



# Three Wheels NEWS



Three Wheels is a branch of Shogyoji Temple in Japan

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## Nenbutsu in Mindfulness A Newsletter article from Japan

*Editor's Note: We are continuing our series of 'Voices from Japan' with a very special article written for Three Wheels News by Ven. Chimyo Takehara the Head Priest of Shogyoji, in Fukuoka prefecture Japan which is the parent temple of Three Wheels. It is through the great kindness and generosity of Ven. Takehara, and the individual members of the Shogyoji Temple Sangha, that Three Wheels can exist and provide a place where we in the U.K. can encounter the living essence of Shin Buddhist teaching.*

A letter from Professor John White reached me recently, quite out of the blue, with the marvellous suggestion that the Three Wheels' Newsletter should be stepped up to the next level.

Professor White has been patiently biding his time ever since he first urged upon us the importance of having *The Letters* by Rennyō Shōnin translated into English. Now that Reverend Kemmyō Sato's translation is finally ready for publication, it would seem to be the perfect moment to upgrade the Three Wheels' Newsletter too. This is because the book of *The Letters* has always been so important in the life of our Shin Buddhist Sangha, with members reading it regularly in everyday life.

In his letter, Professor White stated that the sole function of the designated correspondent from Shogyoji would be "to alert the editor of the Three Wheels' Newsletter to any important things that were happening, or were going to happen, at the temple. No more than that".

If the innermost reality of what lies behind all the recent activities of Shogyoji could be summarised in a single phrase, it would simply be the "Nenbutsu in mindfulness or awareness".

From time to time, when we receive reports from Dharma friends or when they relate to us their impressions of the activities at Three Wheels, we find ourselves awakened in totally unexpected ways to a deeper spiritual dimension by the Westerners at Three Wheels and their interest in Buddhism.

In Fukuoka Prefecture where we live, there is a girls' high school well known for its excellent marching brass band.

The band has been widely lauded, repeatedly winning championships both at home and abroad.

Whilst Japanese audiences praise the band's distinguished performance, saying, "It's outstanding. It sets a high standard for other schools. The hope is they, too, in time will attain that level," foreign audiences simply exclaim, "Wonderful! Absolutely unique!"

I have felt that there is certainly a marked difference between these two ways of evaluating a performance. The latter is an expression of wonder at something that is totally beyond the norm, whereas the former is a relative evaluation of a level that is higher or lower than expected.

The core of *Pure Land Buddhism*, itself the quintessence of Mahayana Buddhism, consists of pronouncing *Namu Amida-butsu*, that is, the *Nenbutsu* of pronouncing the Name.

With regard to the core of *Namu Amida-butsu*, however, no matter how minutely and carefully you may seek to explain it, the explanation itself will always push you further and further away from the *Nenbutsu* of pronouncing the Name.

Because there are those who misunderstand the *Nenbutsu*, placing too much emphasis on the act of saying it and its effectiveness, there has always been this important emphasis in Shin Buddhism that the right cause of birth in the Pure Land is 'faith' or 'the awakening of the thought that moves us to pronounce the Name'. The true source of the *Nenbutsu* is nothing other than this awakening of faith.

In recent times though, I have little idea why, at the same time that Japan has achieved modernization following the Meiji Restoration, voices of the *Nenbutsu* - as if in inverse proportion to the country's progress - have been fading away. This holds true even in Pure Land temples that boast the biggest number of followers amongst Japanese Buddhists.

Several years ago, 550 steles [or vertical monuments] inscribed with the words *Namu Amida-butsu* in calligraphy executed by hand by Dharma friends of Shogyoji Temple, were erected on Mt. Hiko, in a quiet spot much favoured as a resting place by our teacher, Ekai-sama.

On a visit to the holy mountain, Professor Hú Zhì Hòu, a famous flute performer of traditional Chinese Buddhist music, quietly surveyed the steles of *Namu Amida-butsu*, and then asked me, "What does all this express?"

