



Three Wheels NEWS



Three Wheels is a branch of Shogyoji Temple in Japan

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“A Light Endlessly Working”

The Funeral Service for the Late Prof. John White

The funeral ceremony was an occasion in which all the generations of the Three Wheels Sangha, together with old friends of Prof. White and many Dharma friends from Shogyoji Temple via a live video link, could come together to commemorate his life and express our deepest gratitude for everything Prof. White has done for us and continues to do, even after his death.

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In preparation for the funeral service, Rev. Keimei Takehara together with Rev. Emmyo Sato and Mr Masayuki Ogawa, flew to London to join Rev. Kemmyo Sato, Rev. Kenshin Ishii and his wife Sanae to meticulously plan and prepare for the funeral ceremony. Through Mr Ogawa's unstinting work during the days leading up to the funeral ceremony, the Zen Garden was restored to its original pristine glory in honour of Prof. White.

As Rev. Keimei Takehara later remarked, the funeral ceremony for Prof. White began not on the day itself but as soon as the many preparational activities for it started. Under the supervision of Rev. Kenshin Ishii, a large number of Dharma friends gathered at Three Wheels to assist in cleaning the temple and grounds so that when Prof. White's coffin returned to Three Wheels on the eve of his funeral, the atmosphere and environment of the temple felt completely peaceful and pure.

The funeral ceremony itself was led by Rev. Keimei Takehara, representing Ven. Chimyo Takehara, the Head Priest of Shogyoji. Rev. Kemmyo Sato, Prof. White's brother-in-Dharma, fulfilled the role of representing Prof. White's family. Following the chanting of the traditional Shin Buddhist funeral liturgy, Rev. Keimei Takehara read a Eulogy written by Ven. Chimyo Takehara entitled 'A Tribute to Bodhisattva White' in which he with "utmost reverence" posthumously bestowed upon Prof. White the Dharma name of 久遠劫保和燈菩薩 Kuongo Howato Bosatsu, "Eternally Peace-Keeping Light Bodhisattva".



Prof. John White

Ven. Takehara's eulogy revealed the true essence of Professor White's life in which he, over the course of twenty-nine years until the very moment he died, "worked very hard as a bodhisattva". He dedicated his life to the creation of a Shin Buddhist Sangha in the UK and establishing a two-way spiritual

encounter with Shogyoji Temple in Japan. Prof. White was still working at his desk at Three Wheels when he suddenly died whilst writing down his thoughts on the profound teachings of Shinran Shonin, "and thus he returned to the Pure Land like a phoenix soaring into the sky".

One of Prof. White's greatest contributions to Three Wheels was his design and creation of its unique Zen Garden, which Ven. Takehara wrote "is a symbol of his being, of his true body. It will continue to be lovingly raked and maintained, preserving its purity". It was the creation of the Zen Garden that began an ever-widening process of encounter between East and West that continues to grow and develop, fulfilling Prof. White's innermost wish for true international friendship and exchange.

As Ven. Takehara made clear to us at the end of his eulogy, Prof. White continues to work for us as an eternal Bodhisattva from the true world of Dharma-nature who will endlessly manifest himself as "that innermost core of sincerity within everyone protecting this Dharma garden, and will thereby make the fulfilment of the Pure Land adornments ever clearer for all of us".

The eight speakers who next gave their messages of condolence represented all of the important aspects of Prof. White's many faceted life. It was with both feelings of profound grief at losing a dear and treasured friend and mentor, together with their deepest joy and gratitude for the way John's love and compassion had altered the course of their lives, that they each related something uniquely special they had experienced through their encounter with him.

Representing University College London, where Prof. White taught as an art historian eventually becoming its Pro-Provost, Prof Nick Tyler recalled how he met Prof White due the 150th Anniversary commemoration for the arrival of the Choshu students in England. Prof. Tyler learned from him about their “journey of peace” and felt such incredible admiration for Prof. White’s foresight and ability to understand the depths of the relationship between the Choshu students and Prof. Alexander Williamson.

selfless work he carried out in quietness and stillness, with no attachment to the result.

