (3/11) for otoki at the Higan-e Service on March 12.

Attending the BWA World conference in Hawaii on September 1-3, 2006? The deadline for registration is March 06. The fee is \$250.

March toban chair is **Haru Matsumune**.

Following is a message from BWA President, **Beverly Yahata**:

“I would like to take this time to thank all of you for the lovely gift you gave me at the December 18, 2005 meeting. I am overwhelmed with your kindness and generosity.

I took the job of presidency with a lot of trepidation but through the help of you ladies, I was able to do my job and am proud to be a member of the WLA BWA. Thank you so much for all your assistance.

Again, many thanks to all of you lovely ladies and a very Happy New Year. I look forward to 2006 and see what it brings all of us.”

**PHOTOS**

**Mochitsuki, December 10 2005**



▲ Sam Hada teaches youngsters how to pound rice.



▲ Scott Kotake, Rev. Usuki, and ???.



▲ Ladies form mochi while talking a lot.



▲ Coolie laborers take a break: From left: Vance Nishimoto, Ichiro Ouchi, Toshi Ishioka, Peter Babida, Jim Shimomaye, Hidemi Ohkawahira.

**Taiko Group Jamming**



**Bodhi Day Service & Oseibo**



◀ Rev. Seikan Fukuma, guest speaker at Bodhi Day Service.



▲ President Yuki Sakurai and Rev. Usuki.



◀ Maya Narumi, one of the performers in the play presented by the Dharma School after the Service on the famous Buddhist parable of the *River of Fire, River of Water*.

**PHOTOS ARE WELCOME.** If you have photos of interest, please submit them to the *Bulletin*, with the understanding that they may not be used. We prefer photos in digital form to be compatible with our printing process.

## TEMPLE NEEDS YOUR SKILLS AND EXPERTISE

Haru Matsumune

After attending Nirvana Day Service on Sunday, February 19, 2006, please join us at our first ever **Open House**, starting at 11:30 am (a flyer appears elsewhere in this newsletter). During this event, we will all learn together how our committees and departments keep this Temple running.

The chairperson or a representative of each committee or department will explain what his/her group does. Committee members will be available to answer your questions as you look further into specific areas.

Whatever your talents or interests are, there is some niche you can find (or even *create*) for yourself within the *sangha*. If you enjoy writing, you may want to become a reporter for the Bulletin or submit articles. If you have a talent

for working with youth, you may want to help Dharma School or support YBA activities. If you are a photographer, you may want to serve as historian for the Temple or one of its organizations. If you are a creative, technological whiz, you may want to help with the website. We also need your culinary skills, or financial or legal expertise, or operational or organizational knowledge, or ... And of course we sometimes simply need your muscle-power for physical labor.

There are as many ways to help as there are grains of sand on the banks of the Ganges River. Think "outside the box" and bring your ideas and energy to Open House!



*namomaidabutsu*



*namomaidabutsu*



*namomaidabutsu*



## FEBRUARY SHOTSUKI HOYO - 10 a.m. Saturday, February 4, 2006

Akutagawa, Hidemi  
Akutagawa, Hidetaro  
Akutagawa, Karoku  
Akutagawa, Kinu  
Akutagawa, Misuno  
Akutagawa, Shinpei  
Akutagawa, Tetsuo  
Arita, Kayo  
Arita, Kosaburo  
Fujimoto, Yutsuma  
Fukumoto, Furi  
Gomez, Frances  
Hatanaka, Ben  
Hatanaka, Haru  
Hayashida, Minoru  
Higa, Risa  
Ikkanda, Tsuma

Ishibashi, Tama  
Ishibashi, Yoshio  
Ishihara, Kameki  
Ishioka, Wakano  
Kato, Yasutaro  
Kawahara, Kenzo  
Kawai, Ishisaburo  
Kimura, Yoshimichi  
Kobuke, Yoshio  
Koda, Saburo  
Koda, Takao  
Kojima, Kenzo  
Kokado, Robert  
Kokuryo, Atsushi  
Marumoto, Hamaye  
Marumoto, Rokuichi  
Matsuno, Tosa