I felt as if I were being pushed to reveal in a few words the quintessence of what I had been investigating throughout my whole life.

His question at that precise moment delighted me in an unfathomable way and a feeling of exhilaration welled up within me.

Placing my palms together I simply uttered the one sound "O". Ryusho-bo, a young priest who was interpreting for us, likewise repeated my exclamation "O", there being in fact nothing else for him to translate.

Thereupon Professor Hú Zhì Hòu, his face wreathed in smiles, also put his palms together and said "O"! He appeared very peaceful, having understood at a very deep level.

At once I became absolutely convinced that the Buddha himself was working within this encounter.

At the beginning of this essay I made reference to the expression 'absolutely unique'. From time to time I have felt there to be something 'absolutely unique' or extraordinary about certain observations proffered by Professor White or other Dharma friends in the U.K. Their remarks differ at times very considerably from the sort of conversations we hold with Dharma friends close to the Shogyoji Sangha, which, if we are not careful, tend to become somewhat too conventional.

It is recognised in Buddhism that the Buddha's teaching is at its most active under the banner of the Three Dharma Seals.

If we understand Buddhism simply as dogma, it is nothing more than an 'ordinary' or 'standardized' teaching of Buddhism.

Only a 'place' where the Buddha is actively working truly deserves the name of Buddhism.

Only under the banner of the Three Dharma Seals of Impermanence, Selflessness and Nirvana can we encounter the full, active working of the Buddha and, as one of the audience, I myself become its receiver.

What sort of 'place' is it, then, where we can sense the Buddha's working? I have pointed out two such places or instances: when we are moved from the bottom of our hearts, or when we forget ourselves in utmost concentration. Reflecting deeply on the matter, I have come to realise that our state of mind when we lose a parent, whether mother or father, is also of vital importance.

I have no doubt in my own mind that my actions and basic approach to the "here and now" have been supported by the presence of my mother and father.

There is a Japanese novelist, Yasushi Inoue by name, who wrote a number of books about the Silk Road, the route for the transmission of Buddhism.

In one of his essays he talks about his relationship with his

father. Whilst his father was still alive, Inoue was unable to have a natural conversation with him, feeling that there was some sort of barrier between them. But once his father died, on the very night of the wake the wall that had for so long divided them suddenly disappeared and he saw the vast ocean that lay beyond.

We have been talking about the 'working' of the Buddha, but what exactly do we mean? For us the most important thing is the working of true harmony between one human being and another.

In other words, it is the creation of a 'place' where one can respect others as Buddhas, namely manifestations of Amida Buddha.

Any discovery of a 'place' where the Three Dharma Seals are at work is at the same time confirmation of this world of 'standardization', entirely filled with 'blind passions in time and space'.

For as long as we live in this world, we are obliged to inhabit this 'time and space of blind passions'.

In order to go beyond this karmic reality, we have to perform the 'Practice of Three Renunciations', forsaking 'body', 'life' and 'property'. It would seem that in ancient times there were indeed ascetic devotees and bodhisattvas who managed to do just this.

Because the only way to accord with the Buddha's mind is to adopt an attitude of 'no self' or selflessness, there can be no hope of transcending this world of birth and death unless we establish an attitude of 'selfless renunciation', 'Selfless renunciation' is nothing other than 'taking refuge' [in the Buddha], in other words '*namu*'.

It takes place 'at the very moment when the thought that moves us to pronounce the Name is awakened', and this moment of the awakening of faith is always accompanied by the *Nenbutsu* of pronouncing the Name.

Dharma friends have been engaging of late in lively dialogues amongst themselves about 'the moment of awakening'.

In the course of these conversations one lady made the remarkable assertion that she had found 'her moment of awakening' through recounting the story of her failures. She explained herself as follows:

Although the instructions given by her senior had long lain stagnant in her heart and mind, now, because she and her Dharma friends had been given the chance to speak to one another just as they were, she found herself truly unfettered and free of everything.