Miss Jessica Adkins first met Prof. White when she was a very young child and always regarded him as her godfather. Shortly before his death, whilst still extremely weak and fatigued, Prof. White dictated to Jessica the concluding haiku for the last volume of poetry he completed. It read:

A finish
can be

of this, that
or everything.

Which will this
one be?

Mrs Latifa El Ahmadi was Prof. White’s housekeeper and was deeply devoted to him over many years. He seemed to her like a father rather than an employer and she looked forward to seeing him every week. She felt that Prof. White was now in a very special and peaceful place.

In his Address of Thanks, Rev. Kemmyo Sato spoke of Prof. White’s original encounter with Ven. Chimyo Takehara, which was the fountainhead of the innumerable spiritual events which flowed from it. Finding out, several days after his death, that Ven. Takehara always saw Prof. White as a Bodhisattva, Rev. Sato came to understand their encounter with one another as a rare historical event in which two Bodhisattvas met in mindful contemplation of one another in the deepest spiritual dimension.

Rev. Sato described how, following that momentous encounter, Prof. White laid aside all his extraordinary achievements as a world-renowned scholar in the field of art history in order to pour his entire energy into the establishment of Three Wheels. This was the work of a Bodhisattva that he continued right up until the very last moment of his life, when he died at Three Wheels after vowing to spend his remaining days there. It was after his death, Rev. Sato continued, that John’s true being emerged, “This eternal Bodhisattvaship, or never-ending altruism is still working for us and will always continue to do so”

Following the traditional offering of incense in gratitude for Prof. White’s life, his coffin was carried out to the viewing hut of the Zen Garden for his final viewing of the garden he designed and created. Rev. Kemmyo Sato and Mr Masayuki Ogawa, who had such profound, life-changing encounters with Prof White, especially during



The funeral service for the late Prof. John White

Representing the Buddhist Society, Dr. Desmond Biddulph paid tribute on behalf of the wider Buddhist community in the UK to the life of Prof. White who, in his search for the truth of the Buddha’s teaching, “did not leave a stone unturned”. Dr. Biddulph was very grateful to have been involved in the publication of the three volumes of haiku poetry by Basho, Buson and Issa that were translated by Prof. White and Rev. Kemmyo Sato. These three poets each represented three of the most important aspects of Mahayana Buddhism and these books will be a lasting tribute to him. For Three Wheels, Dr Biddulph continued, Prof. White was a real pillar, and a true example of a life fully lived from the whole heart.

Dr Stephen Montgomery first met Prof White in 1998 at UCL and soon became a close friend to him, witnessing the growth of his very special relationships with Rev. Kemmyo Sato and Mr Kenji Toda. Dr. Montgomery was very touched by the dialogues between Prof. White and Ven Chimyo Takehara. When the latter asked Prof. White if he had a teacher, Professor White immediately replied, “I have no special teacher, everyone around me is a teacher”. This answer reminded Venerable Takehara of the spirit of Bodhisattva “Never-despise” who always feels heartfelt respect towards others, never belittling them.

Prof. Hideaki Nagase addressed his words of gratitude to Prof. White “For teaching me, guiding me and inspiring my thoughts. Without which I could not be the person I am today”. He remembered with great fondness their long conversations over dinner on topics such as Buddhism, quantum physics and the nature of illusion. Mrs Kaori Punwani saw, over the many years she knew Prof. White since she was a young student, his commitment and dedication towards the growth of the Three Wheels Sangha and future generations of followers. This was



The final viewing of the Zen Garden

the time of the construction of the garden, sat by his side and raised a glass of Sake as a final toast to him. The song, 'You Raise Me Up', performed by Dharma-friends from the Shogyoji Ladies group, was played as a final tribute to Prof. White's life. Professor White would have been overjoyed to see the pristine beauty of the Zen Garden at that moment.

In closing this report, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to Ven. Chimyo Takehara, Rev. Keimei Takehara, Rev. Kemmyo Sato, Rev. Kenshin Ishii and all Dharma friends from Shogyoji Temple in Japan and

Three Wheels in London, for everything they did at Prof. White's funeral ceremony to make real his innermost wish for pure harmony within diversity. As Ven. Chimyo Takehara expressed so movingly in his eulogy, Prof. White will always be together with us as an eternal Bodhisattva, illumining the way for all of us ignorant beings, as a light endlessly working from the world in which being and not being are equal.

