

Funeral Information

A Guide to Planning a Buddhist Funeral



Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple

April, 2011

PREFACE

“My disciples, my end is approaching, our parting is near, but do not lament. Life is ever changing; none can escape the dissolution of the body. This I am now to show by my own death, my body falling apart like a dilapidated cart.”

“Do not vainly lament but realize that nothing is permanent and learn from it the emptiness of human life. Do not cherish the unworthy desire that the changeable might become unchanging.”

“The demon of worldly desires is always seeking chances to deceive the mind. If a viper lives in your room and you wish to have a peaceful sleep, you must first chase it out.”

“You must break the bonds of worldly passions and drive them away as you would a viper. You must positively protect your own mind.”

“My disciples, my last moment has come, but do not forget that death is only the end of the physical body. The body was born from parents and was nourished by food; just as inevitable are sickness and death.”

“But the true Buddha is not a human body: - it is Enlightenment. A human body must die, but the Wisdom of Enlightenment will exist forever in the truth of the Dharma and in the practice of the Dharma. He who sees merely my body does not truly see me. Only he who accepts my teaching truly sees me.”

“After my death, the Dharma shall be your teacher. Follow the Dharma and you will be true to me.”

“During the last forty-five years of my life, I have withheld nothing from my teachings. There is no secret teaching, no hidden meaning; everything has been taught openly and clearly. My dear disciples, this is the end. In a moment, I shall be passing into Nirvana. This is my instruction.”

From the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*

On behalf of the Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple ministerial and staff, we extend our heartfelt condolences to you and your family on the passing of your loved one.

Shakya-muni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism taught that those who see only his body do not truly see him. Those who accept his teaching truly see him. With true love and compassion, your beloved has now become one borne into the Pure Land. Hear their voiceless voice as they speak to you from the Buddha's Land.

Gassho,

Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple

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PART I
GENERAL CHECKLIST

- A. IMMEDIATELY AFTER A DEATH OCCURS
1. Contact the doctor and/or coroner.
 2. Contact minister(s).
 3. Contact a mortuary.
 4. Contact relatives and close friends.
 5. Make arrangements with the minister for a *Makuragyo* (bedside) Service. *Optional*
- B. MAKING *SOSHIKI* (FUNERAL) ARRANGEMENTS
1. Select someone to act on behalf of the family.
 2. Meet with temple *soshiki* committee.
 3. Hold the *soshiki* service.
 4. Hold the *Shonanoka* (First Seventh-day Service). *Optional or may be combined with funeral.*
 5. Consider Otoki (lunch/dinner) time/location. *Optional*
- C. AFTER THE *SOSHIKI*
1. Send acknowledgements.
 2. Settle expenses and financial obligations.
 3. Arrange subsequent memorial services.

A. IMMEDIATELY AFTER A DEATH OCCURS

1. CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR AND/OR CORONER
 - a. It is required by law to contact the proper authorities in the event of any death. This may be facility staff, doctor, coroner and/or mortuary.
2. CONTACT THE MINISTER.
 - a. Contact a minister of his/her temple. If the minister cannot be reached, contact your district chairperson, office staff or temple president.
 - b. When your minister is notified, he or she will come to conduct the *Makuragyo* service. The brief *Makuragyo* service is conducted immediately after death or at on a later date, to be arranged with the family. This service may be conducted at a temple, home, health facility, or funeral home. Usually, only immediate family members attend, although invited close friends and other family members may also attend. Please see page 15 for explanation of *Makuragyo*.
 - c. When contacting the minister, be sure to clearly give your own name and the name of the deceased person.
 - d. Give the exact location of the place of death (the home, the hospital, etc.).

- e. Give clear and accurate directions or arrange to meet the minister and direct him/her to the location.
- f. The minister, temple president, or temple funeral committee chairperson will offer information, advice and/or suggestions concerning necessary procedures and arrangements.
- g. The minister and/or mortuary will assist in notifying newspapers such as Nichi Bei Times, Hokubei Mainichi, Fresno Bee, etc., through the Betsuin office. *Optional*

3. CONTACT A MORTUARY

- a. Select a reliable and reputable mortuary. Your health advisor, minister, or temple may assist you.
- b. Necessary information about the deceased may be required by the mortuary:
 - (1) Exact spelling of full, legal name
 - (2) Birth date and birthplace
 - (3) Social Security number
 - (4) Address
 - (5) Length of residence at current address
 - (6) Name of spouse
 - (7) Name and birthplace of father
 - (8) Maiden name and birthplace of mother
 - (9) Cause of death
 - (10) Place of burial or cremation
- c. The mortuary will provide information about and schedule the following:
 - (1) Preparation of the body
 - (2) Casket / Urn
 - (3) Available facilities for funeral, cremation and/or burial services
 - (4) Funeral cortege and cars
 - (5) Cremation or burial arrangement
 - (6) Obituary notices (local papers).
- d. The mortuary may also assist you with the necessary paperwork concerning:
 - (1) Death Certificate(s)
 - (2) Social Security death benefits information
 - (3) Insurance claims
 - (4) Veterans and union benefits
- e. Concerning cremation or burial:

- (1) the choice concerning cremation or burial should be made by the immediate family after considering the following:
 - (i) Wishes of the deceased
 - (ii) Feelings of the family members
 - (iii) Costs – initial and maintenance
 - (iv) Accessibility of final resting place
- (2) After a decision is reached, inform the mortuary and the minister.
- (3) Request the mortuary to submit the “Record of Death” on page 8 to the temple office immediately. Temple office will provide blank form if necessary.