The 'original starting point of awakening' that we receive under the banner of the Three Dharma Seals has the potential to develop in an ever-deepening dimension every time we confirm that same 'moment of awakening to the fact that the passage leading to the Buddha is always open to us, even in situations grave enough to shake the foundations of our life, such as the death of a beloved person, our own

serious illness or an unanticipated betrayal by a friend or colleague.

With palms together,

Only after reaching this stage shall we find ourselves on the path to positive practice of the 'Nenbutsu in mindfulness'.

**Ven. Chimyo Takehara**

## Unity, Paradox and Art The 131st London Eza

Today's well attended first Eza meeting of 2017 was warmly chaired by Mr Andy B. The service to the Buddha specially incorporated a memorial ceremony commemorating the third anniversary of the death of Prof. Taitetsu Unno, a long-time friend of the Three Wheels who made a considerable contribution to the transmission of Shin Buddhism to the West, most notably through his books on Shin Buddhism.

Today's guest speaker was Prof. John White who shared with us a talk he first gave at Shogyoji Temple earlier this month entitled Unity, Paradox and Art. His talk, richly illustrated with examples of paintings and sculptures relevant to its underlying themes, brought together insights from Prof. White's long academic career as an art historian with his deep study and understanding of the core fundamentals of Buddhist philosophy encapsulated under the five categories of: "the unity of all that is and is not", "Emptiness", "Illusion", "Impermanence" and "Interdependent origination".



**Prof. John White**

It was a wonderful experience to see important works of art through Prof. White's eyes and notice all the important details which are so easy to overlook, like the small boat in Hokusai's famous print The Great Wave which is seen at the very moment that it plunges into the body of the moving wave; a representation embodying the fourth dimension of time within a medium in which actual movement is impossible.

Afterwards we had a fascinating period of discussion on some of the notable points in Prof. White's talk which really captured our imaginations, particularly on the relationship between art and Buddhism and also how they are both relevant to the way we see the world around us. Expressing his gratitude to Prof. White for his talk, Rev. Sato pointed out that this was the first time Prof. White had given a talk about art in the 25 years since their first encounter at Shogyoji Temple. During that time Prof. White had read many Buddhist Sutras and commentaries and within them found the five basic Buddhist principles he covered in this talk. Today was the first time Prof. White had looked back at the works of art with which he was deeply familiar and showed how we can all appreciate art through these core Buddhist teachings. There was indeed, Rev. Sato concluded, something eternal within Prof. White's talk.

In preparation for Spring School, an annual spiritual training event for young students from Japan, Three Wheels was pleased to welcome Rev. Junsho Takada and Rev. Shinjun Ebikai who are here to attend to all the many preparations for this very important event. Introducing himself, Rev. Takada explained that he had recently graduated after 4 years of study at Otani University in Kyoto and will now commence his spiritual training at Shogyoji to become a priest. "I am very much looking forward to both listening to and speaking to Dharma-friends in London", Rev. Takada said, "and through all of this to come to know myself". Before coming to London, Rev. Ebikai recounted, he was awakened to the fact that he had not discovered his true goal in life. Rev. Ebikai expressed his wish that through encountering Dharma-friends at Three Wheels he could realise his true vocation in life as a Buddhist priest.

At the conclusion of the Eza the warm feeling of fellowship continued as we shared a delicious bring-and-share meal together.

**Andrew Webb**

*Editor's Note: Copies of Prof White's talk Unity, Paradox and Art which includes colour illustrations are available for £12 from Three Wheels.*

## 'Let's share our awakening!' The 16th Spring School

This year, we welcomed 12 young pupils aged 12 and 13 from Japan. It was the longest session in the history of Spring School and they spent in total 18 days in England. To be honest, all the adult residents of Three Wheels were

physically exhausted but all of the participants' splendid impressions refreshed our minds and gave us tremendous joy as well as energy to continue the Dharma activities at Three Wheels.

