



SOTO MISSION OF HAWAII

BETSUIN NEWSLETTER

February 2021

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Nehan-e Service and General Membership Meeting

On Feb. 7 at 9:30 am, we will be observing Nehan-e. Nehan-e Service is a service dedicated to Shakyamuni Buddha in memory of his death, as he took his last breath at a place called Kushinagara.



In his last sermon, he taught his disciples

that even he, who has attained enlightenment, will eventually pass on and summed his basic teaching of impermanence of physical entity. Let us gather on this day to share our deepest understanding of Buddhist teachings as we dedicate the service to Shakyamuni Buddha.

A scroll showing the reclining Buddha surrounded by followers and animals in moaning will be displayed inside the temple. The service will be live-streamed on our Homepage at www.sotomission.org/live.

After the Nehan-e Service, we will be having our **General Membership Meeting**. At the meeting, we will be installing the new Board of Directors who will serve the term 2021-2022.

New Year's Party [Canceled]

The New Year's Party will be canceled this year due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Membership Dues and Nokotsudo Maintenance Fee

We thank everyone who turned in your Membership Dues and Nokotsudo Maintenance Fee. This is a friendly reminder to ask those who has not yet turned in your Membership Dues to please do so at your earliest convenience.

Hawaii Soto Mission Association Spring Meeting

On Feb. 21, we will be having our Hawaii Soto Mission Association Spring Meeting. This year, we will be having the meeting on Zoom. If you are interested in observing the meeting, please contact the office.

Message from the Archbishop of Soto-shu in 2021

As we greet the New Year, I offer a heartfelt prayer for everyone's happiness and for world peace. This past year, the whole world has had to deal with the new corona virus pandemic. I hope that this year will be as calm as possible.



In Japan, we have the custom that we begin the New Year by paying a visit to shrines and temples. In doing this, we are surrounded both physically and mentally with a feeling of freshness. I think this is especially important.

In Dogen Zenji's writings, we find these words, "When one person truly resolves to return to the source, space in the ten directions truly resolves to return to the source." Even though there are differences in religion – some people believe in God, while other believe in Buddha – that belief is nothing less than returning to the true nature of the origin.

When Shakyamuni had true awakening under the bodhi tree and became the Buddha, it is said that he exclaimed, "The great earth has simultaneously realized the Way together with all sentient beings." It can be said that enlightenment means to clearly wake up and correctly understand the principles of things, but I also think it is to return to the source and experience a clear, true heart and mind.

No one lives alone. It is important for us to be aware that we are living and alive with all things in nature. We all want to take the true path that is best for each of us.

The earth can be thought of as a ship joined together floating through space. I believe that there is no greater happiness than helping and encouraging each other to take care of the precious connections we have of living together now. This is the way I would like to endeavor this year.

Minamisawa Donin
Archbishop of the Soto-shu

Let's Learn about Soto-shu: Environmental work by Soto-shu [in Japan]

Five Principles of Green Life

1. Protect the green of the earth;

The earth is the home of life.

One example of our activities to protect the environment is our "Protect the Local Ecosystem" campaign. In farming villages, forests and wooded areas can be found along with rice fields. This is what we refer to as "satoyama," or an area where



normal ecological cycles are supported by cultivation. Deciduous forests in the farm village ecosystem are a precious and essential resource both for the lives of residents and the survival of plants and animals. We pressure the local governments in various areas and raise money to buy land and carry out environmental activities in order to protect the local ecosystems from the wave of development.

What kinds of things can we do as followers of Soto Zen to protect the green resources of the earth? First, visit your local temple or shrine and check out the trees and environment in the surrounding area. In some places there will be dense forests and in others nothing but concrete structures. Let's all give serious thought to what we can do to protect the forests if they are there and how to plant new trees if they are not

A group called the Ecological Life and Culture Organization surveyed high school students about their thoughts on forests. Some of the most common responses were, "They provide us with sanctuary," "They act as a natural dam to collect rainwater," "Mountains and forests provide us with gifts," and "They teach us the difficulty, importance and pleasure of cultivation."

We must develop the habit of giving heed to soil, trees and water in order to preserve the green that surrounds us. If we leave things be in this society where global warming continues to progress, we will lose the trees. The thoughts of the high school students above will surely resonate with everyone. As is written in the first principle, the green earth is the home of all life.

2. Do not waste water; it is the source of life.

The Soto Women's Society is involved in activities called the "Green Plan." For example, the Kanto chapter handed out stickers which listed things that can be done in the home to conserve water, nets for kitchen sinks, acrylic scrubbing brushes knitted by members and other items to passersby along streets beside large stations to raise awareness about the importance of environmental issues. They continue to knit brushes every day and hand them out to people in the

area.

