

Message About COVID-19 from the New Bishop:

As I take office as Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America, we find ourselves living in an unprecedented time, facing a global pandemic that has hit our nation, state and communities.

In order to do our part to help prevent the spread of the virus, we have cancelled all of our in-person services and gatherings at our churches and temples and are all abiding by the “stay at home” directives.

We deeply miss seeing one another and being able to gather for a Sunday service or to be able to pay our respects to a dear loved one at their funeral service. Our Sanghas are living “communities” and now we must be isolated and apart from each other. It is a painful and difficult time for all.

Many have lost their jobs or their jobs are threatened by recession. Perhaps some of you know or have a loved one suffering from the virus and you were not even able to be with them during their time of need.

It is exactly during times of great duress that over the centuries in our Buddhist tradition many have turned to the Buddha-Dharma, for solace, for peace, for meaning. This time is no different.

Shinran Shonin wrote in one of his poems, or *wasan*, the following:

*When we say “Namu-amida-butsu,”
The countless Buddhas throughout the ten quarters,
Surrounding us a hundredfold, a thousandfold,
Rejoice in and protect us.*

p. 355, Collected Works of Shinran

What this poem is saying to me, is not that saying *Namuamidabutsu* will prevent me from getting the virus, but it is saying that for the person who recites and receives the Nembutsu, that they are embraced within the world of Buddha, the world of wisdom and compassion, no matter what.

If I get the virus, *Namuamidabutsu*, I am embraced within the world of Buddha. If I don't get the virus, *Namuamidabutsu*, I am embraced within the world of Buddha. Either way, get it or not get it, I am one with the timeless truth of immeasurable life and immeasurable light. That is the ultimate source of peace and solace.

Namuamidabutsu,

Rev. Marvin Harada
Bishop
Buddhist Churches of America