After the welcome talk given by Rev. Sato at the opening ceremony, Mrs Hiroko Sato gave a short talk about her visit to Plum Village, a retreat centre in France run by the Sangha of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk and teacher Thich Nhat Hanh. She spoke about what she learnt from her visit and focused on three things. They were the importance of saying “I’m sorry”, “thank you” and “to smile”. Her really friendly and easy to understand talk melted the hearts of everyone, from children to adults, and gave us a new view and a bright direction. Also her talk naturally asked all of us whether or not we are actually doing these important things in our daily lives. Simple things which even 5-year-old children can do. Mrs Sato’s talk not only opened Spring School but also individually opened our eyes.

This year too, after the opening ceremony of Spring School, Professor John White gave an explanation of the garden, and one of his poems was gifted to each of the Spring School pupils. Two young priests, Junsho and Shinjun, chose a poem in advance from Prof. White’s collections of poems. What they chose was the one below, which was composed when Prof. White visited Shogyoji Temple for the first time:

You of pure  
faith,  
I,  
who am certain  
of nothing,  
travel  
the one  
road.

This poem became the best gift for them and for me too.

During the Spring School, the children were really fascinated by the character of London as well as enjoying Cumbria’s great natural beauty. However, the majority

of each of their impressions was occupied with their apologies and thankfulness. Let me introduce one of their impressions. Through reading The Sutra on the Importance of What Has Been Done for You by Your Parents, their awareness of themselves let them say, “Sorry for being such a selfish person” and their awareness of parental love let them say, “Thank you for your love and for not forsaking such a selfish person like me”. Following this year’s theme “My awareness, your awareness. Let’s share our awakening”, every morning and evening, all the pupils shared their accounts of what they felt that day, illumined by others. Sharing their awareness and sympathising with one another really helped them look at themselves in a very deep dimension. This was true not only for the children but the adults as well.

The Spring School pupils have only just started their spiritual journey of discovering themselves, a journey which must take the whole of their lives. Being involved in the start of their journey, I really felt that these students, who are the children of Dharma friends, became themselves my Dharma friends.

**Rev. Kenshin H. Ishii**



**The Spring School**

## **A Moment That Changed My World The 19th Shokai Retreat**

Our 19th Shokai Retreat was held between the 21st – 23rd April 2017. The theme of this Shokai was A Moment That Changed My World and a total of 19 participants, including the residents of the Three Wheels, joined us for the retreat. We were particularly pleased that Jon Brown and his wife Rachel were also able to join us for part of the retreat, on their way back to their home in America.

Whenever we come to Three Wheels to attend Shokai we are reminded that we are able to do so thanks to the support of Japanese members of the Sangha under the guidance of Ven. Chimyo Takehara, Head Priest of Shogyoji.

For the main part of our spiritual preparation for the Shokai we were asked by Rev. Sato and Rev. Ishii to reflect carefully on the theme A Moment That Changed My World. We were asked to look carefully at ourselves as we are right now, always keeping our awareness in the present. We then shared our reflections with each other during a series of meetings throughout the Shokai. This

created a wonderful atmosphere of joy and thankfulness, and we all gained much from the insights that we shared. After the conclusion of the retreat we were able to bring the feeling of joy and gratitude that we all felt, and share it with the participants of the 132nd London Eza meeting, which followed immediately after the close of the retreat on Sunday afternoon.

The Shokai retreat opened on Friday evening with the traditional ‘Vow of Sincere Practice’ given by Ms Sally H in which she shared much insight, which helped greatly to bring the theme of the Shokai into focus for all of us. Following Sally’s vow, Rev. Sato welcomed everyone to this Shokai with a Dharma-talk which touched on many important points, particularly the fragility and fleetingness of life and how we need to realise the importance of being mindful and aware of the unconditional love of Amida Buddha which saves us.