4. CONTACT RELATIVES AND CLOSE FRIENDS

- a. As soon as circumstances allow, notify people by telephone, in person, by telegram or by any other means of immediate communication. Information regarding the *Makuragyo* and/or *Soshiki* service should also be communicated.
- b. Service information given should at least include the date, time, and place of the *Soshiki*.

5. CONTACT THE TEMPLE OFFICE

- a. Provide name of deceased.
- b. Provide name of mortuary to be used.
- b. Arrange for a funeral date.
- c. Arrange for the *Makuragyo* service.

B. MAKING *SOSHIKI* (FUNERAL) ARRANGEMENTS

1. SELECT SOMEONE TO ACT ON BEHALF OF THE FAMILY

- a. Although a member of the immediate family may make all the arrangements concerning the *Soshiki* and other related services, the family may select a dependable person outside of the family to act on its behalf.
- b. The duties of this person are to ensure that all *Soshiki* arrangements are made and conducted according to the wishes of the family.
- c. It is recommended that this person go over a checklist with the family to make certain that no vital details are inadvertently overlooked amid the sorrow and confusion, which may result from the death of a loved one.
- d. This person may coordinate notification of the death, transportation for the family, the activities of the *Soshiki* participants, assembling the *Soshiki* service records, etc.

- e. This person may also compile a personal history of the deceased and if available, obtain the *Homyo*, (Buddhist Name card), to be provided to the minister.

2. MEET WITH TEMPLE *SOSHIKI* COMMITTEE

- a. Our temple and certain districts have a *Shoshiki* committee comprised of temple members who are experienced with planning and conducting *Soshiki* services.
- b. The purpose of meeting with this committee is to help the family to make satisfactory arrangements, plan the program, and to select service participants.
- c. Once all arrangements are completed, contact the Temple and Funeral home for final approval/arrangements by each.

3. MEET WITH THE MINISTER

- a. Discuss/request final arrangements.
- b. Discuss/request *Homyo*, *Ingo*, *Eitaikyo*, etc.
- c. Discuss/request non-temple minister(s)' participation.

4. MEET WITH THE TEMPLE STAFF

- a. Finalize date, time, and place of funeral.
- b. Finalize *manju*, flowers, etc.

5. MEET WITH THE FUNERAL HOME

- a. Finalize date, time, and place of funeral.
- b. Advise of officiating and participating minister(s).
- c. Advise of desired program details (chairperson, representatives, hymns, etc.)

RECORD OF DEATH

DECEASED'S NAME

BUDDHIST NAME

(Japanese) _____

(Japanese) _____

(English) _____

(English) _____

Address _____

Birthplace _____ Date _____ Age _____

Date of Death _____

Next of Kin _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Survived by (sons) _____ (daughters) _____

Makuragyo Service

Location _____ Date _____ Time _____

Officiating Minister(s) _____

Funeral Service

Location _____ Date _____ Time _____

Officiating Minister(s) _____

Mortician _____

Disposition

Interment Location _____ Date _____

Cremation Facility _____ Date _____

Inurnment Location _____ Date _____

Remarks _____

Signature of Officiating Minister

PART II

FUNERAL SERVICE PROGRAM

Tolling of the Bell (Kansho)	Minister
Entry Processional of the Casket/Presentation of the Urn	
Chanting of the Sutra before the Casket	Minister
Ingo Dentatsu (Honorary Posthumous Buddhist Title presentation) <i>if applicable</i>	Minister
Homyo – Presentation of the Buddhist Name	Minister
Chanting of the Sutra Before the Amida Buddha	Minister
Incense Burning (Oshoko)	Family, Relatives and Pallbearers
Opening Address	Chairperson
Incense Burning by representatives	Organizations
Personal History	Family preference
Eulogy/Remembrance	Family preference
Gatha	Sangha (Family of the deceased remain seated)
Dharma Message (Sermon)	Minister/Officiant
Reading of “White Ashes,” the Letter of Rennyō (<i>Gobunsho</i>)	Minister/Officiant
Words of Appreciation	Family preference
Closing Address	Chairperson
Incense Burning	Sangha
Exit Processional of the Casket, if applicable	

