

NENJU NEWS

JODO SHINSHU BUDDHIST TEMPLES OF CANADA

Volume 2, Issue 3

October, 2020

JSBTC VISION AND

MISSION

Vision: A community living a life of gratitude on the path of the Buddha Dharma

Mission: Acting as a catalyst for growing a network of Jodo Shinshu Buddhist centres through dynamic and focused leadership



When the last Nenju News went out in May, after the AGM, we were in the midst of the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic and struggling to see how we would go forward with the Temples closed and everyone worried about health and finances. Now we are in the predicted second wave of the pandemic and once again facing possible restrictions. We are in chaotic and uncertain times, with no end in sight.

And yet the pandemic has led to some very positive developments. Several of our ministers are offering services online through Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube, and reaching people far outside their local Sanghas. We have been able to attend events in the US and Hawaii. We continue to explore various types of communication (see page 10 below for more details).

The JSBTC Board and the Ministers' Association met by Zoom for fall interim meetings in late September. We were very fortunate to have Bishop Harada from the Buddhist Churches of America speak to us at the end of the interim meeting. Because we were meeting virtually, we were able to share Bishop Harada's talk with the Canadian kyodan, and a number of people "attended". If you missed Bishop Harada's excellent talk, it is available online (Check Calgary Buddhist Temple's website www.calgary-buddhist.ab.ca and look under [Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada, Teachings](#)).

Unfortunately, after the interim meeting, Larry Wakisaka announced that he was retiring from the Board effective immediately, and Amy Wakisaka announced that she would be retiring from the Board effective Dec. 31st. Larry and Amy have devoted many years to spreading the dharma in Canada; their experience and wisdom have been invaluable to the JSBTC. While we will still be able to call up on them for advice, they will be greatly missed by everyone.

Their retirement raises a number of issues. First, the JSBTC Bylaws require the Board to have 6 Directors; Amy has agreed to stay on the Board until the end of the year to give the Board time to find an interim Director for the period from January 1st to the AGM in April, to ensure that the Board's actions during that interim period are valid. Second, the Board has had to reprioritize important work such as the Living Dharma Centre due to workload, and there are new ideas and initiatives that we cannot move forward on. Finally, there is a need to find new people to serve on the national Board as part of succession planning. With Larry and Amy's departure there is no representation on the JSBTC Board east of Manitoba. We urge all the Temples to consider nominating possible national Board members, both for the interim position and for a two year term at the AGM.

If sitting as a national Board member seems too daunting, JSBTC is also in need of a few volunteers to assist launching some new initiatives related to social media, communications and the Living Dharma Centre. The individuals should have experience in the areas of program development, event planning and communications (e.g., writing, editing, desktop publishing). This can be an exciting time as we continue to respond to the pandemic and to build our national sangha.

Also, the Board has decided that the 2021 AGM will again be virtual. In addition to our regular business meeting, we want to host lectures and dharma talks for everyone, not just AGM delegates. This is an excellent opportunity for sangha members to volunteer to help plan and organize a one time event.

Please consider working with us either as a Board member or as a volunteer!

If you are interested, please contact Laura Sugimoto at laura.a.sugimoto@gmail.com.

Even Though My Loved One Has Gone

Time is a funny thing. One day last month, I decided to pass the time by watching Netflix, but I didn't know what I wanted to watch. I started looking at different titles and descriptions, but I just couldn't choose. Before I knew it, an hour and 30 minutes had passed, and I still hadn't made a decision! But where did the time go? I was so tired from just trying to choose something, that I gave up watching TV all together. It was such a waste of time!

A second is always a second, but I am certain that sometimes it is shorter, and at other times longer. (Like in high school history class when I could look at the clock after what felt like forever, but the minute hand hadn't even moved.)

Last week, I received an email from a temple member who lost her husband last year. In that email, she remarked that after her husband passed away, at first, she felt as though the days went by so slowly. However, in time, she started to feel as if each day was flying by so quickly, so she was surprised that her husband's 1st year memorial service was coming up so soon.