Andrew Webb

Amida Buddha, Transcendence and Otherness **The 152nd London Eza**

On 12th April 2021, twenty-eight guests joined Three Wheels residents to listen to what Prof. John White has declared his "last talk". His erudite and compassionate presentation, drawing on three decades of study and reflection, expressed his deep wish for the Nenbutsu Sangha to go ever beyond the range of conceptual limits and the conflicts that such attachments can cause. In the spirit of the great Mahāyāna Sūtras, he encouraged us to consider the use of the words "transcendence" and "otherness", as these can help us avoid the polarisations that arise from attempting to address the limitations of language through negation.



**Prof. John White giving his talk to Dharma friends
via Zoom**

Prof. White's talk gave rise to many questions and impressions. Mr Andrew Webb, a trustee of Three Wheels, thanked John and said that his talks always show us a clear direction. Mr Sam Kelly and other Dharma friends also took the opportunity to thank Prof. White for everything

he has done to help develop and protect Three Wheels as a place of spiritual encounter. Prof. White responded: "You have all transformed my life. None of us has a permanent self and I am certainly not who I was thirty years ago." He also spoke of the value of ignorance, which he said, "can be a useful tool when used properly". "The thing is to be interested all the time, to live moment to moment without hopes and fears, and with concentration. We all make mistakes. We shouldn't be frightened. Press on!"

Several people asked Prof. White about the relationship between this talk and his previous one on the subject of haiku. John spoke of the importance of spontaneity and said that one should simply look at things with openness, coming back to look again and again. Rev. Ishii noted that this is precisely how Prof. White developed his vision of the Three Wheels Zen garden, through many visits and encounters with the famous Ryōan-ji garden in Kyōto. Rev. Ishii also shared an account of John's first visits to Shogyoji and said that he felt that John had gone to Japan as a practitioner to find the truth of life for himself and for people of the future.

Rev. Sato concluded the meeting by saying that "what is behind John's talk is unconditional love. The way he shows us is beyond conflict. What I can do is just take refuge. Namu Amida-butsu"

The English poet John Burnside once wrote, "The soul that magnifies the unsayable other is itself magnified". This seems to me to be a very apt description of the kind of greatness that all Dharma friends could feel about Prof. John White as he delivered his final, life-giving address to the Sangha.

Andy B.

Virtue Transference **The 153rd London Eza**

Even before we gathered online for the mid-summer Eza, Dharma friends were already talking with excited anticipation about Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato's talk on "Shinran Shōnin's Notion of Returning Ekō". It may be that Rev. Kenshin Ishii's own talk at the Shokai retreat

this spring, titled "Prince Shotoku and His Manifestations around Me", gave Dharma friends an intuition that gensō ekō (returning virtue-transference) is the fundamental basis of the faith-movement of the Sangha.

Rev. Sato said that he wanted to speak about returning virtue-transference because, “there exists a group of Shin Buddhist scholars who are rather reluctant to discuss it. They assume that returning virtue-transference is a gift we receive from Amida after our death”. Rev. Sato, however, wished to demonstrate that the “returning ekō” was actually far from a “fanciful notion” but rather Shinran Shonin’s actual faith experience. As Rev. Sato stated with great energy, “Shinran Shonin had to talk about gensō ekō because it was the reality he saw in front of him. He encountered his master Honen Shonin as a bodhisattva coming to save him.”

Shin Buddhists are correctly taught that there is no virtue-transference from the side of the karmic self, but due to this they can sometimes fall into doubt about Shinran Shonin’s teaching on “love in the Path of Pure Land Buddhism” as “quickly attaining Buddhahood by pronouncing the Nenbutsu”. Rev. Sato addressed this problem in careful detail in his talk but, to summarise, he explained: “In this reality of Namu-Amida-butsu, in this unadorned sole recitation of the Nenbutsu, there is no bifurcation, no duality, no intellectual discrimination. Nor is there any distinction between subject and object, student and teacher, giver and receiver, speaker and audience, ōsō and gensō, after death or during life. They are all as one in the absolute reality of the working of Amida’s unconditional love, Namu-Amida-butsu, Namu-Amida-butsu.”