Following our evening meal we all met again in the

Buddha-room, and some of us shared our reflection on A Moment That Changed My World. This was a very moving and insightful experience; it is always a privilege to hear and share the experiences of Dharma-friends.

Saturday was a full and busy day. It is also the only full day of the retreat and as such Dharma-friends have the great opportunity to really experience being part of Sangha, the third of the Buddha's 'Three Jewels'. This really did happen, bringing a special quality to all our activities. The day started with an early morning work session (sagyō) at 6.30am. This was followed by a Zazen session (seated meditation) that put us all in a positive frame of mind for the morning service, and the rest of the day.

After breakfast Rev. Ishii gave a talk on A Moment That Changed my World. It was very inspiring as he allowed us to share his experience of participation in an inter-faith meeting in Myanmar, between Anglicans and Buddhists, in which over 60 people took part from all over the world although, sadly, there were no local Buddhist representatives in attendance. Rev. Ishii also relayed an impression of the recent Spring School at Three Wheels, reading from a letter written by Miss Tomo Watanabe aged

12.

Her letter revealed how, based on the sutra entitled The Importance of what has been done for us by our Parents, her view of her parents and siblings had moved from one of resentment to one of gratitude and thankfulness. Following lunch we all took part in Sagyo (Work Practice) in the gardens, which brought us all together working in an atmosphere of harmony, and through this activity much was achieved. The final activity of the day was writing our impressions of the retreat and thinking about all that we had experienced during our time together.

Sunday morning was spent reflecting on what we had achieved during the retreat and we each shared our gratitude for the time we had spent together listening to the Buddha-Dharma and each other during our shared journey of A Moment That Changed My World. The 19th Shokai was a wonderful experience for all us participants.

Immediately after the closing service we had to suddenly switch gears and quickly complete all the remaining preparations for that afternoon's London Eza.

**Sam Kelly**

## **Mindfulness in Shin Buddhism The 132nd London Eza**

Following the conclusion of our 19th Shokai Retreat just a few hours previously Three Wheels was delighted to welcome a large number of guests, including a number of new visitors, to the 132nd London Eza. The meeting was both lively and reflective, benefiting from a number of fresh comments and insights especially from those visiting Three Wheels for the first time. I was very pleased by the end of the meeting to see such happy expressions on the faces of all the participants who had been enjoying the warm, welcoming atmosphere the service and talks created.

After the service to the Buddha, Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato presented his talk entitled Mindfulness in Shin Buddhism. For nearly twenty years now Rev. Sato has been teaching us to receive the Buddha's teaching and encounter one another in mindful stillness and quietness, as well as holding weekly meditation classes at Three Wheels. This was, however, the first time Rev. Sato had given a formal talk on mindfulness and its relationship to Shin Buddhist teaching. With all this in mind, it was indeed exciting to receive this Dharma talk that will continue to live on in our hearts, as well as in our practice, both at Three Wheels and in our everyday lives. To illustrate the essence of Rev. Sato's talk I would like to share the following quotation, "If you become mindful of the Buddha it will be enough to help you go forward. It is because you will find the Buddha's great love and compassion accepting you just as you are in the absolute quietude of mindfulness. And you will take refuge in the Buddha by entrusting yourself absolutely to him. It is your return to the starting point of faith and the foundation that is always there to support you."

Among those who were inspired to comment on Rev. Sato's talk was Mr Bill Smyly, a war veteran from the Burma Star Association. With slow and quiet dignity Mr Smyly recounted a harrowing experience from the battlefield in Burma in words that touched our hearts very deeply. Following the death of a comrade by his side he was suddenly exposed to death himself as he became visible to a passing troop of Japanese soldiers. Having seen the tragic event he had just undergone, the commander of the Japanese soldiers ordered them to pass by without shooting him. This, Mr Smyly recounted, was "mercy", the spirit of Japanese bushido, which allowed him to carry on living. I cannot help thinking that this event must have weighed very heavily on Mr Smyly's mind since that time and, today, he wanted to express all that he felt, not only to his wife and daughter who sat with him today, but also to Amida Buddha.