Time is funny. Its value is fixed, but depending on our situation, it can seem so much longer or shorter and we can spend it so carefully or waste it. But when I read her email, I was reminded that at some moments in our lives we feel the need for time to go by quickly. Especially when we have lost loved ones, because we wish time to move quickly to help us get through a difficult time or period. However, at the same time, we worry that time is going by too quickly, and that we are moving too far away from our lost loved ones and our treasured memories. We worry that we will forget our loved ones and lose them as their memories fade. But, in Shin-Buddhism, we never lose those memories even though we feel the days are going by quickly. One minister said:

Even if our loved ones pass away, their smile won't be gone.

Even if our loved ones pass away, their words won't be gone.

Even if our loved ones pass away, their warm heart won't be gone.

Even if our loved ones pass away, they won't leave from me. They always come back into my Gassho by placing our hands together.

Actually, this year will be my grandmother's 7th year memorial. I had lived with her growing up since I was born. She taught me very important things about life. She worried about me a lot and often had to get upset with me.

When I was a high school student, I usually went out with my friends until midnight. Sometimes, I would come back home really late. I would tiptoe into the house so slowly and quietly, but somehow my grandmother always heard my footsteps and would suddenly be standing in front of me. I was always surprised, because I never heard her footsteps. She got angry with me many times. At that time, I felt annoyed by her worries. However, now I understand that her anxiety came from her kindness and warm heart. Now whenever I hold a memorial service for someone's grandmother, I usually recall memories of my grandmother. I cannot see her existence, but I feel her warm heart as it comes back into my Gassho with the voice of Namo Amida Butsu.

Today, many people have an interest in the teachings of the Buddha. They know Buddhist members are always doing Gassho. However, have you ever thought about why you do Gassho? For some members, the first time they do Gassho from the bottom of their heart is when they have lost a loved one. The same is true of me. When I was growing up in the family temple, I did Gassho without thinking. But when I lost my grandmother, I placed my hands together from the bottom of my heart, and I said "Namo Amida Butsu". It seems easy to place our hands together, but actually, it is quite difficult.

The woman who emailed me last week, she started coming to the temple with her family after her husband's death. I believe they encountered Buddhism through the loss of her husband. In Shin-Buddhism, we believe our loved ones give us the great opportunity to do Gassho and to say "Namo Amida Butsu" in the temple.

This opportunity is made by Amida Buddha's great compassion. He established great vows for all sentient beings and attained perfect enlightenment. Our loved ones connect us to Buddhism, and Amida Buddha connects us to our loved ones. So, we can meet our loved ones again when we do Gassho, even though we cannot see their existence, through saying "Namo Amida Butsu".

Time will march on, however slowly or quickly, it will pass. We will make many new experiences throughout our lives, and our memory will inevitably fade away. However, we do not need to fight time, because our treasured memories of loved ones and their warm hearts will always come back into our Gassho.

Namo Amida Butsu

Yoshimichi Ouchi

Reverend Yoshimichi Ouchi

Rev. Ouchi was born in 1991 in Oita prefecture, Japan. He studied religions, with a focus on Buddhism, at Ryukoku University in Kyoto. After graduating from Ryukoku University, he went to Chuo Bukkyo Gakuin School and Gonshiki Shidousho, part of Nishi Hongwanji-temple. When he studied, he also volunteered at a temple in Osaka for two years. On April 15th, 2016 Reverend Yoshi was assigned to the Toronto Buddhist Church.



Jodo Shinshu

The fruit of silence is shinjin.

The fruit of shinjin is nembutsu.

The fruit of nembutsu is loving-kindness.

The fruit of loving-kindness is service.

The fruit of service is peace.

The fruit of peace is silence.