Following the talk there was an opportunity for people to ask questions and share their impressions. Mr Max Nilsson-Ladner expressed his thanks for Rev. Sato’s talk and spoke about the difficulty of seeing others as Bodhisattvas. This allowed Rev. Sato to clarify, “Seeing others as Bodhisattvas is not a ‘duty’ of Shin Buddhists, but as Shinran Shonin describes, a fact of faith experience.”

Mr Neil Chase said that he used to think of the Pure Land as a faraway place but now, through Dharma friends, he could find it shining vibrantly in this world and life. Responding to a similar remark from another Dharma friend, Rev. Sato agreed with both comments but re-emphasised that in our daily lives we easily fall into the habit of intellectual division and discrimination. “Just say Nenbutsu, Namu-Amida-butsu”, he stressed once again. Mr Dave Zimmerman thanked Rev. Sato for his talk and said that it was a good reminder that the Nenbutsu way is “not some merit-based game where you accumulate and call in rewards when you die.” “Virtue-transference happens in the moment that you say Nenbutsu”, he added.

Rev. Kenshin Ishii thanked Rev. Sato and said that while living at Shogyoji he never wondered about gensō ekō at all, as it seemed evident all around him. This contrasted with his experience when he first came to England. One day though, he heard English Dharma friends sincerely the pronouncing Nenbutsu and he found himself in exactly the same spiritual “place” as when he was with Dharma friends at Shogyoji. Rev. Ishii also talked about how the moment of attaining faith is like going through a spiritual funeral and being born into a new life, and noted that the traditional expression, “To go is easy and yet no one is born there”, indicates that those born in the Pure land immediately return to benefit all beings.

Although the subject of Rev. Sato’s talk was profound and complex, the simple message to simply take refuge and pronounce the Nenbutsu came across very clearly and tenderly in his peaceful and loving way of speaking to the gathered Dharma friends.

Andy B.

On John’s First Talk at Shogyoji The 154th London Eza

The September 2021 London Eza, incorporating as usual the ceremony of reconciliation between Great Britain and Japan, was held online due to the continuing pandemic. Around twenty-five people – including Rev. Miki Nakura of the New York Shin Buddhist Sangha and two other North American guests – chanted service together, listened to a talk by Rev. Kemmyo Sato and had a lively discussion afterwards.

Rev. Sato’s talk was entitled “On John’s First Talk at Shogyoji”, prompted by the recent online publication of over 1500 of Prof. John White’s poems, under the title of “Done for the Doing”, as well as the forthcoming online publication of the twenty-eight talks Prof. White has delivered at Shogyoji Temple over the past twenty-eight years. It was the first time for many of those listening to become aware of the enormous amount that Prof. White has done for the temple.

These contributions include his involvement in the founding of Three Wheels, the creation of the Zen garden, the establishment of the memorials to the pioneering

Chōshū and Satsuma students and to Professor and Mrs Williamson who took care of them, the Japanese-British reconciliation movement, the construction of the Stupa of Namu-Amida-butsu at Brookwood cemetery, and numerous publications aimed at, in Prof. White’s words, “the further development of mutual understanding between British and Japanese.” Rev. Sato expressed his deep personal thanks to Prof. White for all of his efforts and made clear that he wanted Dharma friends to understand the deep roots of his dear friend’s work. The Three Wheels community “should never allow ourselves to forget this fundamental ideal of mutual understanding underlying all his actions, so full of love and compassion.”

Rev. Sato pointed out that, following his original encounter with Ven. Chimyo Takehara and his followers, Prof. White put aside his own career as a world-renowned scholar in the field of Western art history, and devoted the next twenty-eight years of his life to helping us create and develop Three Wheels in all manner of innovative ways. Revisiting Prof. White’s first talk, Rev. Sato found himself “both shocked and amazed by its contents” because “what

John had been speaking about or promising back then in that very early talk, [is now] fully realised in the form of the wonderful Sangha of Three Wheels with all its Dharma friends... All the benefits and gifts we receive nowadays from the Sangha, whether practical or spiritual, were actually foretold in that early talk and we can find the signs hidden in that talk given a full twenty-eight years ago.