SERVICE IN MEMORY OF

DATE OF BIRTH: _____

DATE OF DEATH: _____

SERVICES

Held at: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

OFFICIATING: _____

CHAIRPERSON: _____

ORGANIST/PIANIST: _____

OSHOKO – (Family, Relatives, and Pallbearers)

OSHOKO – (Organizational Representatives) Start with friends, then organizations, district, and lastly, Fresno Betsuin)

EULOGY: _____

TELEGRAMS, if any: _____

GATHA: _____

DHARMA MESSAGE (Japanese): _____

(English): _____

GOBUNSHO: _____

WORDS OF APPRECIATION: _____

CLOSING WORDS: _____

OSHOKO BY SANGHA

INTERMENT OR CREMATION
(Name of Location)

PALLBEARERS:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

USHERS:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

CHOBAs:

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FLOWERS:

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HONORARY PALLBEARERS:

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1. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

- a. Altar flowers and a spray for the casket are provided by the family. Other floral pieces are optional.
- b. *Osonaye* (Manju) is provided by the family.
- c. Arm bands and gloves used by the pallbearers are provided by the mortuary.
- d. Attendance book (usually supplied by the mortuary).
- e. *Koden* (monetary memoriums) book may be provided by the family or the mortuary.
- f. Otoki: Refreshments (lunch/dinner) after the service is provided by the family – optional.
- g. Security – the temple can assist in providing security, if needed.

2. PARTICIPANTS

- a. *Minister(s)*
 1. *officiant: temple minister*
 2. *attendant: assistant to the temple minister*
 3. *participant: other temple/retired minister requested by the family (with the permission of the officiant)*
- b. *Chairperson*. Precedes the progression of the *Soshiki* Service.
- c. *Organist*. Provides music during the prelude, Oshoko by representatives, Gatha, and postlude.
- d. *Personal History Reader (Chairperson or Family preference)*
- e. *Condolence Speaker*. Extends a word of sympathy or gives the eulogy/remembrances. A close friend or family member is usually assigned to this role.
- f. *Words of Appreciation (Shaji) - Representative of the Family*. Expresses, on behalf of the family, words of appreciation for those in attendance, temple, minister, funeral committee, service chairperson, organist, gifts, special support, etc. A relative is usually assigned to this role.
- g. *Floral*. Arranges the floral pieces and keeps a record of the floral donations.
- h. *Ushers*. Four or more persons, as needed (see Usher's Duties).
- i. *Pallbearers*. Usually, six to eight persons to serve under the direction of the funeral director. They should arrive at the site of the *Soshiki* early enough to receive instructions for carrying the casket.
- j. *Reception Desk (uketsuke)*. Four or more persons to receive and record the *Koden* (monetary memoriums) and other donations.
- k. *Honorary Pallbearers*. Honorary members of the family or friends of the deceased usually escort the casket – optional.

- l. *Oshoko*. Burning of incense by representatives of friends, various organizations the deceased engaged in and the temple.
- m. *Telegrams*. Will present the telegrams received and on behalf of those people. (After reading, places the telegrams on the incense table).
- n. *Funeral Home Staff*.

** Note: All participants, except ushers, should arrive at least one hour before the service begins or as advised by funeral home director. Ushers should arrive two hours before the service begins or as advised by funeral committee chairperson. Minister(s) and the Chairperson should arrive 1-1/2 hours before the service begins.*

USHER'S DUTIES

1. Arrive at least 2 hours before the service begins, or as directed by funeral committee chairperson.
2. Arrange the stage before the service. Retrieve the Butsugu articles (altar pieces) from storage closet and arrange on the stage. Arrangement of altar pieces will be reviewed by minister prior to start of service.
3. Arrange chairs according to the expected number of the congregation. Have extra chairs readily available.
4. Greet the Congregation.
5. Distribute programs.
6. Ask members of the congregation to sign guestbook.
7. Guide congregation to their seats, starting at the front, thus accommodating late-comers in the back.
8. After the service, all Ushers shall help the funeral home staff carry floral arrangements to the van for transport to the cemetery or chapel, if applicable.
9. After the service, ushers shall help with the following:
 - a. Give altar flowers and manju to family.
 - b. Place altar articles back into the storage closet.
 - c. Turn off all lights, thermostat, lock all doors.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

MAKURAGYO – *Bedside service*

The *Makurago* is a private family service conducted by a minister following the death of a person. Since it takes place after death, it is considered not a last rite but the beginning of the cycles of memorial rites. Traditionally a sutra was chanted at the deathbed, hence the term *bedside service*. In America, the minister is called to the place of death, to the home, or to the temple or mortuary for the service. The *Makurago* service is usually followed by a meeting of the family members with the minister and mortuary personnel to plan the funeral service. If requested, temple representatives may be present to provide any assistance or advice.

SOSHIKI – *Funeral-ritual*

KANSHO – *Tolling of the bell*

The Kansho begins the funeral service. This is a ritual striking of the bell in the funeral pattern of 7-5-3. The bell is struck seven times, followed by a crescendo and a decrescendo; struck five times, followed by another crescendo and decrescendo; then struck a final three times.

