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GEPPPO

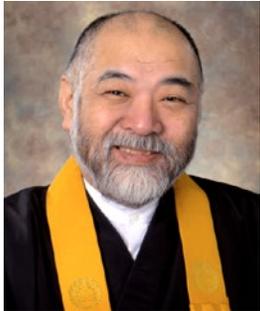
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AUGUST
2020

"BE MINDFUL. BE GRATEFUL. BE POSITIVE. BE TRUE. BE KIND." - Roy T. Bennett, *The Light in the Heart*

REV. KAKEI NAKAGAWA, Rinban



Post Hiroshima 76th (PH 76)

The atomic bomb was dropped on downtown Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, instantly killing tens of thousands of people, evaporating more than 140,000 people. It centered on the A-bomb memorial dome (a.k.a. Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall) within a few days. The thousands of survivors directly hit by

the A-bomb, as well as the first suburban responders, consecutively died caused by the nuclear radiation during the next decades.

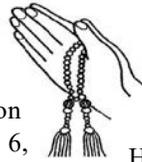
But few know the fact that many Americans such as elementary school, junior high school and high school students lost their lives. They were all 2nd generation American-Japanese-Ancestry. 'Nisei' boys and girls who were staying at the grandparents' place to receive basic education. And many P.O.W. American Army Officers were sacrificed under this genocidal bombing campaign. We can never forget this brutal act.

A.D. 2020 = P.H.(Post-Hiroshima) 76th. It is 75 years after "A" Day – almost two generations have passed, but people do not seem to realize the true impact of it yet. But the citizens of Hiroshima, who survived through that hell and a few deep-thinking people who had been living in other parts of the world, had recognized a certain fact.

That day under a blinding flash, which surpassed the brightness of the sun, we human beings entered into A NEW ERA against our will. We human beings, Homo sapiens, during the long ages have been living our lives merely foreboding death as individuals. But since "that" day we must realize a foreboding of the biological death of the entire species. Our real-self came into view in a moment for the first time but, at the present time, we still don't recognize our deadly foolishness that may cause the total downfall of all species on the earth itself.

Since that day, we have experienced additional tragedies due to nuclear technology in Nagasaki, Nevada, New Mexico, Chelyabinsk (Russia), Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Iraq, and Fukushima, etc., recently polluted as an accident of a nuclear reactor and as an experimental site for newly developed nuclear weapons from PH 01 to PH 76.

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REV. KAZ NAKATA

Reaching out to as many Sangha members as possible

Hello, all Central California Sangha friends! This is my fifth Newsletter article after the stay at home/shelter-in-place orders were enacted. How are you adapting to the new normal life? Are you getting used to it?



August is my anniversary month. Yes, it is my birth month, but more importantly it is the month that I was assigned to the Central California District. I still clearly remember that it was 105 degree here in Fresno on July 26, 2019. Gary Mukai from Fowler generously volunteered to drive a 26-foot U-Haul Truck (it was like a Transformer Convoy!) from Los Angeles to Fresno. There was more than a dozen of the Central Cal Sangha friends that arrived at my new residence to unload furniture and my toys!! Without their support, I would not have been able to manage my move. I really appreciated it.

As a CC District Minister, I have driven up to Merced and down to Bakersfield, the area we cover as a minister serving area of CC. I have met thousands of people since last August. I have always tried to accommodate their needs by sensing their feelings. As many as possible, I try to accept invitations for the family luncheons to see and visit with Sangha members.

One person walked up to me after I conducted a service in Bakersfield. The person said "I used to attend the Bakersfield church. After the closure of the church, I have not had a chance to hear a minister's talk for a long time. Your talk was pretty good today because I recalled my church memories." I said to the person, "thank you so much for attending the service and for listening to my talk. I am so glad to hear that I was able to bring back fond memories again."

There are several care homes and assisted living facilities where our senior Sangha members reside in CC, to which I have visited in the last 12 months. Sangha members at the facilities offer coffee and tea (and snack!) after a monthly service. I enjoy chatting with them for an hour or sometime two hours, after the "short" monthly service. They usually share stories of their active ages. I have even heard love stories of the 1960s. At the time, McDonald was an awesome spot for dating, spending 70 cents for two meals. What a great value!

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Rev. Nakagawa, continued

There was not one year in which there wasn't a possibility for nuclear-related disaster. We should recognize that we have a huge scientific power that can physically destroy this planet hundreds of times over. We should also notice that the human mind has not developed conspicuously since 5000 years ago when the first human civilization was occurred—only the greed that is based on blind feelings due to fear of death has burst forth to become a gigantic monster as such. Yes, these are the same follies responsible for many sorts of environmental destruction, such as depletion of the ozone layer by Freon gas, etc. Currently, the whole world is now actually suffering.

Human's act of stupidity never stopped since THAT HOT SUMMER DAY.

The ominous testing of nuclear weapons, non-self-control new technology, and the roar of economic greed have drowned out the voices of Hiroshima calling out, "No more Hiroshimas!", preventing this message from being heard throughout the world.

As Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists, each of us has to bear in mind that greater than 90% of the victims who perished or were wounded in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist followers, definitely our Dharma friends. And after 'that' day we certainly must have recognized, as followers of the Buddha-dharma, that a mere personal liberation means there is no meaning of life in this world anymore.

Our basic ideas have changed certainly from "Death as an Individual Human" to "Death as a Human-Species." This changing of ideas must bring about a real epoch. As followers of the Buddha-dharma, we ought to become conscious of "Death as a Human-Species." And, our desire for salvation should extend to "Liberation of all beings." We can no longer be satisfied without complete liberation that is Buddha's intent. This is obviously the original way of the Bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

This deep consciousness of ours has already been entered upon with Buddha here now!

At the end, I present a poem of Rabindranath Tagore that we can only think was written for us in the 21st century.

O Serene, O Free, Lord Buddha, The Awakened One

By Rabindranath Tagore

The world today is wild with the delirium of hatred.
the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish,
crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed.
All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine,
O Thou of boundless life,
save them, rouse thine eternal voice of hope,
let Love's lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey
open its petals in thy light.

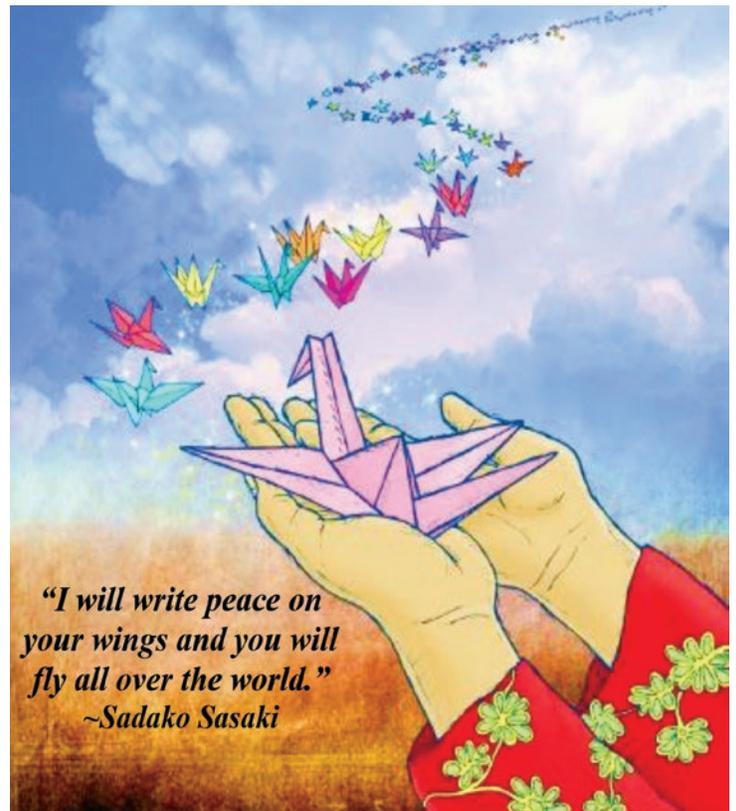
O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.

Man's heart is anguished with the fever of unrest,
with the poison of self-seeking,
with a thirst that knows no end.

Countries far and wide flaunt on their foreheads
the blood-red mark of hatred.

Touch them with thy right hand,
make them one in spirit,
bring harmony into their life,
bring rhythm of beauty.

O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.



Rev. Kaz, continued

While reaching out many Sangha members, some have made the difficult decision to close their community. Dinuba Buddhist Church, providing longtime dedication to the local community and Central Cal District, hosted its final service November 2019 to which many CC leaders attended. I had a chance to talk to one of the founding member's families after the service. They had a black and white photo taken in 1927, when Dinuba celebrated its Hondo building dedication. One of the family members pointed to a kimono-clad girl in the photo and said "the little girl was my Ba-achan (grandmother). She was raised in Dinuba and later moved away." When the grandmother was a little girl, she attended the church grand-opening ceremony. 92 years later, her children and grandchildren observed its closing ceremony. Before the little girl (Ba-achan) passed away, I occasionally met her and listened to her stories. This personal experience made the closing service more meaningful. On the other hand, one of our branch temples, Kingsburg Buddhist Church chose to revitalize. After moving to CC, I started monthly Dharma discussions at the church. It is a small gathering, but all attendees are eager to learn the Buddha Dharma. There is no penalty or punishment even if people do not attend Services in our Buddhist tradition. It is rare to meet people who say, "we seriously want to hear the teachings."

For the first 7 months of my assignment, I drove around the Central Valley and reached out to as many Sangha members as possible. Then, as you know, we encountered the pandemic in March. Right after the announcement of shelter in place, we quickly started streaming, online Sunday Services for continuity of our Buddhist tradition and ministerial duty. For those unable to go out during the pandemic and for those not familiar with the internet, I distributed a recorded Sunday Service DVD to CC temple/church for their Sangha members. Burning hundreds of DVDs became part of my monthly routine.

I have started hearing "I miss going to the church" and "I miss my church friends." Currently, Rinban and I provide the Streaming Services through Twitter. I decided to add Zoom video streaming for the Sangha participants to "gather", to see and talk to each other. This means we will have two cameras capturing our chanting and Dharma talk. Twitter streaming will be continuously provided for public viewing. When I presented this idea at the Parlier Board meeting, they favorably agreed to try their virtual Parlier Sangha gathering on Zoom. I am writing this article on July 19, and our first Zoom gathering from Parlier Buddhist Church will be on July 26. I hope it will go well.

It might have been the middle of March when you last saw your temple/church friends. I feel that it is my duty to re-connect Sangha with each other. It is my hope that many temples/churches participate in this Zoom project to reach out to their Sangha members and to restart their social gathering online. There is no result if we only complain about the current situation. The 1st year of my assignment at CC was challenging but I was able to overcome many because of your help and support. In my first year, I tried my best to provide enthusiasm throughout the Central Valley, and I will continue to do so in my 2nd year. Please continue to support your Central California Temple and Churches.