Rev. Sato described how it was John's poem: "You of pure faith, I who am certain of nothing, travel the one road," that personally gave him the impetus to "entrust" his life to his friend and fellow traveller. However, on revisiting Prof. White's original talk and discovering all that had been wonderfully achieved in the Sangha, Rev. Sato said that he now realised that John wasn't simply an "exceedingly good friend" but "at the same time [...] a manifestation in the form of a bodhisattva of the Ultimate Truth (Dharmakāya-in-itself) that is formless beyond words, inconceivable, incomprehensible and inexpressible." Prof. White's quiet resolution in the above poem sounds, Rev. Sato said, "like an expression of the bodhisattva's vow to benefit oneself as well as others or, put another way, to love others as oneself [... a vow that] has been most wonderfully fulfilled during the course of the last twenty-eight years."



Rev. Sato was delighted to welcome many guests on line

Rev. Sato also highlighted two specific points that he feels Prof. White has elucidated very clearly for members of the Sangha. Firstly, in his last Shogyoji talk, entitled "Amida Buddha, Otherness and Transcendence", he emphasised the importance of "otherness" which (as John put it) "simply says that whatever it is, or whatever kind or quality of thing it may be that comes into your mind, a Buddha differs from it, as it does from anything else you could ever conceive." Rev. Sato said, "It is quite amazing the way a Westerner's sharp insight into the Buddha-dharma was able to dig, no, gouge, out this crucial point." Secondly, Rev. Sato highlighted John's phrase "Done for the doing". In the Buddhist context, Rev. Sato said, "[This] stands for a bodhisattva's pure act of doing for the doing in order to benefit the self and others simultaneously." "All that was said in John's original Shogyoji talk has been achieved miraculously," Rev. Sato said with tears of gratitude. Following Rev. Sato's talk, several of the trustees of the Three Wheels London Shogyoji Trust were invited to

speak. Mr Montgomery said that he felt so lucky to know John, and that his friend was a person who would never stop being active until he is finally stopped by death. Prof. Nagase also expressed his gratitude for John's friendship and example, saying how he deeply valued his attitude of always "doing for the doing" and continual striving. Mrs Crellin spoke of how she had come to understand John more deeply over the years and feel gratitude for his contributions, while Mr Andrew Webb expressed how much he had learnt from John's "careful determination". Rev. Ishii also informed everyone that Andrew Webb had recently taken over from John as Honorary Secretary. He reported that John was very pleased to see that Andrew had understood and continued his way of record keeping, which aims to help people in the future understand not only what was decided in the past but also the context in which it was decided. "John's foresight is not only for the next two to three years," Rev. Ishii said, "but for fifty or a hundred years. It shows us his faith that people will keep the Three Wheels Sangha spiritually active."

Rev. Miki Nakura, of the New York Shin Buddhist Sangha, spoke of his recent stay at Three Wheels and shared his gratitude. He said that he was "so impressed to meet a real Sangha, being led there by Amida Buddha". He also said that reading Rev. Sato's talk, and thinking about Prof. White's way of living, he came to reflect on the importance of resolving "the great matter of the after-life" (rebirth).

Rev. Kenshin Ishii said that, while it was wonderful for us all to gratefully celebrate John's great life and work, it was important to understand three deep aspects of Rev. Sato's talk. Firstly, the importance of spiritual "Encounter", as seen in the encounter between Prof. White and Ven. Chimyo Takehara. Secondly, becoming aware of what has been done for us by others, as seen in Prof. White giving up his career and reputation to serve the truth that he had encountered at Shogyoji. Thirdly, to understand the nature of practice. On this last point, Rev. Ishii described how one time he heard Rev. Sato answer the question, "What is Shin Buddhist practice?" Rev. Sato had replied, "Nothing special... every moment is our practice."