After the ringing of the Kansho, the casket is brought into the Hondo and placed in front of the Naijin. In most cases, the casket is opened. Option: Memorial Service with urn and picture.

KANZEN DOKKYO – *chanting of the sutra before the casket:*

The minister(s) enter the Hondo with the casket and stands in front of the casket, where they will chant: *Sanbujo* (*three-respectful-callings*) from the *Hojisan* of Zendo Daishi. The *Sanbujo* acknowledges the presence of all the manifestations of Truth-Reality at this moment of encounter with death.

The *Sanbujo* is followed by the chanting of the *Kisanboge* (*return-three-treasures-gatha*) found in the *Gengibun* section of the *Kangyosho*. This is a gatha written by the Fifth Patriarch of the Jodoshinshu tradition, Zendo Daishi. The gatha exhorts all to take refuge in the Three Treasures and awaken to the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha. Following the *Kisanboge*, the Nembutsu is chanted in the abbreviated style of *Nam An Da Bu* six times.

Next is the *Ekoku* (*dedicatory-verse*). The verse here is a gatha called the *Gan-ojo-raisan-ge* (*In Praise of Birth in the Pure Land*), written by the First Patriarch of Jodoshinshu, Nagarjuna, which translates:

*I expound on Amida's venerable meritorious deeds,
Whose goodness is as limitless as the waters of the
Ocean. Amida's protecting, pure goodness is bestowed
On all sentient beings for their birth in that country.*

When the Kanzen Dokkyo is completed, ministers except for the chief officiant, will burn incense and enter the Naijin or altar area. The Doshi, or chief officiant, burns incense and remains for the *Ingo Dentatsu and Homyo-juyo*.

INGO DENTATSU – (if applicable) *Introduction of the Honorary Posthumous Buddhist Title:*

* If an *Ingo* is to be presented, it precedes the presentation of the *Homyo*. – All Past Presidents of the Fresno Betsuin will receive an *Ingo*.

HOMYO JUYO — *presentation of the Buddhist name:*

This is a presentation of the *Homyo* or *Buddhist Name* to the deceased if he or she had not received one while alive. If the deceased had been given a Buddhist name, that *Homyo* is read at this time. The *Homyo* is made up of two Chinese characters and is preceded by the character *Shaku* meaning “disciple of the Buddha.”

A *Homyo* card with the deceased’s name, Buddhist name, and vital statistics is then placed in the casket, and another given to the principal mourner. A third copy is kept in the temple records.

The Doshi then enters the *Naijin* to begin the *Butsuzen Dokkyo*.

BUTSUZEN DOKKYO – *Chanting of the sutra before the Amida Buddha:*

The chanting of the sutra before the Buddha now commences. This sutra is *Shoshinge*, written by Shinran Shonin. As the Doshi enters the *Naijin*, the other ministers stand. Led by the Doshi, the ministers chant the first eight lines of the *Shoshinge*, then stop and begin again from the ninth line, sitting down for the remainder of the chanting.

At this point, the family of the deceased, when advised by the ushers/funeral staff, will burn incense, and return to their seats. They are followed in turn by the relatives and pallbearers only. In Buddhist funerals, burning incense is traditionally done first because burning incense symbolizes an offering to the Buddha and clearing one’s mind to receive the Dharma. It is customary to bow as one passes the immediate family after burning incense. When at a loss of words of condolence, this simple bow can be very expressive of your feelings. The casket may be closed under special circumstances. Sometimes, rather than the casket, the cremated remains of the deceased is brought to the funeral service and a picture of the deceased placed in front of the urn.

NEMBUTSU – *reciting-Buddha’s-name:* The *Shoshinge* is followed by chanting the *Nembutsu* six times in unembellished style and six times in embellished style.

WASAN – *Japanese Hymn:* This is followed by the chanting of a *Wasan* (Japanese Hymn) written by Shinran Shonin.

*The Treasure Ocean of virtuous power is filled to Overflowing
Though the defiled waters of deluded passions are not diminished.
The Holy Ones of the Pure Flower of Tathagata are born from
The Flower of True Awakening. They quickly satisfy all the wishes
Of sentient beings.*

EKOKU – *transfer-verse:*

Next is a dedicatory verse (*Ekoku*). The *Ekoku* chanted here is from the last lines of the *Kisamboge* chanted earlier.

*I vow to give equally and to all, this meritorious Truth,
Raising the mind of Bodhi in them and
Awakening them all to the Realm of Serenity and Joy.*

OPENING REMARKS

The chairperson will burn incense and return to podium to begin the opening remarks. He/she should wear the layperson’s *okesa/nenju*.

RYAKUREKI – *personal history:*

The *Ryakureki*, a brief history of the deceased is read, following the gatha and opening address by the Chairperson.

