

December 2011

SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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December Events Calendar



Weekly Meditation Services (WMS) are on Wednesday evenings. They begin at 6pm with a discussion or talk (see below for this month's discussion topics). At about 7pm there is a meditation service, followed at 8pm by a potluck supper. All of Wednesday evening's events are open to the public. There is no fee, and reservations are not required.

December Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

7 Rohatsu (Bodhi Day) - is the Buddhist holiday that commemorates the day that the historical Buddha experienced enlightenment. It is celebrated traditionally on the 8th day of the 12th lunar month in East Asian countries. In Japan, it is observed on the Gregorian date of December 8, a result of Westernization during the Meiji Restoration in the 19th century. We will discuss the meaning of this momentous event.

14 Time for Outrage - This is a discussion of Stephan Hessel's thought provoking and much heralded essay. Bill Wilson had read this small book and was so taken by it that he wanted to make it the basis of a Dharma discussion. Bill has purchased ten of these books for people to borrow previous to the discussion. Please borrow a book and prepare yourself for an interesting discussion. We had originally scheduled this discussion for November, but the books were not available with sufficient time to pass them around, so we rescheduled. There is a *New York Times* article about the book and the phenomenon it spawned at the following link:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/10/books/stephane-hessel-93-calls-for-time-of-outrage-in-france.html?pagewanted=all>

21 Jushoku Q&A - Ok - what was that question you had during last month's discussion? Oh yeah, it had to do with . . . Now is the time to write it down so you don't forget it. Ask it during this evening's Q&A session.

28 No Meditation Service this evening - Join us for the New Year's Eve Service.

31 New Year's Eve Service - Gather around 10:30 PM. The Meditation Service is in the hondo, and it begins at 11:15 PM. Following the service we will assemble for a New Year's celebration in the house. Please bring finger foods, appetizers, and drinks that you would like to share. We will have sake and non-alcoholic sparkling beverages as well as soft drinks. The evening's emphasis is on bringing in the New Year in equanimity and celebrating with sangha, friends and family. All are welcome!

Events

3 Sutra Class and Morning Service, 8:30 - 10:30 AM - *Vajrachedika Prajnaparamita Sutra (The Diamond Sutra)*. Please obtain the following book for this class: *The Diamond Sutra: Transforming the Way We Perceive the World*, by Mu Soeng; Wisdom Publications (2000). It is one of the earliest Mahayana Sutras and is considered by many scholars as foundational to subsequent Mahayana thought. The book should be readily available. We are moving along at a breakneck pace. Don't miss this scintillating class!

January 2012 - in Brief

4 Buddhadharma and the Human Condition

7 Sutra Class

11 TBA

18 Meditation as a Practice

25 Q&A with Sensei

27 - 29th Winter Retreat: Hongaku (Original Enlightenment) - Hongaku is a fundamental characteristic of Japanese Butsido. We will discuss the meaning of original enlightenment, but more importantly, we will engage in practices that have at their core the embodiment of Hongaku. The retreat begins at 7:30 on January 27th and ends at about 1 PM on the 29th. Sign-up soon. We have a limited number of attendees to assure personal attention.

Notes

Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji - The number of families who now depend on the food pantry has grown as a direct result of the continued economic recession. There are fewer and fewer resources going to more and more people. Please bring non-perishable food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute on Wednesdays. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry.

Jushoku's Meanderings

The winter solstice is the origin of many common observances cross-culturally, on every continent, in the vast majority of countries. December is filled with common observances in the West, Hanukah, Christmas, Winter Solstice, Kwanza, and of course, Bodhi Day.

Japanese Toji, or Chinese Dongzhi, is one of the most important festivals celebrated in East Asia during the Toji solar period on or around December 21st. It is perceived that leading up to the solstice all beings become progressively weaker with an increase in negative energy. I can attest to this from a personal perspective.

(cont.)



The origins of the Toji festival can be traced back to the yin and yang philosophy of balance and harmony in the cosmos. After this celebration, there will be days with longer daylight hours and therefore an increase in positive energy flowing in. The philosophical significance of this is symbolized by the I Chig hexagram FU (Returning).

In Shinto there were once held festivals to celebrate the reemergence of the mythological Amaterasu, the sun goddess, from her seclusion in a cave. Tricked by the other gods with a loud celebration, she peeked out to look and find the image of herself in a mirror and was thus convinced by the other gods to return, bringing sunlight back to the universe. Requiems for the dead were held and Manzai and Shishimai were performed throughout the night, as the people awaited the sunrise. Aspects of this tradition survive on New Year's in Japan today.

At Tendai Buddhist Institute we decorate the Hondo (main hall) with candles creating a festive sanctuary as we observe Bodhi Day, and have a marvelous New Year's Eve Service. We join together as a sangha during this time when the natural light is in recess, casting radiance on to one another.

Living in a society with many ethnicities and religions we also have an opportunity to celebrate and observe not only our own special traditions, but also those of our friends and neighbors. Use the Toji solar period as an opportunity to be inclusive in your loving kindness toward all sentient beings, and join in all the festivities. Enjoy the holidays.

Gassho . . . [Monshin](#)



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