**Mr Bill Smyly with his wife and daughter**

Prof. John White, the person who had first encouraged Rev. Sato to hold meditation sessions at Three Wheels, expressed his happiness both at the fact that it was now an established part of the Three Wheels calendar and that the subject of mindfulness and meditation was now being actively explored at Three Wheel's parent temple, Shogyoji, in Japan through the guidance of Ven. Chimyo Takehara. Prof. White said, is a two way process that is inward as well as outward. Parts of our inner selves can be like a stranger to us. Meditation is the best way to make friends with those hidden aspect of ourselves.

We next heard a report given by Mr Sam Kelly on the 19th Shokai Retreat, the theme of which was A Moment that changed my World. Nineteen participants joined the retreat that was held from Friday evening to Sunday lunchtime. You can read elsewhere in this newsletter Sam's detailed report on this event. The energy and enthusiasm of Shokai certainly overflowed into this Eza meeting and we looked forward to the next retreat that is to begin on the 20th October 2017.

Rev. Kenshin Ishii next gave a report on the events of the 16th Spring School, an educational and spiritual training session for young Japanese students which takes place annually at Three Wheels. This year twelve children took part together with three young priests from Shogyoji temple who coordinated all the activities and helped look after them. You can read separately Rev. Ishii's wonderful report on the whole event. All of the participants returned to Japan illumined by their awareness of the love and compassion given by others, not least their parents, which surrounds them at all times and in all places. We were also delighted to hear Miss Hitoe Ishii's own personal account of what she had received participating in the Spring School.

The Eza concluded as always with the chanting of Nenbutsu before Amida Buddha, the sound of which arose from, and then returned to, stillness and silence.

Andrew Webb

## The visit of Rev. Zensho Yoshihara The 133rd London Eza

*Editor's note: this is an edited version of a longer article written for Go-on, a monthly journal published by Shogyoji Temple.*

Rev. Zensho Yoshihara arrived at Three Wheels on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July and despite the long journey immediately began to share his energy and wisdom with the Sangha. I also noticed how he kept his *Rikka* master's book 'Masukaki' with him always; as if careful to keep his teacher's advice close to his heart.

The following day Rev. Yoshihara demonstrated the art of *Ikebana* (flower arranging) to a small group of *taya* residents and Dharma friends, creating three different arrangements: the first a small arrangement for the Buddha shrine, the second a large 'freestyle' *Rikka*-inspired arrangement, and the final one an arrangement expressing the spirit of hospitality. As one would expect, watching a master at work is an extraordinary experience which I cannot describe adequately here. Of the few points that I could notice from my narrow viewpoint, however, I was especially struck by the fact that out of all the material gathered for the arrangements there were only a few handfuls of waste matter. I feel that this observation may be explained by Rev. Yoshihara's realisation, which he spoke about the following day, that "Breaking through our preconceptions and making the best use we can of a branch's natural tastefulness, rather than seeking to force it to conform to a basic standard, [is] a far better way to accord with the original life of that branch."

Rev. Yoshihara's talk at the 133<sup>rd</sup> London Eza on the Sunday afternoon was a wonderful event, warmly conveying not only his personal and spiritual journey but also many fascinating and historical points regarding *Bukka* and *Rikka* flower arranging. At a personal level the most significant moment for me was when he showed the gathered audience

a photo of an arrangement I had seen at Kasugayama Gagaku Mido (music hall at Shogyoji Temple) many years earlier. However, on seeing the arrangement I realised that I could not feel the same feeling as I had back then. My mind had long since changed and become clouded over by blind passions. On realising this I felt as though Rev. Yoshihara's visit to England was made for myself alone, to remind me of my Chomon (Introspection session held at Shogyoji Temple). I was like a flower reviving in the hands of his "true *Ikebana*, the kind that transforms death into life."