DAIHYO SHOKO – *burning incense by the representatives:*

The *Daihyo Shoko* is the burning of incense by persons representing close friends; representing organizations in which the deceased was a member; representing organizations in which immediate family members are involved; and representing the temple. The Chairperson reads the name of the representative and the name of the organization being represented. The representative will then burn incense, bow to the bereaved family, and return to his/her seat.

CHOJI – *eulogy/condolence-words:*

Though usually mistranslated *eulogy*, the *Choji* are *words of condolence* given by a good friend or family member of the deceased. The eulogy as understood in the United States is technically not a part of the Jodoshinshu tradition and is often omitted, or when given is often, an elaboration of the *Ryakureki*.

GATHA – *Buddhist Hymn:*

The gatha or hymn is always *Nadame*, a hymn of condolence or another Buddhist hymn. The sangha, except family and relatives of the deceased, will be requested to stand.

HOWA – Dharma Message (sermon) or talk given by the minister.

GOBUNSHO READING

The Howa is usually followed by the reading of the *Hokkotsu no Gobunsho*, or *Letter on White Ashes*, written by Rennyo Shonin, the Eighth Monshu of Jodoshinshu. It may be read in the formal chanted style in Japanese, simply read in English, or both. It is customary to Gassho during the reading.

SHAJI – *words of appreciation:*

The funeral ends with words of appreciation to those attending the funeral and to those involved in conducting it and supported/encouraged the family during this difficult time. The *Shaji* is usually given by a relative or close friend of the immediate family.

CLOSING REMARKS

The funeral closes with final words by the Chairperson who also announces the time and place of the burial/cremation, if applicable.

BURNING INCENSE BY THE SANGHA

The chairperson will invite the entire Sangha to burn incense before departing the funeral service.

SHUKKAN – *exit processional of the casket*

The casket is closed and escorted out of the Hondo/funeral site by the pallbearers, led by the ministers and followed by honorary pallbearers, family, and relatives.

CREMATION/BURIAL – *Kaso – fire-burial, Maiso – earth-burial:*

The cremation or burial customarily takes place the after the funeral at the cemetery or hakaba (grave site) officiated by the minister(s).

SHONANUKA (FIRST SEVENTH-DAY) MEMORIAL SERVICE

- a. The Final Service solemnizes the interment or cremation of the deceased.
- b. In the event of a cremation, the service is held at the crematorium chapel. In the event of burial, the service is held at the gravesite before burial.
- c. The service may be open to others or limited to family and close friends.
- d. The *Shonanuka* (First Seventh-Day) Memorial Service is so named because it is held on the seventh day after the death of the individual and is usually combined with the funeral. It is believed in general Buddhism that there was a 49-day interval between the death of a person in this world and the subsequent birth in the next world. Every seventh day, from the first to the forty-ninth, was believed to be a day on which the destination of the deceased was to be considered, depending upon the spiritual value of their previous life's accomplishments. By chanting the sutras and having special services each seventh day, surviving family members hoped to send the deceased to a better birthplace.

In the Jodo Shinshu sect, however, these services have a different significance. They are not for the purpose of enhancing the birthplace of the deceased since their birth into the Pure Land of Amida Buddha is already decided by the power of the Amida Buddha's Vow. Therefore, in Jodo Shinshu, the purpose of these services is to express thankfulness and gratitude to the Amida Buddha, in memory of the deceased.

In modern times, usually only the 7th day and 49th day services are held, rather than observing all seven of the memorial services within the traditional 49-day period. It has become customary practice, for the convenience of those who participate in the *Soshiki* Services, that the 7th day service be held on the same day as the *Soshiki* Service, immediately after the body of the deceased has been sent to the cemetery of the crematory.

AFTER THE SOSHIKI

A. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. The family should make certain acknowledgements to whom have participated in the *Soshiki* Services. The listing below indicates customary types of acknowledgements.

Recommended

Temple or other organizations	Monetary
Minister	Monetary
Organist	Monetary or gift
Chairperson	Gift or card
Person acting on behalf of the family	Gift or card
Pallbearers, ushers, <i>Choba</i> (receptionists)	Card
<i>Koden</i> (Funeral Envelopes)	Card
Flowers	Card

Telegrams	Card
Condolence Speaker	Card
Floral Arranger	Card

2. Acknowledgements should be made as soon as possible after the Soshiki.

B. FINANCES

1. Listed below are usual expenses incurred when a family member passes away.

- a. Casket or urn
- b. Plot, niche, vault or *nokotsudo*
- c. Burial fee
- d. Marker or headstone
- e. Upkeep of final resting place
- f. Death Certificate
- g. Mortuary charges (body preparation, limousine services, etc.)
- h. Flowers (for the shrine: two white bouquets, casket spray, etc.)
- i. *Osonaye* (food offerings: *omanju* or fruit, etc.)
- j. Acknowledgements
- k. Legal paperwork and counsel

C. SUBSEQUENT MEMORIAL SERVICES

1. The tradition of Buddhist memorial services is lined to some of the most basic and fundamental teachings of the Buddha; among these are transiency, interdependence, oneness, and karma.

