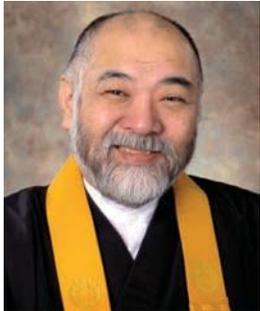




home is the nicest word there is_Laura Ingalls Wilder

REV. KAKEI NAKAGAWA, Rinban

REV. KAZ NAKATA



Family 'Hoji' Memorial Service - A foundation of our Dharma Living



The diversity of the American family of today is changing family and relatives are scattered in various places, and the period that the younger generation living alone is getting longer. In recent years, there have been fewer opportunities to realize that we are living with many "life" connections. In such an environment, it can be said that the significance of having the Yearly 'Hoji' Memorial Service, under "normal" circumstances, in which family and close relatives gather and remembering the beloved deceased, is great.

First, you can feel the deep connection of "life" that has been handed down and acknowledge the direct lineage.

Second, by gathering family & relatives, everyone will be embraced in a great "life" and live together. That is, the horizontal connection of "life".

Here we have the phrase, "To listen to the Buddha-dharma is to wash away the dirt in your mind."

Every year during this season, there is a ceremony for the Baby's first visit to the temple, and every year without exception, every baby has clear and pure eyes. The reason why baby's eyes are pure is that he/she has no malicious intent in his/her mind. As we approach adulthood, various malicious thoughts occur in our mind, and our eyes become dull or tainted. It is a sad reality, isn't it?

That is why we must always wash away the dirt in our mind. We wash our face and body every day but isn't it unexpectedly easy to forget about washing our heart/mind? Like our face and body, if we do not wash our mind every day, dirt will pile up quickly. Be sure to face the family 'O-Butsudan' shrine once a day and put both palms together in Gassho and say the Nenbutsu. This is an important way of life that will wash away that dirt. Then visit the temple occasionally and listen the Dharma, practice the Dharma. This is where, from the Buddha, we receive treatment for the disease of the heart/mind. We all have symptomatic diseases in our heart/mind. Symptoms of such various diseases include:

- *If we like something, we endlessly indulge.
- *If we do not like something, we easily anger.
- *When listening to important information or stories, we doze off.

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Obon is a time to unite everyone for joy and gratitude



Hello, all Central California Sangha friends! This is my third Newsletter article after the stay at home/shelter in place orders were enacted. I am so pleased that many friends watch our weekly Streaming service. I edited our streaming video to create a Streaming Sunday Service DVD for some of our friends who do not have internet or a device on which to watch our service. Some CC Temples/Churches offer meal delivery to their members, so I asked them to include delivery of the DVD. I distributed more than 200 DVDs to cover all CC friends. If you have not received the DVD, please notify me or your local temple/church contact. I would be happy to send a copy to you.

In the last three months, many activities at Temple/Church have been canceled. It is inevitable, but I feel so sorry that we cannot gather and mingle at Temple/Church. In June, we usually have meetings and gatherings for pre-Obon activities, such as food preparation, booth setting and Obon dance practice. There is no doubt that Obon is one of the biggest events for us. When we hear Tanko-Bushi song, our hands start digging coal. "Tsuki ga, deta, Tsuki ga, deta" It may be a part of our DNA! However, you might already have heard that we regretfully had to cancel the 2020 Obon festivals in Central California. This summer, there will be no hanging lanterns, no Chicken Teriyaki booths.

When in the internment camps in the 1940s, Obon was held. I am not sure how Obon was held in 1918 during the Spanish Flu. This may be a first time canceling all Obon in our CC Buddhist history.

Soon after the cancellation was announced from CC temple/church presidents at a district meeting, Rinban Nakagawa, Rev. Midori, and I gathered to hold a minister's meeting and we discussed a possibility of hosting an alternative event. Since the stay at home/shelter in place order was enacted, we have conducted more than 12 streaming services on the internet. Although our temporary service is not fulfilling everyone's need, we try our best with what equipment we have, under the limited circumstances. We are sure that whether our service is conducted with congregants or online, our passion for conducting services has not changed.

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Rev. Nakagawa, continued

Symptoms, continued:

*Placing more importance on eating & drinking, comfort of the room temperature, fame & fortune, etc., yet not concerned about the most important things in life.

*Speaking ill of others, yet hesitant to praise, etc.

There is no end...

The only heart/mind ('soul' in English and 'kokoro' in Japanese) that has no lie and no delusion is empathizing me, embracing me and fostering me. It is amitābha of the Sākyamuni Buddha. This true-and-real parental Love heals our diseases, washes away the dirt piled on our heart/mind, and no matter how long our life lasts, we will continuously be able to head toward the Buddha-realm. Only the Nenbutsu opens up the great path of unobstructed freedom without any lies.