Mr Satoru Ishii and Rev. Zensho Yoshihara

Following Rev. Yoshihara's talk there was lots of quick fire questions from the participants on the practical and design aspects of Rev. Yoshihara's arrangements. Mr Satoru Ishii, a special guest visiting from Shogyoji temple, noted that this was the first time he had visited London since the Williamson monument unveiling in 2013. Hearing that Rev. Yoshihara had been asked to give a talk on flower arrangement he specially requested to accompany him to London. Although he had heard Rev. Yoshihara speak over many years on various aspects of flower arranging, this

was the very first time he had heard the complete story from him. Mr Ishii also expressed his happiness at hearing the *Ofumi* (Letter by Rennyo Shonin) read in English during the service to the Buddha. This experience made him feel the great effort Rev. Sato had made to translate the *Ofumi* and he also expressed gratitude to Prof. John White for encouraging Rev. Sato to publish his translation. Rev. Kenshin Ishii was touched by Rev. Yoshihara's words about being given "new life". Until he became a priest at the age of 27 he felt that he had been wasting his life. It was through being ordained that he was given new life through the Buddha-dharma. "My role in life is to treasure the life I have been given and share my joy with others," he said.

Rev. Sato was deeply moved by Rev. Yoshihara's account of his awakening to the true meaning of flower arranging in his 80s. He saw through these words how the person he views as his senior Dharma-friend and an accomplished teacher is an eternal student. "The occasion of this talk is my real encounter with Zensho-san," he stated.

In conclusion, Rev. Zensho Yoshihara's visit to Three Wheels truly provided a living example of the relationship between pure faith and symbolic forms.

**Andy B**



**Two flower arrangements at Three Wheels**

## Interfaith Consultation Conference in Myanmar

*Editor's Note: Rev. Kemmyo Sato and Rev. Kenshin Ishii were invited to an Interfaith conference in Yangon, Myanmar which was held from 16th to 20th January 2017. The purpose of the conference was to hold a consultation on Anglican-Lutheran-Buddhist relations in Myanmar and find a way to heal the troubled divisions between the Christian and Buddhist communities. Following the conference Rev. Sato wrote this letter to the organisers to express his gratitude for being able to participate in this landmark interfaith event.*

Thank you for inviting Reverend Ishii and I to take part in the wonderful interfaith consultation in Yangon. From the moment of our arrival at the consultation venue we were so very impressed by the loving kindness shown to us by all the other Buddhist and Christian participants.

There were so many wonderful events throughout the consultation, but I especially appreciated the Bible reading sessions on 19th January. Bishop Michael Ipgrave, whose preparations for the meeting were perfect, asked us to reflect as to which character in the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 12*) we most identified ourselves. Father Stephen Oo, Archbishop of Yangon, who was sitting at the same table as me, declared that he saw himself as the wounded traveler. My answer was that for Buddhists, the thieves who attacked the traveller, that is to say ourselves, represent our own blind passions and attachments. Father Oo responded that a similar interpretation existed in the Christian tradition, with Christians seeing the thieves as representing their own sinfulness. This episode was, for me, a marvelous and fascinating encounter with the profound spirituality of the Christian tradition and especially with Father Stephen's own individual understanding. I found him to be a man of profound simplicity and devout faith.

On the final day, when we were having a wonderful discussion about all the events of the last four days, Father

Stephen said something along the lines of, "Buddhists arrived and uncovered the bushel and light came." Hearing these words I instantly experienced a surge of confidence regarding my own participation in the consultation at Yangon. I now feel convinced that good things will come in the future, not only in the context of interfaith dialogue but also in the context of reconciliation, all based on the foundations already attained through our encounters. My joy was also increased even further when Father Michael Jackson, Archbishop of Dublin, whose thoughtfulness and heartfelt care of every participant impressed me very much, said towards the end of the conference, "We need Buddhist help." In experiencing these joys, the important thing for me now is to become fully aware that I am already in the embrace of unconditional love and to love others based on this awareness.