2. Listed below is the schedule of memorial services generally observed.

Briefly speaking, the significance of having memorial services is:

49th day – *Shikukunichi (Manchuin) memorial service*

According to the Buddhist tradition, every 7 days after his/her death, the deceased family continues to observe the memorial service until 7th, 7 days, namely 49 days.

Although the origin of this service is obscure, it was believed at one time that on the 49th day after death the karmic destination of the deceased would be determined. By observing a special service, the surviving family hoped to eliminate all karmic effects of evil deeds the deceased may have committed during his lifetime, thus eliminating the possibility of having the deceased sent to any of the hells or animal worlds. This service was regarded as very important for the destiny of the deceased.

However, in our Jodo Shinshu sect, one attains birth in the Pure Land of the Amida Buddha through His Vow. Therefore, Nembutsu followers who have

come to rely upon the Name of the Amida Buddha with the mind of *shinjin* are assured birth in the Pure Land immediately after death.

1st circuit – *Isshuki* – *1st-cycle-memorial*:

This is on or near the date of death called *Meinichi* (life-date), one year after the death of a person.

3rd cycle – *Sankaiki* – *3rd-cycle-memorial*:

According to the traditional way of counting, the yearly cycles begin with the *Meinichi* or death date as 1. One year later then, would be cycle 2, two years later would be cycle 3, etc. The *Isshuki* does not refer to the year but to the first round or circuit from *Mei nichu* to *Meinichi*. Thereafter the term used is *kaiki* or *cycle-memorial*. In other words, the 3rd cycle *Hoji* is observed on or near the *Meinichi* 2 years after the death of the person, the 7th cycle, 6 years after death, etc.

7th cycle – *Shichikaiki* – *7th-cycle-memorial*

13th cycle – *Jusankaiki* – *13th-cycle-memorial*

17th cycle – *Jushichikaiki* – *17th-cycle-memorial*

25th cycle – *Nijugokaiki* – *25th-cycle-memorial*

33rd cycle – *Sanjusankaiki* – *33rd-cycle-memorial*

50th cycle – *Gojikkaiki* – *50th-cycle-memorial*

100th cycle – *Hyakkaiki* – *100-cycle-memorial*

Thereafter observances are held at 50-year intervals.

* In BCA history, the Issei tended to use the traditional way of counting for memorial services, birthdays, anniversaries, etc., but not always. Hence temple anniversaries and other traditional observances may or may not always be consistent. It is however, accurate within one year. *Hoji* observances, however, have remained according to the traditional way of counting.

* Other schools of Japanese Buddhism observe the 23rd and 27th cycle *Hoji*. This was combined into one 25th cycle by Jodoshinshu. Today, the *Isshuki* is considered to mark the end of the mourning period. The *Meinichi* of a family member was also traditionally a day of limiting food to vegetarian meals as was also the case on the 16th of each month, the *Meinichi* of Shinran Shonin.

3. As the first-year memorial of the deceased approaches, contact the temple and your minister to arrange for a service before the date of death of the deceased.

4. Our temple holds a *Shotsuki* (monthly) Memorial Service. At this service, family members may burn incense in memory of the deceased. See (section e) above for schedule of memorial services observed.

5. The *Obon* service is a general memorial service held once a year for all those who have passed away since the last *Obon* service. A special effort should be made by family members to attend the first *Obon* service (*Hatsu Bon*) after the death of a loved one.

6. CHUIN – *in the midst-yin*:

Chuin refers to the first 49-day period of mourning after death. It is marked by observances every 7 days until the 49th day.

In the Tantric and popular traditions of Buddhism, the *soul* or karmic energy of a person is believed to be in a suspended state for 49 days before taking another form. Rituals were conducted and offerings to the Buddha were made every 7th day until the 49th day in the hopes of helping the deceased to bring about a higher birth. This 49-day period was a period when which the deceased was thought to be “*in the shadowy world or Yin*”, hence the term in *Chuin*. This belief became deeply rooted in Far Eastern cultures. It was a widespread practice in China by the later T’ang Dynasty and in Japan was observed from the time of the Emperor Kammu (781-806A.D.).

Jodo Shinshu, which categorically denies the efficacy of such observances, nevertheless observes *Chuin* in grateful memory of the deceased and yet another opportunity to listen to the Dharma. In other words, the *Hoji* in Jodoshinshu is not for the sake of the dead but is indeed for the sake of the living. In our remembering the deceased, we acknowledge the influence of the deceased’s Karma on our lives. We are the inheritors of the collective Karma of our ancestors who cause us to meditate on our own mortality and listen more intently to the Dharma.