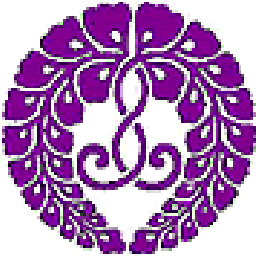
Matsuura, Yoshinori  
Mihara, Gunzo  
Mihara, Katsuji  
Mochizuki, Hama  
Morikawa, Mitsuru  
Morimoto, Shizue  
Morita, Masato  
Nakamoto, Hiroshi  
Nishikawa, Masato  
Ohara, Kageo  
Ohkawahira, Richard  
Onami, Masato  
Oshinomi, Masato  
Oshinomi, Ted  
Ouchi, Moto  
Ozamoto, Sae  
Sakahara, Shigenobu

Sakata, Ichijiro  
Sasaki, Chitose  
Shimasaki, Masateru  
Suzuki, Hatsuko  
Takeda, Ichizo  
Takeda, Ishi  
Takeda, Paul  
Takenaka Akiyo,  
Tanaka, Kenjiro  
Tanaka, Tetsuji  
Tanaka, Yoshiye  
Terashita, Sueko  
Uchida, Jue  
Yamamura, Yaeno  
Yamanaka, Sotaro  
Yamane, Sadako



### CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY OF:

MR. TOSHIMITSU YOSHIOKA, 88  
12-24-2005



West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple



# OPEN HOUSE

Come and Learn about Your Temple  
Sunday, February 19, 2006, 11:30 am  
following Nirvana Day Service



Get to know  
the minister,  
☆ Rev. Fumiaki Usuki ☆



Come meet  
the Temple President,  
& Mrs. Yuki Sakurai &

Sponsored by WLABT Buddhist Education Committee and featuring:

Bingo  
Building/Property  
Maintenance  
Dharma School  
Duplex Administration  
80+ Lunch Program  
Eitaikyo Service  
Endowment Fund  
Funeral Arrangement  
Garden Management

Gourmet Academy  
Historian/Photographer  
Information Technology  
Insurance  
Mailing  
Membership  
Obon  
Omimai  
Publication & Printing  
Religious Service

Sawtelle Property  
Scholarship  
Shotsuki Hoyo  
Speaker's Fund  
Study Class  
Taiko  
21st Century Campaign  
Uketsuke  
Website  
Yard Sale

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>FEBRUARY 2006</b>  Office hours: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm Bulletin Folding Toban: BWA			Phone: 310-477-7274 E-mail: westlabt@verizon.com			
			1 7:30 pm Taiko	2 1 pm study class	3 10 am Shotsuki Hoyo	4
5 9:30 am Sunday Service/Dharma School/ study class (E)  12 Noon Shigin Kinyo Kai	6 7:30 pm Temple Board Meeting	7 Rev. Usuki off	8 7:30 pm Taiko	9 1 pm study class 7 pm Religious services committee meeting 7:30 pm Buddhist Men meeting	10 Rev. Usuki off	11
12 9:30 am Sunday Service/Dharma School/ study class (E)  12 Noon BWA Meeting	13 Rev. Usuki off	14 10:00 am SD Ministers' meeting at Betsuin	15 7:30 pm Taiko	16 1 pm study class	17 7 pm <b>BINGO</b>	18
19 9:30 am NIRVANA DAY SERVICE Toban: Dharma School  11:30 am OPEN HOUSE	20 Rev. Usuki off	21	22 7:30 pm Taiko 7:30 pm Asoka Fujinkai meeting	23 1pm study class	24	25
26 NO Sunday Services  Rev. Usuki in Sacramento 2/21-26	27 12 Noon 80 Plus lunch	28 Rev. Usuki off	2/21-26, Rev. Usuki to BCA Ministers' Meeting and National Council Meeting in Sacramento  2/4, Saturday, 12 pm SDDSTL meeting at Gardena 2/10, Friday, 7:30 pm SD Council meeting at Gardena 2/18, Saturday, BCA YAC college youth summit at OCBC			