As a Buddhist it was a great pleasure for me to note that in the last passage of the *Statement of the Participants of the Consultation on Anglican-Lutheran-Buddhist Relations, Yangon, Myanmar, 16-20 January, 2017*, it says (in regard to future meetings and encounters), 'Inclusion of Buddhist and Christian Scriptures for reflection and study'. This opens up for us Japanese the possibility of contributing in some way, however minutely, to the country and people we devastated with our invasion. This is my humble and sincere hope, constrained only by the fact that I live in London.

Thank you once again for inviting me to participate in such a wonderful meeting and for the enormous and continuing effort put into its organisation by all the Christian friends.

With many thanks and best wishes.

**Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato**

## Garden Open days 2017

A Big Thank You to all our friends who supported the Garden Open Days 2017.

First of all let me introduce the part of the letter we received from Mrs Penny Snell, Hon. County Organiser London for the National Garden Scheme.

*“Thank you so much for supporting the National Garden Scheme and for every generous donation which will help us try to reach our target for London Gardens in 2017. As you know, this year is the 90th birthday of NGS so we are hoping for a bumper year...”*

We welcomed 175 visitors over 4 afternoons in June. As a result we have managed to raise £596.95 for the NGS. These open days are an opportunity for us to introduce our beautiful Zen garden and also our activities at Three Wheels, so please spread the word to your friends and family so they can join us at these events.

All the income generated from our volunteers such as selling tea and books has been donated to the running of Three Wheels.

We cannot thank all the volunteers' enough for their help and support, which made this event possible and successful. We would also like to express a special thank you to Mr Masayuki Ogawa, a professional gardener and landscaper from Kyoto, who has been staying every summer at Three Wheels for several weeks in July over the last 18 years. During that period he volunteers his time for the pruning and maintenance of the trees around the perimeter of the Zen Garden. We are very grateful for all his great efforts. Dates for the 2018 Garden Open Days are yet to be confirmed. Please visit the Three Wheels website for updates.

**Kaori Punwani**

## Activities for the Young Pre-school Children's Meeting at Three Wheels

On 27th May 2017 Three Wheels held its first Saturday meeting for pre-school children up to the age of 4 years old. This meeting is in addition to the monthly Infants meeting held on a weekday so as to allow children who go to nursery or are in day care to join in this activity. We had a wonderful time with our children at the temple. I came away feeling very enthusiastic and encouraged that our own child is being given the opportunity to receive a spiritual education at a very early stage in his life.

We sat together in the Buddha-room and the children had a short period of meditation. We were very impressed by their ability to sit quietly together. We then had a service before the Buddha shrine following which Rev. Ishii spoke to the children about the importance of being able to be still and peaceful. Next we moved to the *taya* house next door where the children played together and the adults shared conversation.

To learn to be able to sit quietly, bow their heads and say the Nenbutsu is the most precious gift for our children. Also for us parents to have the opportunity to talk together and share both our joys and sufferings is a most special time. As Rev Ishii mentioned in our discussion time what makes our meetings at Three Wheels special is the fact that we have the Buddha-room. This sacred space gives us the unique opportunity for our children to start becoming familiar with Buddhist teachings and etiquette. As parents we can then continue practising with our children the way of sitting quietly and respectfully before the Buddha in our own homes. Step by step this will then help bring harmony into all areas of our lives. If you are interested in bringing your child along to this activity please email Three Wheels for further details.

**Mako Webb**

## A Poem by Matsuo Basho

*yo ni sakaru  
hana nimo nebutsu  
mōshi keru*

**To blossoms blooming  
in this world, I have also  
said the Nenbutsu**

*This haiku written by Matsuo Basho is from a new translation by Prof. John White of a selection of his poems.*

*Editors' Note.*

*For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter or if you want to provide material for inclusion, please contact Three Wheels Temple.*

*Edited and created by the Three Wheels Editorial Committee.*

**All donations are welcome**

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