7. Briefly speaking, the significance of having memorial services is:

- a. To express our gratitude for Amida Buddha and the life of Nembutsu.
- b. For members of the family, relatives, and friends to gather in the name of the deceased person to express thankfulness to him/her and to share their memories.
- c. To be reminded of the impermanence of this world and the value of faith in Amida Buddha in everyday life, since human beings are apt to forget that we are mortal.

d. HOJI – *dharma-affair*:

Hoji is originally a general term for any ritual observance. It has however, come to specifically mean a private family memorial service. The *Hoji* is a system of private memorial observances for members of a given family. Extended members of a family, and sometimes close friends, will gather at a temple or home in memory of a deceased member of the family. Following the service, the family invariably goes out to lunch or dinner or serves a potluck at the home, renewing and strengthening family ties. This custom, along with the Buddhist emphasis on death observances over birth observances, has resulted in the understanding that death is a natural occurrence, no matter how sorrowful it may seem to us. An important by-product of this custom has been the reinforcing of family ties with members beyond one’s immediate family and a sense of continuity from generation to generation.

8. HOMYO CARD – *Buddhist name card*:

The use of a small book called *Kakocho* (*past registry*) for recording the names and dates of one’s ancestors is used. The book is kept in the Butsudan drawer and never in the Butsudan itself. At *Hoji* observed at the temple, the *Homyo* card of the deceased is placed in a holder and put on the altar during the service to indicate who is being remembered. For services at the home Butsudan, the *Kakocho* is removed from the drawer and placed in front of the Butsudan.

PART III
DONATION SCHEDULE

The following are *only suggested amounts* for gratuities and donations. Any amount is very much appreciated. Please note these numbers are consistent with temples throughout the West Coast.

	<u>MEMBER</u>	<u>NON-MEMBER</u>
FUNERAL:		
Temple	\$400.00	\$600.00
Away Services	\$300.00	\$350.00
Ofuse – Minister	\$250.00	\$300.00
Organist	\$ 75.00	\$100.00
Custodian	\$ 75.00	\$100.00
CREMATION / BURIAL SERVICE:		
Temple	\$100.00	\$150.00
Ofuse – Minister	\$100.00	\$200.00
49 DAY AND FAMILY MEMORIAL SERVICE:		
Temple	\$100.00	\$150.00
Ofuse – Minister	\$100.00	\$200.00

Note: A non-dues paying person may not be a member through their parents.

PART IV

THE BUDDHIST ALTAR

A. ALTAR SYMBOLS

The figure of Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Wisdom and Compassion, occupies the central position in the shrine. In some temples and home altars, instead of the statue, a scroll bearing the Japanese characters, *Namo Amida Butsu*, meaning “I place my faith in Amida Buddha,” or a picture of Amida Buddha, occupies the central position.

The adherents of Buddhism do not worship the image of Amida Buddha but bow their heads in reverence before the Wisdom and Compassion of Amida Buddha, which the figure symbolizes.

In many of the larger temples the altar is more elaborate. On the right, facing the altar, hung is a scroll bearing the image of Shinran Shonin (1173-1262), the founder of the Jodo Shinshu (Pure Land) Sect. On the left hangs a picture of the 8th Gomonshu, Chief Abbot Rennyo Shonin (1414-1499) a descendant of Shinran Shonin. In addition to these, there may be others, such as a scroll on the far left depicting the images of the seven masters who contributed the most to the development of the Jodo Shinshu teaching of salvation through the power of Amida’s Wisdom and Compassion. These figures are placed in the altar as a sign of respect and gratitude.

Picture of
Amida Buddha
(Gohonzon)

Picture of
Rennyō Shōnin

Picture of
Shinran Shōnin

Incense Burner

Obuppan
(cooked rice)

Osonae
(Manju offering)



Flower Vase

Uchishiki
(altar cloth)

Incense
Burner

Candle

Record of
the
Deceased
(Kakocho)

Gong

B. ADORNMENTS (*SHOGON*)

The shrine contains many symbols. From the elaborate and fine *yoraku* (overhanging adornments) symbolizing the wonderful trees of the Pure Land, to the huge *rinto* (shrine lamp), each of these has its own origin and meaning. The symbolic articles used in the shrine have their basis in the many sermons of the Buddha (*Shakyamuni*), especially in the three basic sutras of Jodo Shinshu. The shrine, in its entirety, is a human effort to create beauty and harmony depicting the realm of Jodo, or the Pure Land.

- a. **Light.** Light symbolizes the Wisdom of Amida Buddha which drives away the darkness of the human mind. In Jodo Shinshu, this is directly related to the name of Amida Buddha. Amitabha depicts Infinite Light of unobstructible power.
- b. **Incense Burning.** The practice of burning incense is symbolic of purification, as the followers of the Buddha purified their minds and bodies before paying homage to Buddha. At the same time, the smoke rising from the burning incense represents the transiency of all existence. In Jodo Shinshu, for everyday services, the incense sticks are placed horizontally in the incense burner.
- c. **Flowers.** Flowers symbolize the Compassion of Amida Buddha which embraces all human beings without any discrimination. Flowers should be always kept fresh. Artificial flowers are not recommended.
- d. **Monetary and Other Offerings.** Monetary offerings are made to the temple as well as to the ministers. Offerings are made not with the intention of paying for or compensating the services of the minister, but with the feeling of gratitude as “Offertory” or “Dana.” Cooked rice, confections, cakes, and fruits are also offered. Offering fish or any form of animal flesh should be avoided.