Rev. Ishii said that recently he received a phone call that Prof. White had suffered a fall while out at the shops. While he was searching for John his mind was so stressed and anxious. However when he found him at last, John said quietly, "Here you are Kenshin!" and at that moment his mind became peaceful. "John and Amida Buddha have been teaching me that I need to be peaceful and settled," Rev. Ishii said, "I need to be ready to say goodbye to anyone, even though I feel sadness." Rev. Ishii added that he found this awakening, which is very hard to put into words, expressed beautifully in Prof. White's poem:

In this small garden
Amida Buddha awaits
Building his Pure Land
Three Wheels

Ms Judy Patterson, whose father died at the age of 100 last year, was moved to tears by hearing Rev. Ishii's

comments and thanked him saying, “It was very important to hear someone talk about [this] and I was so glad to hear you.” She also added that John’s last talk really helped her to understand what real encounter is between people, especially his words, “Ignorance can open the door to discovery”.

Rev. Sato closed the meeting by reminding everyone of D. T. Suzuki’s words that the ultimate truth is “both in and beyond us”. Rev. Sato said, “If you seek after Buddha outside you can’t get it. Sink within, introspect within and beyond at the same time – and then you will be at one with everything. That is why I don’t mind if John says he a Buddhist or not. He is a Bodhisattva – a manifestation of the truth that is within us. I came to England thinking I was coming to “a land of no Buddha” but I was wrong. Behind every human being is Buddha nature within and beyond us. Look at John and you will understand everything. The

essence of what I want to say can be found in this poem from John’s original talk:

Consider

one leaf

falling.

It will tell you all

that you need

to know.

Andy B.

The Pure Land and This World The 28th Shokai Retreat and the 155th London Eza

Over the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd of October Three Wheels held its biannual Shokai Retreat, followed by the annual Hoonko Otorikoshi Ceremony celebrating the memorial of Shinran Shonin, the founder of the Shin Buddhist tradition. Although many activities had continued online over the preceding months, this was the first time since before the Covid pandemic that it had been possible to hold meetings in person. As a result, it was such a happy occasion for everyone to meet old and new Dharma friends after such a long time. Some members who for various reasons had been away from Three Wheels for even longer, were especially happy to be back, and very warmly expressed their joy.

Other participants, who mainly for reasons of distance were not able to join in person, could join through a Zoom link. Even Rev. Kemmyo Sato, head priest of Three Wheels, who at that time was staying at our parent temple Shogyoji, was still able to join and teach and guide us from there. With the large screen, which had recently been very kindly donated by a Dharma friend, and with Rev. Kenshin Ishii’s technical skills, it was as if the online participants were joining in person as well.

On the morning of the 2nd of October everyone gathered in the Buddha room and the Shokai Retreat began with a service to set the scene and concentrate everyone’s minds. This was followed by a Vow of Sincere Practice given by Mr Christopher Duxbury, which created the perfect atmosphere for the entire retreat. Christopher started by saying that during the Coronavirus pandemic, he had become aware of how much he was being supported by the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and how Three Wheels had been an island of safety for him. Christopher then spoke of how Rev. Ishii had taught him that in its simplest sense, Shin Buddhist practice could be described as “Thank you and sorry”, but said that on reflection he realised that he

had been much more focused on the former rather than the latter. In his vow he said that as well as saying the Nenbutsu with gratitude and sincerity, he would also like to say the Nenbutsu with humility and less self-pride.

Afterwards, and for the rest of the day, the time was devoted to listening to all the Sangha members’ reflections as to what they had absorbed and learnt over the previous few weeks on “The Pure Land, this World and Hell”.

It was wonderful and amazing to hear everyone’s reflections and it really did seem that through everyone, Amida’s light from the Pure Land was able to shine in the Buddha room. Everyone’s words contained so much obvious thought and each member could teach the Sangha as a whole so much with their insight and understanding. Everyone’s reflections on the Shokai theme came from slightly different angles which was really helpful and just went to underline the importance of Sangha. Perhaps most impressive was that the contributions given by newer members, some who were attending their first Shokai, were every bit as wonderful as those of more long-standing members, and definitely so much could be learnt from them. There definitely was a very warm and inclusive atmosphere during the meetings, with everyone absolutely accepting everyone else just as they were, which was wonderful and very heart warming.