Some of the ways to conserve water are to:

- Insert a water stopper in faucets
- Turn off the water while washing your face
- Use strainers with small holes and be careful not to let food crumbs get into the drain
- Soak up oil in newspapers and throw it away instead of draining it in the sink
- Use acrylic scrubbing brushes and soap to cut down on the use of synthetic detergents

There are plenty of other ideas as well for keeping water clean in our daily activities. In fact, most of these are not things that have just been started but have been rooted in people's lifestyles from long ago as "wisdom of the elderly." The Green Plan places high value on the wisdom of elderly people. We have much to learn from them about how to live in affluence while conserving energy.

It is said that Dogen Zenji once drew water from a mountain stream and said, "May this water bring blessings to 100 billion people after me," after pouring half the water in the dipper back into the stream. That is how precious he considered water. Let's make it a habit to keep water clean and not to waste it.

3. Do not waste fuel or electricity; they are the energy of life.

As part of our activities in the Green Plan, the Soto Zen School is calling on its temples and all its followers to cut down on the energy resources they consume by 1%. There are some simple things you can do in your immediate surroundings which will even save you about 50,000 yen a year in utilities per household:

- Turn off lights and electric appliances when they're not being used, lower the temperature on the air conditioner by one degree in the winter and raise it one degree in the summer.
- Have all family members take baths one after another to conserve energy

-Reduce the time spent watching television by one hour

If this is done in all 1.7 million households of Soto Zen followers it will result in the saving of around 60,000 kiloliters of crude oil (or the equivalent of the annual consumption of roughly 7,500 households). To look at it another way, this would highlight just how much is wasted by a high growth society.

The merits of offerings are taught in Shushogi, a Soto Zen sutra. It says, "Do not be greedy for offerings." This teaching can be applied in the conservation activities described above which will result in planting seeds of

happiness for future generations.

4. Keep the air clean; It is the plaza of life.

The Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union carries out some noteworthy activities. The members of this union take their own bags to grocery stores and use them instead of the plastic bags at the register. As a result they eliminated the need for about 250 million grocery bags in 1996. This is the equivalent of 1,075.77 tons of carbon that was not released into the atmosphere.

When we all work together these kinds of amazing results are possible. Within the Soto Zen School, temples and lay people are coming together to reduce pollution by 1%. We encourage them to keep a household environmental book so that the results can be seen more clearly. For example:

- Raw garbage in the household was reduced
- The temperature on the air conditioner was adjusted one degree
- Baths were cut down to once every two days
- Eliminated 10 minutes of idling per day

These types of records allow people to check the results, and this activity is important for getting into the habit of an energy-saving lifestyle. Soto Zen followers account for 1.7 million households, and the Green Plan calls for the participation of all members. It is an attempt to change lives and the world around us.

Keizan Zenji taught that "the ordinary mind is the way." This teaching makes us realize that when a truth is discovered in everyday life and put into practice, such is the way of Buddhism. The atmosphere is what preserves the delicate balance for all life to exist, but mankind is on the verge of upsetting that balance. There is no other way to protect the environment than to do so in our daily lives.

5. Co-exist with nature; It is the embodiment of Buddha.

Dogen Zenji loved the mountains and nature. On living in harmony with nature, he said, "If I take care of the mountains, they will take care of me."

He also proclaimed that "The colors of the mountains and the sound of mountain streams are the voice and embodiment of Shakyamuni Buddha."

He taught that all aspects of nature were the embodiment of Buddha.

Keizan Zenji also taught that nature was Buddha. He said, "You should not see Shakyamuni Buddha in anything other than nature and living things. Mountains, rivers and all other things in nature may take on various forms, but they are all the embodiment of Shakyamuni Buddha."

He also warned that not a single branch of a tree or plant was to be broken unless it was to be used in a ceremony and strictly forbade the unnecessary cutting down of trees. Keizan Zenji co-existed in harmony with nature and strives to live on a bare minimum of resources in order to protect it.

To learn from the words and lives of these two founders of Soto Zen is to

accept nature itself as the embodiment of Shakyamuni Buddha, to respect it, cherish it, learn from it, and live in harmony with it.

(Article from Soto-Shu Head Administrative Office in Japan)

Online Dharma Message and Sermon

In collaboration with the Bishop's Office, ministers of Betsuin made a online video to be shared with members across the state and the world.

Bishop Komagata: <https://youtu.be/AMzrtdGOMVc>

Rev. Yoshida: <https://youtu.be/KCwQhivKrVM>

Rev. Hoshino: <https://youtu.be/6lszllbyp8A>

You can also view other minister's video as well by visiting Hawaii Soto Mission Bishop's Office's YouTube page.

Special Temple Hours

Feb. 15 Temple close at noon for President's Day

Acknowledgment of Donations

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Memorial Service / Funeral / General Donations

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