Sensei Fredrich Ulrich

(Retired, Manitoba Buddhist Temple)



TORONTO BUDDHIST CHURCH

Rev. Yoshimichi Ouchi is our resident minister and he is assisted by Sensei Dr. Jeff Wilson, Sensei Joanne Yuasa and Dennis Madokoro. As well as Toronto Buddhist Church, services are held at Hamilton Buddhist Temple, Montreal Buddhist Temple and the fellowship in Ottawa.

Many Japanese-Canadian families moved east from the West Coast of Canada after World War II. The first Jodo Shinshu service in Toronto was held on August 15, 1945 led by Rev. Kenryu Tsuji. Until October 1947, meetings were held at various homes and halls until a house was purchased at 134 Huron Street thanks to the sacrifice, commitment and dedication of members.

The congregation soon outgrew the Huron Street house and a new temple was built at 918 Bathurst Street in downtown Toronto, opening in March 1955. In later years, space was in short supply at Bathurst Street and parking became a problem. Congregants were no longer living in central Toronto and had moved to areas outside of the city. With the generous assistance of the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, members and supporters, the present building was built at 1011 Sheppard Avenue West. It was opened in 2005 - our 60th anniversary.

In the 1960's, a plot of land was purchased approximately 2 hours north of Toronto. Camp Lumbini was a getaway for families and Temple groups. Presently a one-week children's camp is held in the summer and Camp Lumbini is available for rent to Temple families.

Toronto Buddhist Church could not operate without the assistance of its many volunteers. Presently, the primary service groups are the Sangha (mainly men), Dana and Shin-Fujinkai (women's groups), as well as the Youth/Young Adults. Another volunteer group was formed to include all members and supporters - the CCOV (Coordinating Committee of Volunteers). All these groups contribute to the potluck meals, luncheons, dinners, the bazaar and other fundraising events.

Presently, due to the pandemic and provincial restrictions, our Hondo is limited to 30% capacity. Typically, Shotsuki services are held on the first Sunday of the month and special services such as Ho-onko, Higan, Hanamatsuri on the third Sunday of the month. Obon service is held on the second Sunday in July.

At this time, as a precaution, we have had to cancel many activities. Usually the Temple is busy with Karaoke, Buyo, Minyo odori, Taiko, Tai chi, Meditation and Ikebana classes during the week. We have also had to cancel our 75th anniversary luncheon.

We would like to thank Bishop Aoki, Rev. Grant Ikuta, their congregations, James Martin Sensei and the JSBTC board for their never ending assistance and support during the past year.



Toronto Buddhist Church Hondo and Naijin



Toronto Buddhist Church, Allen Rd. and Sheppard Ave.

History of Hamilton Buddhist Temple

In 1946, Japanese Canadians started to arrive in Hamilton, Ontario from various relocation centres. While their immediate concern was to find decent accommodation and employment and to send their children to school, Japanese Buddhist families realized the need to establish a place to practice their faith.

A group of dedicated Buddhists formed the first Bukkyokai in Hamilton. They held services in private homes and organized Hamilton's first Obon service in 1946 with Rev. Kenryu Tsuji from Toronto Buddhist Church. By 1948, the Hamilton Bukkyokai was able to buy a family house at 44 Strachan Street East. This became the first Hamilton Buddhist Church (later renamed Hamilton Buddhist Temple in 1998). However, after several years, another location had to be found due to the city expropriating the land. The Church moved to 671 Tate Avenue in 1967.

During the early years, membership mostly consisted of issei and nisei. Services were held weekly, preceded by Sunday school for young sansei. Men would take turns doing maintenance, and the women would prepare delicious food for lunch as part of their toban. Besides fundraising events such as bazaars and mochitsuki, there were fun social activities such as picnics and group trips. Many of the ladies learned odori at the Temple for the annual obon dance, whose location in the city changed year-to-year. The dancers would also travel to Toronto and participate in the Toronto obon odori, which used to be held at Nathan Phillips Square. The Temple took turns with Toronto and Montreal hosting the annual Eastern Canada Sangha Dana League conference.



