

March 2018

SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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Jushoku's Meanderings

We put the cart before the horse. Our nation is experiencing political and cultural polarization that is, arguably, the worst we have experienced since the late sixties and early 1970's.

There are many factors, such as 24/7 cable news, social media that escalates and exacerbates hot button issues, rapidly increasing enclaves of like-minded people, the list goes on; they all contribute to this sense of a society out of balance.

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March 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.



March Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

7 Good and Evil in Buddhist Thought - As a discussion piece, 'The Nonduality of Good and Evil', a short article by David Loy, Tricycle - Spring 2002 is the jumping off point for this topic. *The article will be available in the kuri a week before the discussion.*

14 What is the Role of Forgiveness in Buddhist Practice - An article by Ken McLeod and a response by Thanissaro Bhikkhu will be used to examine this debatable subject. *The articles will be available in the kuri a week before the discussion.*

21 Spring O-Higan - Returning to the Source - pilgrimages and special services, such as Segaki, are important



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ways to commemorate O-Higan. Equally important is the observance of the Six-Paramitas. Start on March 17 and continue to the 23rd to contemplate each of the Perfections. We will put them into a context this evening. Refuge will be given during the service this evening.

28 Conducting Civil Political Discourse -

Discussion Led by Maynard Toll- we live in a nation that is polarized by politics, culture, and socioeconomic class. Speaking with each other is essential if we are to recover a sense of common purpose in our fractionated nation. Maynard will explore this important skill.

Other Events in March:

3 Sutra Class and Morning Service, 8:30 - 10:30

AM - The *Maha Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra* (Heart Sutra) is the most often chanted, cited and best known sutras in the Mahayana canon. We will read and discuss two different translations and commentaries (Mu Soeng's and Red Pine's) as a set throughout the classes.

23-25 Spring O-Higan Retreat - Finding Equanimity During Crisis

- Rather than an emotion or thought, equanimity is a stable conscious awareness of reality's transience. We will be using teachings and practices to find that core to our being that encourages equanimity when all around us seems to be falling apart. This will be a silent retreat. It is appropriate for people at all stages of practice. Please sign up, let Shumon or Monshin know. There is a limit to the people who can attend the retreats.

Please sign up to donate flowers for a month - at Tendai Buddhist Institute / Jiunzan Tendai-ji. You can either bring them yourself or pay to have them purchased for you. There is a sign-up sheet on the notice board in the kitchen. If you have any questions please ask Shoshin (Sandy), Chorin (Peter), or Shumon (Tamami). Providing flowers for the hondo is a service to the temple and a *smṛti* practice. By providing flowers one makes an important contribution to Jiunzan Tendai-ji. Several people can choose to contribute together. We still have several months available later in the year..

Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji - Gratitude is best shown by extending to others the thoughtfulness we have received. Please bring non-perishable food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute on Wednesday's. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry.

Meanderings (cont. from side bar at left)



Polarization and extreme views are the result, not the cause of social and economic changes in our society. The world is in a state of rapid change. Social scientists identify a number of factors that contribute to this change. It is referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Additionally, climate change, industrial agriculture and a predictable swing in political forces intensify these tendencies. Immanuel Wallerstein, in 1974, developed a theoretical framework to understand the historical changes involved in the rise of the modern world. We are tracking amazing close to his model. What we are now experiencing was foreseen over forty years ago.

Back to polarization - all of these influences have created anxiety and apprehension as a result. This anxiety leads to fear and trepidation about the present and future. This in turn leads to a search for answers for this fear. I propose that it doesn't matter which side of the social / political / cultural divide one sits the fears are palpable and this results in facile solutions to nuanced challenges. We have a need for certainty where none in facts exists.

The Three Marks of Existence; impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self, posited by Buddhism, speak to this directly. For most people, in a world that values and, even, rewards the appearance of certainty it's difficult to say "I don't know" or "I'm not sure".

By shifting our thinking from a need for certainty to a position of accurately assessing what we know and what we don't, we will be less susceptible to destructive habits in our reactions. We will be less reactive to anxious emotions and knee-jerk biases. In so doing we will experience greater equanimity and compassionate living.

This month the measures we employ to attain composure during these tumultuous times will be the focus of our weekly discussions and the O-Higan retreat. There are readings and presentations specifically chosen to provide useful direction. This exploration of uncertainty is followed next month, April, to addressing where we as Buddhists, fit into the greater spiritual milieu. This will include Tendai Buddhism in its mystical dimension.

Recently I had mentioned during a Dharma Talk that Fr. Thomas Merton has been a great inspiration to me. He was a devout Roman Catholic, Trappist monk, a poet, social activist, and

student of comparative religion. Merton was a keen proponent of interfaith understanding and an explorer of mystic teachings. He died in 1968 in an accident while visiting Buddhist temples in Thailand. His writings are filled with sensitivity and insight that will speak to anyone that is open to finding wisdom. A sangha member asked if I could recommend one of his books that we might discuss in April. After considering several, I have selected; *New Seeds of Contemplation*. Originally published in 1961, reprinted with an introduction by Sue Monk Kidd, 2007, by New Direction Books. The book is 39 chapters and 297 pages, too long for a Wednesday evening discussion. Please read chapters 1 - 9, 69 pages, enough to absorb for an evening's discussion. We will discuss this reading and determine if people are interested in continuing with the book in subsequent months.

Thomas Merton was a Roman Catholic priest; his reflections are drawn from, and toward, an integration with God and through the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. That may put some people off. However, it has been my experience that in the same way that Merton found Asian philosophy and teachings to be instrumental to his understanding of his faith and practices, we can in turn learn from the depths of his insight and wisdom. Read these chapters with an open mind. Buddhism is a search for the nature of reality, wherever it might be.

This and next month are devoted to finding equanimity on the interior and exterior of our lives. It is a cumulative process. Don't miss the many opportunities to cultivate composure and dignity.

Love and Gassho Monshin

The Third Jewel-
Where sangha members share ideas, poetry, and art to enrich everyone's Buddhist practice.

from
"Twelve Reckless Tanka"

This late night, Times Square turns migrating geese
into golden arrow
- captivating and frightening.

by Kimiko Hahn



"City birdhouse"
Tomie Hahn

Kimiko Hahn's latest book is Brain Fever.
These unconventional tanka are printed
here with her permission.
She is Tomie Hahn's sister.

And as always, please do send us news from your sangha! Your
poetry, your images, your suggestions!
Gassho!

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Contact . . .

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