

The Fresno Buddhist Church

Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple

GEPPŌ



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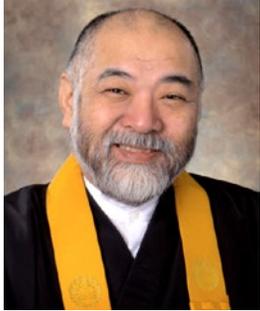
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“BE MINDFUL. BE GRATEFUL. BE POSITIVE. BE TRUE. BE KIND.” - Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

REV. KAKEI NAKAGAWA, Rinban



Kikyo-shiki Affirmation Ceremony

As the Fresno Betsuin Sangha anxiously awaits the completion of the Hondo, plans are currently underway for the Grand Opening service and celebration. My original thought was to conduct a “Kikyo-shiki Affirmation Ceremony” as part of the opening service but due to time

constraints and capacity limitations, the ceremony will take place on a different date, with date and time still to be determined.

For the Central California District, receiving this “Kikyô-shiki” will be a condition for the direct conferral of the Dharma name at the time of the official visitation of His Eminence Monshu Kôjun Ohtani of Nishi Honganji to the United States after the end of this current pandemic.

The “Kikyô-shiki” Affirmation Ceremony is an important ceremony to make the vow to become a disciple of the Buddha and to live in the Buddha-dharma. Before Amida Tathâgata, the image of Namu-Amita-abha,* one renews one’s consciousness as a member of Shin Buddhism, the Mainstream Mahâyâna Tradition, undergo “Okamisorî,” the act of symbolically shaving the hair, and receive the Dharma name of “Shaku _ _”.

The Dharma name you receive is a global sign that you are a disciple of the Buddha.

The Dharma name begins with the character “Shaku (釋)” and is expressed with three characters, including the two characters of one’s buddhist name. Incidentally, the character “Shaku” is the surname of Sâkyamuni Buddha, symbolically indicating that one has become a member of Buddha’s family.

Incidentally, in Shin Buddhism, the “Dharma name (Hô-myô)” is given to those who have emerged individuals with Buddha-nature by the working of Buddha’s Amita-abha, while in most of other schools, the “Precept name (Kai-myô)” is given to those who follow the strict precepts and follow the same path of Sâkyamuni Buddha.

Neither of these names is originally intended to be a memorial service for the deceased.

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Gaku Butsu Dai Hi Shin –

Current situation of Adult Buddhist Education and Youth Buddhist Education in Central California

REV. KAZ NAKATA



Hello, all Central California Sangha friends! It is a Flaming Hot Summer! Ah-Tsu-eeee!! This is my third Summer since I have moved to Central Cal in 2019. I mow my own lawn. In May, I was doing it late afternoon. Now I must start yardwork in the early morning and finish by 9am. I am gradually learning how to deal with the hot summer.

Last month, some Central California temples and Churches hosted in-person Hatsubon/Obon Service and, or Obon Dance activities. I posted some pictures and videos from our Obon activities on Twitter. Please view them if you missed those.

I usually write an article on one of eight essential teachings of Jodo Shinshu. I have written 4 articles on this topic so far and I plan to continue writing another 4 articles. But in this article, I am writing on a different topic: “Gaku Butsu Dai Hi Shin.” Have you seen this word somewhere in the Central Cal temples or churches? If you are a Parlier Sangha member, you cannot say you do not know, unless you have never attended activities at Parlier Buddhist Church. In front of the entrance of the church, there is a stone monument (left to the entrance). The word, “Gaku Butsu Dai Hi Shin” is engraved on the front surface of the monument, and appears with Kanji letters, 学佛大非心 on it.

When I studied Jodo Shinshu at Ryukoku University in Kyoto (founded in 1639 for the purpose of ministerial training), one of my professors, Risho Ohta *Kangaku* told me that Gaku Butsu Dai Hi Shin is one of the most important activities for Jodo Shinshu Sangha. I was a freshman at that time, so I did not know what he meant. When I was a junior, I had a chance to research Zendo, (Shan-Dao), one of the seven masters in Jodo Shinshu. I found the word Gaku Butsu Dai Hi Shin in his commentary on the *Contemplation Sutra* of Jodo Shinshu.

Gaku Butsu Dai Hi Shin appears as a part of an introduction to his commentary and the introduction is known as Ki San Po Ge (Gatha of Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures).

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This is a once-in-decades opportunity to officially become a member of the world Dharma Sangha and receive an official Buddhist name in the Central California, U.S.A.

Please watch for more information on this ceremony. Soon, applications will be made available to anyone wishing to receive their Dharma name.

* Namu-Amita-abha (*Namomitâbha* in ancient Indian): “Namu” means ‘Entrusting oneself’ and “Amita-abha” means ‘The (Buddha’s) merciful wisdom and kindness which contains the nature of boundless-light’

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It is used at a traditional funeral service with a casket. So, if you have attended these services, you have probably heard it being chanted. Now I would like to share the meaning of Gaku Butsu Dai Hi Shin, explained by Jitsuen Kakehashi *Kangaku*. He is one of my favorite Jodo Shinshu Scholars. He states:

“the word is expressed by Zendo to honor and respect people who live a life of the Buddhist way, and it means People who are always eager to learn (Gaku) the heart (Shin) of great (Dai) compassion (Ji Hi) of the Buddha, as a lifelong student. Learning the Buddhist way equals to learning the heart of great compassion as the Buddha’s intention. Hi is an abbreviation of Ji Hi, compassion. Ji is a wishing will or heart to guide all sentient beings to the state of equanimity, which is transcending human desires and hatred. Hi means empathy for pain of all sentient beings. The teaching of Amitabha Tathagata embraces us with the heart of great wishing will (Dai Ji) and great empathy (Dai Hi), and it guides us all to the state of equanimity, pure realm which has no boundaries between supporter and opposer.”

Since I have become a minister, I have always had an ambition to share the Buddhist teaching with as many people as possible. I initially started a weekly Adult Buddhist Study class at Sacramento Buddhist Church in 2004. Since then, I have held the Study class or lecture at various locations, includes at a Public-School Teachers’ Association, VA hospitals, the White House and the office of the Congress. I have conducted adult discussions right after Sunday Services since being assigned to the Central Cal district. I announced a plan of a district level Adult Buddhist Education in 2020, and started it this January. For the spring semester, more than 20 people participated in classes, and half of the participants were registered as Ministerial Assistants at CC temples and churches. I hope they have encountered and understand Gaku Butsu Dai Hi Shin through classes. I hope more and more people will join in this wonderful opportunity to reach the state of equanimity.

I also put extra effort into Youth education for the last 9 years. Currently, I teach weekly Applied Jodo Shinshu Buddhist studies to middle school and high school students (now on summer break). It is a 2-year or 72-hour credit course. They learn Buddhist teaching in Sanskrit (original text language in India), Chinese, Tibetan, Japanese, and English. You may wonder why they are learning in so many languages. The reason is that there are so many misconceptions or misinterpretations of Buddhism in English. I asked these students to write an essay on the Buddhist teaching after they spent more than 30-hours study which included their homework. I am so honored and pleased to read their essays, because they properly understand the Buddhist teaching. It indicates that our Buddhist teaching and society will continue to 22nd Century! I am including Makayla Kubo’s essay in this issue. You may notice some differences between how you understand Buddhism and her explanation on Buddhism. I am sure you will enjoy her essay and feel confident that we as Central Cal has a bright future with the youngsters!

Gassho.