The Temple has had resident ministers for only a few years: Rev. Tetsunen Yamada from 1963 to 1966 and Rev. Seimoku Kosaka from 1976 to 1980. Lay ministers, members of the Temple conducted services and Sunday school but with declining enrolment, Sunday school was closed in the mid-1970s. Ministers from the Toronto Buddhist Church (TBC) would preside over major services as well as weddings and funerals. The Hamilton Temple continues to appreciate TBC's generous sharing of its ministers' time and has expressed its thanks by donating to the TBC after each service.

By 2012, due to declining membership and the high cost of maintaining an aging building, the 671 Tate property was sold and the Temple moved to the Canadian Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre at 45 Hempstead Drive. It was hoped this would continue the work of the founders by keeping Jodo Shinshu Buddhism alive in Hamilton and by exposing Buddhism to a new group of people. These people could include those who wish to investigate more of their heritage and those looking for an alternative to other religions.

The Temple took an underused room at the Centre and converted it to a beautiful, multipurpose room. The Temple purchased and installed hardwood floors and Japanese-inspired storage areas, and also painted the room. The first service at 45 Hempstead Drive was held in February 2013.

Around the time of the move, the Temple was loaned a beautiful statue of Amida Buddha by the family of the late Mr. Naoya Nasu.

Previously, the statute resided at his father's temple in Japan, and rescued from the fire caused by a bomb striking and burning down the Temple towards the end of World War II. Mr. Nasu's wish that the statue be placed again in a Jodo Shinshu Temple was honoured by his sister, Mrs. Kaibara. She and her husband attended Hamilton's Gotanye and monthly Shotsuki service in May 2013, and are pictured (below) with Frances Campbell, Fujii Sensei, Chris Hourmouzis and Marlene Frazer.

On May 27, 2015, the Hamilton Buddhist Temple was honoured by having his Eminence Kojun Otani Gomanshu sama visit. He even checked out the kitchen and was amazed at the space.

Currently, the membership of the Hamilton Temple is a small but mighty group. While it is predominantly Nikkei, there are several members who are not. Since its move to the Centre, Temple members have actively volunteered in various fundraising and community events for the Centre. The Temple also offers mindfulness meditation twice a month.

Until recently, the monthly services were followed by potluck lunches, allowing the attendees to socialize. At any given service, up to half the attendees would be guests attending for their family's shotsuki service. However, since the pandemic was declared, in-person services have been suspended. Instead, for the health and safety of members, many of them high-risk, services resumed in September virtually over zoom. This has had the benefit of allowing people in seniors home who have not been able to visit the Temple, even pre-pandemic, to participate.



Thoughts from Joanne Sensei

I am certain we can agree that our days are now full of instances that we would not have imagined possible at the beginning of this year. Although we have been living with the pandemic for half the year now, and things are settling down relatively, I am still very aware that there was “a time before”. One of the aspects of my life that changed dramatically, as I imagine it may have for you as well, was the disruption of weekly temple services.

For the first few weeks, everything was so unusual and volatile - it felt “unreal” for some time - leaving the house for *any reason* seemed like, indeed, was a bad idea. My focus turned to issues like helping my family (and myself) stay safe and healthy, how to navigate work and school as everything moved online, and more immediate things like how to get groceries. Admittedly, I did not really miss Sunday services in the initial weeks of the lockdown. As the weeks passed, however, and the phrase “the new normal” popped-up in conversations more frequently, the absence of the weekly Sunday services did become pronounced.

Luckily, we live in a time and in circumstances that allow us to connect remotely; many temples and Sensei across the JSBTC and Buddhist Churches of America recorded or streamed services so that they could be accessed online. I listened to lectures and watched services by Sensei from temples across Canada as well as the United States and even Japan. The novelty of being able to access Sensei, or join conferences that were previously inaccessible, feels like a silver lining in these worryingly volatile times.