C. BUDDHIST ETIQUETTE

Etiquette, in general, is concerned with the refinement of human behavior in relation to the other human beings. Common courtesy, cordially, grace and beauty, along with tradition, are all involved.

Buddhist etiquette takes into consideration this concept of etiquette, but it is more concerned with the refinement of our behavior in relationship to the Buddha, His Teachings, and His Brotherhood.

Thus, while it is necessary for the Buddhists to observe the ordinary rules of good conduct toward others, it is just as important to move with reverence and gratitude in all things regarding the Buddha.

Reverence and gratitude for the Wisdom and Compassion of the Amida Buddha are integral aspects of Buddhist etiquette. Learning and practice of outward gestures alone are empty and meaningless. *Gassho* is meaningful only when it is the Nembutsu in action – when it is the expression of our gratitude and reverence.

When Shinran spoke of “Shomyo Nembutsu” – the actual utterance of the Nembutsu – he meant that it is not enough for one to merely have noble thoughts; the expression of words and action is essential.

The purpose of etiquette in the lives of Buddhists become clear. We are inspired to put into action the reverence and gratitude which we feel toward the Buddha.

While it is true that Buddhists in America cannot adopt all the rules of etiquette as practiced in Japan, there is still much to be said for the perpetuation of some common traditions.

1. **GASSHO**

Gassho means to put the hands together. Both hands are placed palm to palm, with the fingers and thumbs aligned. The *o-nenju* encircles the hands and is held lightly under the thumbs. Both elbows should be close to the body and the hands should be at mid-chest level. When bowing during *gassho*, the arms should be held steadily against the body, while the torso is bent forward from the hips and then back to an upright position.

Gassho is the natural expression of reverence and gratitude.

2. **THE O-NENJU (o-juzu)**

The *o-nenju* encircles the hands during *gassho*, symbolizing our Oneness with Amida Buddha. The *o-nenju* should be always treated with up most respect. At home it should be kept in a special place, such as in a drawer near the family shrine. At other times, the *o-nenju* should be carried in the purse or coat pocket so that it will always be available. During the service, when not in use, the *o-nenju* should be held in the left hand.

3. **O-SHOKO (BURNING OF INCENSE)**

Early Buddhists burned incense as a ritual of purification before approaching a person or object of reverence. The fragrance of the incense is another form of purification, as it drives away unfavorable odors. In Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, it is a symbolic expression of our respect to the Amida Buddha.

O-shoko is performed in the following manner:

- (1) Walk toward the incense burner. Stop two or three steps before the table; bow slightly.
- (2) Step up to the incense burner. With your right hand, take a *tiny* pinch of the ground incense and drop it into the incense burner, over the burning sticks or charcoal. (This need be done once only, and it is not necessary to first bring the incense to your forehead).
- (3) Bow in homage to Amida Buddha in *gassho with nenbutsu recitation*.
- (4) Take two or three steps back, bow lightly, and return to your seat.

4. **USE OF THE SEITEN (AND GATHA BOOKS)**

The *Seiten* contains sacred words and should be handled with proper respect and care. Many *Issei* reverently hold the book with both hands and lift it to their forehead in a gesture of gratitude, or “*itadaku*,” before and after using it. It is hoped that such an attitude of reverence will be perpetuated by succeeding generations.

5. ENTERING AND LEAVING THE *HONDO*

The *hondo* (main temple hall) should be entered quietly and reverently. Upon entering, bow your head slightly and *gassho*, facing the shrine. Take your seat and wait quietly for the service to begin. Avoid being late to service, but when you must enter the *hondo* after the service has started, be especially careful not to disturb the others. Try to find a seat in the back rows. At the doorway, before leaving the *hondo*, turn to face the shrine, bow your head slightly and *gassho*.

6. RECITING OF THE *NEMBUTSU*

Jodo Shinshu is based on the realization of the *Nembutsu*, therefore, the importance of reciting it correctly cannot be overemphasized. “*Namo AmidaButsu*” should be recited clearly and accurately.

(Portions of this booklet have been taken from Shin Buddhist Handbook, published by the Buddhist Churches of America and Death, Rites of Passage published by Senshin Buddhist Temple)

PART V
SUMMARY

Whether after a lengthy illness or a sudden death, the passing of a loved one can be a traumatic and challenging time for any family. This is a time that should be reserved for grieving, reflecting, and meditating.

For this reason, this Guide is offered to assist you and your family in making the final arrangements for your loved one. We recommend that details be discussed and/or written down in advance.

The Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple and its ministers will always be available to assist you and your family. Please contact us if we can be of any assistance.

In Gassho,

Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple