



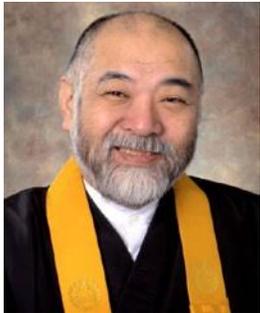
VOLUME 55
ISSUE 10

Website: www.fresnobuddhisttemple.org

OCTOBER
2020

“LIFE MOVES PRETTY FAST. IF YOU DON’T STOP AND LOOK AROUND ONCE IN A WHILE,
YOU COULD MISS IT.” - Ferris Bueller

REV. KAKEI NAKAGAWA, Rinban



Shô-ga-nai-ken-nô does NOT mean Shikata-ga-nai

For some time, I’ve always wanted to resolve that misunderstanding.

From 150 to 100 years ago, our Japanese-American community, who immigrated from Japan, a country that speaks a completely different language, became English-speaking Americans. This difference in languages has resulted in many cultural misconceptions based on Lost in Translation. Most of them are settled as smileys now, but some of those Lost in Translations are obviously harmful to the new generations in forming their identity as Americans of Japanese ancestry.

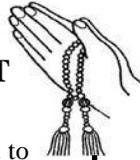
The first thing that must be mentioned is the word, “Shikata-ga-nai,” that is still used in Japanese, even in the third and fourth generations. In most cases, it is used as words of resignation; for example, Japanese-Americans detained in Concentration Camps during World War II were despaired in a difficult reality—shikata-ga-nai. This is the example that creates the most misunderstanding today. It has become a word that expresses the negativeness of Japanese Americans. This is a curse made by Lost in Translation; a curse that must be unraveled.

This is the historical fact: Most of the Issei of Japanese immigrants did not speak the standard language centered on the Tokyo area, which is “Shikata-ga-nai.” They used dialects from the western part of the Japanese archipelago, such as “Shô-ga-nai-ken,” “Shô-ga-nai-ken-nô,” and “Shô-ga-na-ka-rô.” Especially for the Issei from Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, and Shimane prefectures, who were the core of California immigrants, “Shô-ga-nai-keh-nô,” was the most common. The contents are decisively different between “Shikata-ga-nai” and “Shô-ga-nai-keh-nô.”

“Shikata-ga-nai” is a word of complete resignation, looking up at the sky with both hands up. That pose means, “I can’t help it,” or “There is nothing for it but to accept.”

Instead, “Shô-ga-nai-ken-nô” is the word that comes out when they look down, focusing on the point with their arms crossed and recognizing the desperate situation, but thinking about possible ways to solve it.

Continued on Page 2, left column



REV. KAZ NAKATA



It’s never too late to start doing something new

Hello, all Central California Sangha friends! Although we are limited to conduct only outdoor activities, there were three unique activities in September. Did you follow all of them? If you missed viewing them, please access our Central California Nishi Hongwanji Twitter site:

@Fresno_Nishi, where all our activities are streamed and recorded. You can find these video clips on the site. Even if you are not able to access the internet, do not worry. I will not exclude anyone who like to see what our O-tera (temple/church) are doing! I will make DVD and give it to your Temple/Church leaders, and they will deliver it to you for playing at home!

For the first unique activity in September, the first virtual 2020-2021 Dharma School began on September 20th. During the Summer break, both Rinban Nakagawa and I conducted a short Sunday Service every week from all the CC temples and church altars. I express my deepest appreciation to all temple and church leaders for their support while we conducted our streaming Sunday services. Rinban Nakagawa provided several unique Buddhist sutra texts for chanting, so that we could learn more on Jodo Shinshu Buddhist teachings. While we continue Streaming Sunday Services, both Rinban Nakagawa and I deliver Dharma talks every Sunday except for Special Service Sundays. I will speak for Dharma School students with my puppet, and Rinban Nakagawa will give his message for adults. Hopefully, our messages will deepen your understanding of the Dharma and will help you feel more peaceful and calmer in the Pandemic situation.

Do you think it is too late to challenge new things at temple/church? I do not think so. Look what Kingsburg Buddhist Church did for its historic event. Some readers may wonder where the church is located. It is a part of our Central California Nishi Hongwanji temples but more precisely, the church is a branch temple of the Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple. Many branch temples of the Fresno Betsuin have merged or closed in the past. The Kingsburg is the last remaining branch temple with the Hondo structure in Central Cal. It is located south of Selma, in the Swedish village town.

Continued on Page 2, right column

Rev. Nakagawa, continued from page 1

That contrasting pose means: “It’s a first-time experience; no data cannot help...” or “Well, let me see....”

Residents in 16th century Japan, mainly farmers of the Republic of Hongwanji who were facing genocidal attack by the absolute dictator, Oda Nobunaga, spoke the same words:

“Shô-ga-nai-ken-nô...well, let me see...OK, TAKE HIS HEAD!”

Nobunaga’s ambitions were crushed by a long-running draw for the next 10 years. (I won’t discuss here whether it is good or bad for Buddhists to have a war.)

The Republic of Jodo Shinshu, which started by rejecting the royal power in the 15th century in the Jodo Shinshu region and after maintaining a unique system for over 100 years, unfortunately, was incorporated into the stronger royal power, Tokugawa Shogunate. However, the influence of the royal power was relatively weak, and the spirit of the republic continued to be maintained thereafter.

In the 20th century, America, due to the unreasonableness of the federal government, forced Americans of Japanese ancestry to live in Concentration Camps that violated the Constitution. Isseis and Niseis spoke the same words:

“Shô-ga-nai-keh-nô...well, let me see...GO FOR BROKE!”

For the sake of the mother and for the family, the Nikkei troop, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, continued to perform their duty, even if the casualty rate exceeded 300%. They were never the descendants of the professional “Samurai”; they were the descendants of the Jodo Shinshu peasant rebel army, who almost established a republic system in the 16th century, which appeared again in the 20th century USA.

Jodo Shinshu Buddhists never despair and never give up. We are the successors to the core of Mahayana Buddhism, which Buddha most enthusiastically propagated.

Please never say, “Shikata-ga-nai.”

“Anyone whoever has been born in human form attains Buddha-hood without exception. Moreover, one could attain Buddha-hood moment by moment without interruption and innumerable people would attain Buddha-hood unquestionably. You should never arouse the flinching heart from difficulties.”

[“Mahâyâna Sûtra Lankâra”, Chapter ‘Adhimukti’ – 11]



Rev. Kaz, continued from page 1

In my previous article, I mentioned that we proudly conducted the CC combined Hatsubon Service and the Obon Dance on August 15. It was originally scheduled to be held at the outside ground of Fresno Betsuin Dharma Center, under the guideline of the local health department. However, due to the heat wave warning, we changed the location of the Service and the dance to indoors of the Family Dharma Center. When the plans of the outdoor dance was announced, the members of Kingsburg Buddhist Church expressed interest in participating. Some of them tailored their *Yukata* (Summer Kimono) for their Obon dance participation and they were so excited. Because of the heat wave and the limitation participation for indoor activities, I had to call and tell them that they cannot participate. I felt so bad and could imagine their disappointment.

As a Jodo Shinshu minister, my main mission is to encourage and motivate our sangha members’ interests and enthusiasm. So, I called the president of the Kingsburg Buddhist Church and suggested that we can do Obon dance at Kingsburg if their Sangha members were interested. When we think of Obon, we imagine many food and game booths, taiko drums and the yagura (raised stage) for the Obon dance instructors. Many manpower hours are required to construct these booths and stage. But the origin of the Obon dance was people simply hanging around and dancing together. I told the president, “I have a speaker and a microphone. If we find an Obon dance teacher, we are good to go. We should start with a simple Obon and if later, the Kingsburg members want to make the event bigger, they can put in the efforts needed to draw more people with food and drink.”

So, as the second unique activity in September, the Kingsburg Obon dance was held in the evening of September 20th, the same day that our Dharma School resumed. If you watched the Kingsburg Obon dance, you might have noticed that there were not many helpers. But even so, they had the passion to host the Obon dance. It became their first ever Obon event in Kingsburg. I always encourage and tell Sangha members that the number of helpers or participants is secondary. Most important is our interest, and enthusiasm. As a minister, I can help and assist the growth of temples and I do both as much as possible, but essentially, I need your passion. I hope this Obon dance at Kingsburg will become one of the positive outlooks for the Central Cal Sangha.

For the third unique activity in September, the Central California Combined Fall Ohigan Service will be held at the Manzanar National Historic Site. I write “will be” because this article is being written before the Service takes place. I have many things to write about for this event, so I will include it in the next newsletter. The service will be livestreamed on Twitter so you can watch the service before the next issue of the temple newsletter is published.

It’s never too late to start doing something new.

I discussed at several CC board meetings, the possibility of food fundraisers (for pickup or drive-thru). Some of our temple and churches had to cancel their fundraisers due to the shelter in place order, and/or the temporary closures.

Continued on Page 5, top left column

Rev. Kaz, continued from page 2

I personally wanted to help our temples and churches as they mainly provided dine-in fundraisers, so I suggested a pickup and/or drive-thru fundraisers instead. After discussions at the board meetings, I was accepted to help Reedley and Fresno with their food fundraisers for this fall. Please check the details of their fundraisers in their respective newsletters. I also plan to have a second snack bag fundraiser. This time, I will wrap snacks with clear wrapping, so you can use it as a holiday gift for your loved ones.

It is always good to learn our Buddhist teachings from books, however, it is also important to experience the essence of Namu Amida Butsu through someone's deed of reverence to the teachings. The saying of Namu Amida Butsu is an expression of deepest gratitude to all sentient beings. Thus, it is not a prayer's word to a higher being. I will try my best to maintain all CC temples and churches, so please continue to support your local temple and church. I recite Namu Amida Butsu to all of you. I really appreciate your help and support.

Gassho.