Our current situation reminds me of the innovations Jodo Shinshu has gone through so that the Nembutsu path was made accessible to followers through pandemics, natural disasters, religious persecution, and wars of the past. I am acutely aware that relatively recently, Shin Buddhism in Canada survived the unjust incarceration of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War through the diligent work of ministers and members, some of whom are still with us and deserving of our deepest gratitude. Further back in history however, we can look to Rennyo Shonin (1415-1499), the 8th monshu (head priest and descendant) of the Hongwanji (the head temple of the Jodo Shinshu sect), who is known for unifying Nembutsu followers, as well as broadening the reach of the teachings through reforms in liturgical practices. In other words, Rennyo made it easier for people to encounter and engage in the Nembutsu teachings. Famously, he wrote letters to groups of Nembutsu followers so that they could be read aloud at gatherings; they were akin to receiving Dharma Talks in the form of a letter. This activity lives on in our services today with the recitation of his letters, the best-known being “*On White Ashes*”.

The collection of letters known as the *Gobunsho* cover a wide range of topics, from hunting and fishing to the role of women in the sangha, but are all meant to be experienced and listened to *as a group*. One of the letters highlights this very concept. In “*The Meetings Twice Every Month [4-12]*” Rennyo writes:

“What is the purpose of having the meetings that are held twice every month? It should be nothing other than to attain the entrusting heart for our birth in the land of bliss.

From the past up to the present, monthly meetings have been held everywhere, but the issue of the entrusting heart has not even once been discussed at such meetings, Especially in recent years, whenever meetings are held, people just enjoy a meal with sake and tea, and then disperse. This is contrary to the primal intent of the Buddha Dharma.....

After all, it is essential that, from now on, those who are yet to attain the entrusting heart should discuss this issue with each other.....

With this in mind, when you attend the monthly meetings, you should take them as an opportunity to express your appreciation for Amida’s benevolence. Those with such understanding can indeed be called practitioners who have attained the true entrusting heart.

Humbly and respectfully,

Written on the 25th day of the 2nd month, 7th year of Meio (1498)

To the members of the congregations that meet twice every month”

(Letters of Rennyo: A Translation of Rennyo’s Gobunsho, edited by G.M. Nagao. Shin Buddhism Translation Series, Hongwanji Int’l Center, 2000)

Although this was written over 520 years ago, I think there are portions of this letter that are relevant to our services today (although *sake* is not a regular aspect of temple gatherings, tea is most definitely ubiquitous!) The message contained in the words - what to do/practice - is important, but for me, the most notable part is *the context* in which it is suggested we practice - together, as a group. For us Shin Buddhists, encounters with the Buddhist teachings resonate strongest when we are with others, in a community. Without others, we are unable to encounter Other Power, the compassionate activity of Amida Buddha that sustains each of us. Fortunately throughout the pandemic, our ministers and community were able to be innovative, like Rennyo Shonin many generations ago, to maintain a sense of community and experience the compassionate activity of Amida Buddha even if only through screens and speakers. It was so comforting, in a time of physical distancing, to be able to see familiar faces and hear "Namo Amida Butsu" in familiar voices. As much as I am looking forward to being together again in temples, I also hope that we continue to use technology to connect with each other as well as with the Shin Buddhist teachings.

More broadly, the stay-at-home measures were and continue to be a unique set of circumstances that help us acknowledge the people and conditions outside of the temple community that we probably took for granted in the past. It shone a bright light on the people and work that are truly essential to our lives - the essential workers who work in grocery stores to the folks who work to keep our communities safe and running, and of course those who provide healthcare.

I do hope everyone reading this is safe and well and continues to be so, especially in the Fall and Winter seasons when temperatures will dip, and our understanding and relationship with Covid-19 will move into another phase.

Namo Amida Butsu

Joanne Yuasa

Dial the Dharma

Buddhist Churches of America has started a "Dial the Dharma" program on an 800 toll free number, especially for members who might not have access to a computer or the internet. This is a recorded message giving a 5 minute dharma message in English or Japanese, with the message changed every Wednesday. Bishop Harada of the BCA records the English message, and various Japanese ministers do the Japanese message.

