

NOTES – EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE, FAIRFAX STATION, VA

1. Sustaining temple operations. In 2014, the Ekoji Finance Committee recommended that in order to financially sustain temple operations at its current physical location, Ekoji Sangha must grow to, and maintain, its membership at 200 fully paid members. While fund raising activities should continue the relative amount of income these activities bring in will not support the operational needs of the temple.
2. Ekoji's history. Causes and conditions that led us to today.
 - a. Different from most other temples in that we don't have the foundation of the Issei and Nisei spirit.
 - b. Started with Reverend Shojo Hondo who established a *ko*. He and June invited families into their home to share the Dharma.
 - c. Then several families (parents who had small children; they were raised in Shin Buddhism but in areas outside of D.C., e.g., California and Hawaii), got together to start a Dharma School. Bishop Tsuji and Reverend Numata recognized the potential for spreading the Dharma and purchased and built the current property. We are grateful that BDK continues to partially support the operations of Ekoji, but are slowly decreasing their financial support and Ekoji will need to be able to operate independently.
3. The \$64 million question: How are we going to get this done?
 - a. This is not a single solution problem.
 - b. Communications. Involve the Sangha and be sure members are aware of the critical issues. The Board presented the Finance Committee recommendations and also the alternatives of not achieving the necessary growth – i.e., the possibility of having to sell the current property.

- c. Develop and deliver programs. It's all about the Dharma. Programs must be meaningful and relevant to current Sangha and those seeking the Dharma.
 - d. Outreach. If Honen and Shinran Shonin were able to "get the word out" in 12th and 13th century Japan, how is it that we're struggling to get the word out when we have access to amazing technology that they could not even have begun to imagine back then?
 - i. Internet and emails
 - ii. Social Media: FaceBook, Twitter, Instagram, Twitter, Blobs
 - iii. Websites: How many temples have websites? How many temples keep their websites updated? Are the websites easy to navigate? Are the websites engaging?
 - iv. Don't be afraid to try new ways of outreach. Don't be afraid to fail. Example of Ekoji's monthly evening Dharma Discussions in Maryland. Very few people showed up. Maybe we didn't do a great job of advertising and should try again.
 - e. How do we invite and engage new people seeking a spiritual path?
 - i. How does one describe an encounter with the Dharma? I'm not sure it can be adequately described, but perhaps the experience can be shared.
 - ii. So how can we share the experience of the Buddha Dharma and how can we share the experience of how it helps us navigate through the difficulties of living this 21st century life?
4. Current program and outreach activities include:
- i. Dharma School
 - ii. YBA. We encourage youth to attend the YAC and YBCSI programs and currently have two active Youth Minister's Assistants.
 - iii. Buddhism 101 classes are offered 4-5 times per year and scheduled after major events such as Obon and our spring and fall seminars.

- iv. Open Dharma Discussion after Sunday services. We tried earlier but then cancelled. We've re-started this and it has been quite successful especially as a venue to answer questions of people new to Shin Buddhism.
 - v. Monthly Study Group. So excited to be starting this new program. The first book is Reverend Dr. Taitetsu Unno's River of Fire, River of Water.
 - vi. Participating in community festivals. Ed Sams sets up and staffs booths at the Sakura Matsuri in Washington, D.C. and at the local Burke Festival. We have also begun participating in the Northern Virginia Pride festival.
 - vii. Strengthening our alliance with the Japan America Society of Washington, D.C.
5. We need to do more. But our focus should be on doing more to spread the Buddha Dharma rather than just increasing membership. As leaders of our temples, we need to self reflect and ask ourselves what are we individually doing to share the gift of the Dharma? "If we build it, they will come." Be inspired by the dedication and sacrifices of Honen and Shinran Shonin who dedicated their lives to spreading the gift of the Dharma.