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December 2012

SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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Jushoku's Meanderings

Bodhi Day commemorates Shakyamuni Buddha's awakening. It is observed on the 8th day of the 12th month.

According to lunar calendars the date typically falls in the spring. Japan adopted the Western calendar in the 19th century, so in Japan Bodhi Day is observed on

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

5 Stump the Sensei - Q&A - This is your chance. Some people are shy about asking a certain question because they think, 'it's only interesting to me.' Chances are other people have the same question but are also too shy to ask. Come prepared with questions.

12 Bodhi Day - we observe Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment. Celebrated throughout East Asia with meditations, chanting and dharma study, we will discuss Shakyamuni Buddha's awakening and meditations.

19 Sangha Solstice Reflections - This is the long night, a continuity of Bodhi Day and preparation for the New Year. Join us for an evening of reflections, sharing and observance of a Buddhist Solstice.

December 8th.
(cont.)

26 No Meditation Service this Wednesday - Join us for the New Year's Eve Service - see below.

Other events in December:



1 Sutra Class and Morning Service, 8:30 - 10:30 AM - *Vajrachedika Prajnāparamita Sutra* (The Diamond Sutra). It is as one of the earliest Mahayana sutras and is considered by many scholars as foundational to subsequent Mahayana thought. Don't miss this enjoyable class. Please obtain the following book for this class - *The Diamond Sutra: transforming the way we perceive the world*, by Mu Soeng; Wisdom Publications (2000).

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Monshin Naamon](#)

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Our Other Sangha:

[Blue Mountain Sage
Sangha--Denver, CO](#)

[Celestial Drum
Sangha--Indian Lake,
NY](#)

[California Tendai
Buddhist Monastery](#)

[Tendai Denmark](#)

[Flowing Waters--
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada](#)

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Sangha--Arlington,
VA](#)

31 New Year's Eve Service - Gather from about 10:30 PM- the Meditation Service in the hondo begins at about 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 beverage, as well as soft drinks. The emphasis on the evening is bringing in the New Year with equanimity and celebrating with sangha, friends and family. All are welcome.



New Year's Eve Meditation Service

[Nagado Sangha--
Springfield, MA](#)

[Nishi Sangha--
Albany, NY](#)

[Red Maple Sangha--
Renfrew, Ottawa,
Canada](#)



New Year San-san-ku-do Sake set

Upcoming Events

January

2 No Meditation Service this Wednesday

It is the day after New Year's - join us for the New Year's Eve/Day Service.

5 Sutra Class as above.

February

8 - 10 Winter Retreat - Topic to be announced.

Notes:

Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji - The need is much greater than the resources of the local food pantries, especially at this time of year. Please bring non-perishable food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute on Wednesdays. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry.

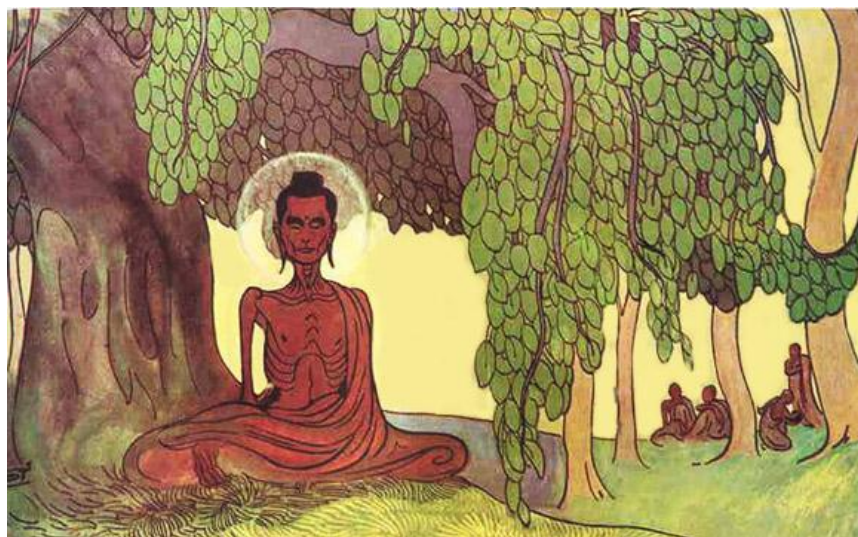
Meanderings (cont. from side bar at left)



The stories of Shakyamuni Buddha's awakening are most likely apocryphal with a core of truth. There are a number of different renditions of the awakening experiences and meditations. The varieties and types of stories demonstrate the ways in which different cultures at different times modified the basic theme to fit a narrative about the

historic Buddha which gave it immediacy to the lives of sangha around Asia.

Elements that resonate with me include the story of Sujata the maiden who saw the starving and weakened young Gautama. She brought him milk-rice which gave him strength and brought an end to a six-year ascetic practice. This is also credited as leading him to the Middle Way. The reason I especially like this story is that it was through a simple act of compassion by a simple person that Gautama was able to go on to meditate under the Bodhi Tree leading to his awakening.



His struggles with *mara* (psychic demons) during his meditations also ring true to me. Anyone who has practiced serious meditation for a prolonged period of time can relate to the delusions, emotional and seemingly real, which arise and must be dealt with appropriately. These events can lead to a profound understanding of the dynamics of the mind and our perception of reality. This story seems to me to be immediate and personal.

The celebration of Bodhi Day continues until the New Year. During this month read the various stories of Shakyamuni Buddha's awakening and find one or two that speak to you. During our discussion on the 12th you might want to share them with us, and share them with your family and friends. This is a wonderful time of the year to deepen your relationship with the teachings of the Buddhadharma.

Enjoy the holidays and Akemashite omedetou gozaimasu - Happy New Year!

Gassho . . . Monshin

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

Gratitude Contemplation
by Seiyo Erica Fay

We tend to direct and select when considering our reasons to be thankful. Try this contemplative approach:

- While sitting, begin to settle by following your breath.
- Bring a few things you are grateful for into a soft mental focus.
- Allow your focus on specifics to loosen, opening to the bounty that surrounds all of them.
- As you continue, notice the joy each breath brings with each exhale brings a beautiful release - a giving back to all that surrounds you. Let your mind float on the breath and open your heart-mind to the immense bounty that is life - always present and always available. Consider the blessing of each breath, the fortune of experiencing your life while the chi, the prana, moves in and out of the exquisitely designed body that is yours.
- Release any focus of mind, allowing unsentimental gratitude to generate your sense of connectedness.
- When your practice feels complete, deepen your breath, returning to your cushion.

A frequent practice of gratitude meditation or contemplation develops and strengthens a deep sense of joy that becomes a state in which you abide. Gratitude becomes an abode.

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Contact . . .

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