The number is 800-817-7918, and you press "1" for English, and "2" for Japanese.

A huge thank you to the BCA for making this available to our Canadian sangha!

*Comments? Suggestions? We would
love to hear from you*

jsbtcnewsletter@gmail.com

New JSBTC Logo



Donald Teranishi designed a new logo for use by the JSBTC. The logo incorporates a wisteria symbol and the colours purple and gold that are synonymous with Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. The serif font was chosen to keep the look of the logo timeless and classic, and all upper-case letters is a more established look. The new logo is featured in the masthead of the new JSBTC web site and it will also be used on JSBTC letterhead and business cards.

The JSBTC Board would like to express its sincere gratitude to Donald for donating his time towards this important undertaking.

Donald is from Winnipeg. He also developed the logo for the Japanese Cultural Association of Manitoba.

New JSBTC Web Site

Robert Miyai designed, developed and launched a new mobile friendly web site for the JBTC. It includes links to member temple web sites or Facebook pages. The new site is located at www.jsbtc.ca. The new web site can also be accessed using the old domain names www.livingdharmacentre.ca and www.bcc.ca.

The JSBTC Board would like to express its sincere gratitude to Robert for donating his time towards this important undertaking.

Robert sits on the Board of the Manitoba Buddhist Temple. He also developed the web site for the Manitoba Buddhist Temple.

WF Dana Donations for 2020

Every year, the Women's Federation sponsors Dana Day at the Temples. All funds donated on that day go towards national charitable causes supported by the WF. However, this year, with the Temples being closed, the WF asked those Temples with active WF groups to donate any funds raised to local charities. Congratulations to the following WF groups for their support:

- Toronto Buddhist Church SF and Dana – Daily Bread Food Bank
- Vernon - The Vernon Hospice Society
- Fraser Valley - Archway Community Services which is part of the Abbotsford Food Bank.
- Steveston – Red Cross and the Richmond Food Bank
- Kelowna – Central Okanagan Community Food Bank
- Manitoba - Agape Table
- Hamilton – Food Banks of Canada

Shirley Tanemura and Maureen Hatanaka from Kelowna Buddhist Temple present a cheque for \$750 to the Central Okanagan Community Food Bank.



Ongoing Communications

When we started working on the Nenju News two years ago, the plan was to provide regular information about the activities of the JSBTC, to reach more than the people who might attend the AGM as temple delegates, and to share stories from the Canadian temples. No one could have foreseen just how important national communication would become sixteen months after that first issue. This is now the third issue of the Nenju News to come out during the pandemic; one issue was even a special COVID edition!

The JSBTC Board, Socho and the Ministers realize that it is critical that the Canadian kyodan continues to be connected and that we continue to support one another. While our ministers' first obligation is to their home temples, they are now providing advice and solace and spreading the dharma well beyond the physical walls of their temples. The JSBTC through the Living Dharma Centre is maintaining its assistance to temples for upgrades to audio visual equipment and software.

The JSBTC is also working on building the national Sangha. In addition the Nenju News, we have had a national Obon service in July and a special guest lecture with Bishop Harada of the BCA at the end of September. Socho has planned two more national guest lectures on Zoom for December and February—STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILS!

Services continue on various social media platforms, and we have access to services and lectures in the US and in Hawaii.

As well, the Board has discussed how to reach out to members who do not have computer or internet access. We thought that these members might appreciate short printed material that connects them to the Dharma and to the Temples. To that end, we decided to draft a one (two-sided) page of material ("*Dharma to Your Doorstep*") which the temples could print for mailing to those members, perhaps with the temples' printed newsletters. The next page (Page 11) is our first *Dharma to Your Doorstep*. We hope that this supplements the temples' own outreach to these members. This is another area where volunteer help from various temples would be very greatly appreciated, because we need your help to build on this idea or identify other possible strategies. Buddhist Churches of America is also considering how to reach such members, and has implemented its *Dial the Dharma* program which is also available to Canadians.

Finally, here is a reminder of links to various services online:

Socho Aoki's Dharma messages to YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-Gw4NTDSEjB9Skua6TMLg>
Many of the services are broadcast live on the YouTube channel at 10:30am Sunday mornings.

Rev. Grant in Steveston is holding a Zoom service every Sunday morning at 10:00 am PDT. To receive an invitation to participate in the Zoom call and receive reminders, email: info@steveston-temple.ca
Website: <http://steveston-temple.ca/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Steveston-Buddhist-Temple-136413149761882/>

Calgary Buddhist Temple holds regular online Sunday Services starting at 10:00 am MDT by live streaming from Calgary Buddhist (Jodo Shinshu) Temple Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CalgaryBuddhistTemple/>
Sensei Robert is also live streaming a daily evening service/mediation starting at 9:00 pm MDT using Calgary's Facebook page.
Sunday Services are on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtW0VjcC02o98KL_EWF8wrg

Dr. Roland Ikuta (President, BTSA) has posted a series of ten short videos, "10 Things to do to cope with COVID-19." The videos can be found on the BTSA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BuddhistTempleOfSouthernAlberta>
In addition, BTSA has started a series of podcasts called "A Buddhist Life": <https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/a-buddhist-life/id1525943674>

Buddhist Churches of America live streaming and recorded video link: <https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/live-streaming-and-recorded-temple-services/>

Hawaii: <https://hongwanjihawaii.com/>

Dharma to Your Doorstep

A Dose of Dharma for the Temples

We hope that these Dharma stories will keep you engaged and close to the Dharma and to our Sangha across Canada.

Our first Dharma message is from Rev. Yasuo Izumi (resident minister of the Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta in Lethbridge) who is celebrating his 50th year of teaching the Dharma and serving the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada in Vancouver, Toronto, and Lethbridge.

Simply Ordinary People

One bright and quiet Sunday morning I was walking to the temple. On the way I saw a young couple and two toddlers in the front yard of their home. I had never met them before. Each toddler was playing happily on their parent's lap, talking and laughing. The mother saw me and said, "Hi" with a smile. I said "Good morning!" This was a moment of peace and joy – a genuinely happy moment for me. I thought that Buddha's world might be like this. I continued walking. After a few blocks, I heard sounds coming from a house I was about to pass. As I got closer, I could discern that the sounds were harsh and quarrelsome. First I heard the yelling of a man, then that of a woman, followed by the yelling of a child. As I continued walking I soon saw a police car approaching the house.

In a very short span of time, I saw both happy people smiling and laughing and heard angry people yelling and fighting. I thought to myself, "This is life". Nobody really wants to fight, yell and quarrel. Everyone wants a peaceful and happy life. However, our lives have ups and downs due to our selfish mind. We are neither perfect nor enlightened. Prince Shotoku (574 – 622) a respected Japanese teacher said, "**We are not unquestionably sages, nor are they unquestionably fools. Both of us are simply ordinary men.**"

Because we are imperfect and unenlightened ordinary people, Amida's true light, life, wisdom and compassion never cease to work and guide us to the realm of true awakening. How fortunate we are. In deep gratitude and joy we respond to Amida's life uttering "Namo Amida Butsu" (I take refuge in Amida's Life). *Dharma: My Guiding Light No. 7, p.18*

Snapshots of Dharma

From Sensei Fred Ulrich (former resident minister at Manitoba Buddhist Temple, now retired):

Death??

The Great Going Forth.

How Grateful!!

From Dhammapada Verses, BDK:

The ignorant person who knows that he is ignorant is still wise;
the ignorant one who thinks that he is wise is indeed a fool.

From the Zen poet, Ryokan:

Like the little stream
Making its way
Through the mossy crevices
I, too quietly
Turn clear and transparent.

....and from Bishop Tatsuya Aoki:

**"Each and everyone of us is a
Living Dharma Centre."**