No matter how I wash or how often I wash it, my heart will soon become dirty, so I have no choice but to live and practice Buddhadharma for the rest of my life.

The Family Hoji Memorial Service is an important opportunity to convey the life as a true-and-real human being who follows the path to Buddhahood and imparts it to the next generation.

Please make your family reunion a reality through Family Hoji Memorial Service.

The appropriate intervals for Family Hoji Memorial Service is the 49th day, 100th day, 1st year, 3rd year, 7, 13, 17, 25, 33, 50, and every 50 years thereafter. These "Nenki Hoyo" (yearly services) are usually held privately by the family, relatives, and friends. Also there are O-Bon and O-Higan, which are the memorial for all of our ancestors.

We are considering sending reminders to all Central Cal Sangha families, of an upcoming Hoji Memorial service interval/anniversary. We ask that a date be chosen for the service, also a wonderful opportunity for a family reunion.

As we experience the current pandemic, we started ZOOM Dharma Services at the CC temples. Families living distantly may watch & participate in services. Now, even US-wide family reunions are possible thru the internet.

For practicing Shin Dharma, the significance of having Hoji Yearly Memorial Service is not to appease or console the spirits of the deceased, but is, rather the opportunity to pay tribute to and to recall cherished memories of the departed while listening to the Dharma. And an important by product of this custom is the reinforcing of family ties with whole members beyond the immediate family and a continuity of Dharma-heritages from generation to generation.

Rev. Kaz, continued

Our Jodo Shinshu tradition started over 800 years ago in Japan, but its origin is in India. The teaching of Shakyamuni is reformed into three major traditions: Hina-yana, Maha-yana, and Vajra-yana. Hina-yana (three yanas). During the time of Shakyamuni, he trained people to become professional monks. He might have thought that if they became professionals, they would have the ability to guide the uneducated to reach enlightenment. However, these professional monks misunderstood his intention. They understood it to be that the teaching of Shakyamuni was shared only by professionals (monks). Only professionals kept rituals and precepts, and they discussed Buddhism in own language for reaching enlightenment. One of their main objectives was to "suppress their human desires." They left ordinary life and had a chance to manage and eliminate their desires. To survive, ordinary people must have all kinds of desires. They started questioning... Shakyamuni is supposed to share his teaching, to guide everyone in attaining enlightenment. Why are we not included? A new Buddhist movement came out from their voices 500 years after of Shakyamuni's death. The movement was called Maha-yana. Maya means vast, huge, or great and Yana means wagon. Therefore, Maya-yana is the teaching of a huge wagon. The wagon is big enough to drive all people to reach enlightenment, and so it is known as a "great vehicle". "Without suppressing our desire, we reach enlightenment", is a mainframe of the Maha-yana tradition. Our founder, Shinran Shonin described it as the teaching of attaining enlightenment while you live as you are. So, our Jodo Shinshu tradition is known as a mainstream of Maha-yana because it carries the original intention of Shakyamuni. The teaching is for everyone.

Our passion for conducting a mainstream Maha-yana services comes from such historical background. Obon includes an especially important service, which is Hatsu-bon. Hatsu-bon is a time to express our deepest condolences and gratitude to our loved ones who have passed since the last obon. Do you remember how they were enjoying the hot summer gathering of Obon? When was the last time they were in the dancing circle of Obon odori? What was their favorite Obon food? What conversation did you have with them on the way home from Obon? After they stopped coming to Obon, did they miss it? I am sure that when you close your eyes, you recall these memories. We show our appreciation to them by dancing Obon-odori, thanking them for their tireless help and support to our life.

We care of your health and appreciate governmental guidance. So, we will have a streaming Central California District combined Hatsubon Service and a virtual Obon dance on July 11 beginning at 5:30pm. If you are unsure on how to view the service & odori, please ask your family members, local temple/church friends or me. In June, we will have several Obon odori practice sessions and how to wear Kimono sessions on-line. To view the scheduled sessions, visit your temple's website or Central Cal Twitter website beginning June 1st. So sorry for this short notice and inconvenience.

Under the current circumstance, regrettably we cannot enjoy our regular Obon food. But I decided to sell an "Obon Snack bag" as a Central Cal fundraiser.

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Rev. Kaz, continued

Each bag contains Japanese crackers, chocolates, candies and so on (my choice!), and includes a raffle ticket. Of course, we cannot conclude our Obon without a raffle! At the end of the virtual Obon dance, we will have the raffle drawing. All proceeds go to local CC temple/church, so to support your temple/church, please purchase as many snack bags as possible and share them with your family and friends.

Again, thank you all for your tremendous help and support to our CC temples/churches.

I try my best to serve everyone for their smile and happiness in return :-)

Sincerely, Gassho.