After everyone had finished, Rev. Kenshin Ishii then commented on how pure and sincere everyone’s impressions had been. He talked about the importance of encounter, the importance of listening carefully to others, and the importance of trying to understand their heart and mind. He also reminded us, that through our reflections, we should always try to be mindful of everything that has been done for us, and of the so many people helping us.

Rev. Sato then talked about how happy he was after

listening to a Dharma friend say that being at the Shokai he felt like he was on Vulture Peak, being guided by teachers and Dharma friends. From hearing one Sangha members beautiful reflections, he said that all individuals have their own special light, no matter who they are, but it is our self-centredness and ignorance that prevents us from seeing clearly. He said this light is always shining but because of our blind passions we cannot see it. It is within us and yet beyond us and we are able to meet this light by turning within. He said the Nenbutsu itself was the Other Power gift of this light, and that we should entrust ourselves to Amida, simply pronouncing Namu-Amida-Butsu. He said that Three Wheels itself was the working of the Pure Land and we as the Sangha should keep moving forwards towards it.



Dharma friends gathered at Three Wheels for the London Eza

After the meetings had finished there was a real sense of peace and happiness, and there was plenty of time to chat and digest everything we had received, and then start thinking about preparing for the following days Hoonko Otorikoshi Ceremony.

Whilst the weather on Saturday 2nd October had been very dull, with almost constant rain, on the Sunday the skies started to clear and by late morning a beautiful cloudless blue sky was shining warm autumn sun. Many more guests arrived for the Eza and again those who could attend in person seemed so happy to be back at Three Wheels. Joining online once again was Rev. Sato from Japan, plus guests from Hong Kong, America, and Northern Scotland, amongst many others.

The Hoonko Otorikoshi Ceremony is the most important occasion in the year for Shin Buddhists. It is the time to come and express our gratitude to Shinran Shonin for everything that he has done for us. After the service Rev. Ishii gave a talk, with the same title as the Shokai theme, “The Pure Land, this World and Hell”. This talk was Rev. Ishii’s own personal impressions on this subject, and here is a very brief summary: Through his reflections on Buddhist teaching he knew that Shakyamuni Buddha had said “life is suffering”, but he came to realise that Shakyamuni Buddha also said something positive about this world, namely “life

is beautiful”, giving various examples of this from the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and Shinran Shonin’s own teaching of the meaning of faith in the Nenbutsu.

Rev. Ishii then went on to give recent examples of how, through introspection, some Dharma friends had been illuminated by Amida’s light and were able to encounter themselves. He said that Amida’s formless truth manifests itself as omnipresent light which appears to us shining through others. This is the reason why Rev. Sato teaches that every moment is our practice for Shin Buddhists. It is not easy for us, ignorant beings, to see the light because our eyes are usually closed to it. However, through listening to one another carefully, humbly and sincerely, we become aware of ourselves heavily burdened with our own karmic problems and at the same time of Amida’s unconditional love that embraces all of us entirely with no discrimination.

Rev. Ishii then went on to share an encounter he had had with his Dharma friend Andy while he was writing his talk. He had explained to Andy how his talk was going, and Andy said how it naturally reminded him of the famous story of Bennen. At that very instant Rev. Ishii was illuminated by the light of Amida and able to see himself clearly, and at the same time see Amida’s compassion through his good Dharma Friend. To conclude his talk Rev. Ishii reminded us of the importance of the Hoonko Otorikoshi Ceremony, and it being a special time for all Shin Buddhists to express their deepest gratitude to Shinran Shonin for all that he has done for us.

One guest commented that it seemed that having a self-centred, discriminating mind could be likened to Hell, while through having a selfless mind, you could see Amida’s light and a glimpse of the Pure Land. Another said that from the talk she liked to think that “life is beautiful”, and that by coming to Three Wheels she was able to do so. Several guests commented on the importance of encounter within the Sangha. One guest said he had learnt about the importance of listening to others carefully, and how through discussions you can see things differently.

Following this Rev. Kemmyo Sato, joining online from Japan, spoke to everyone. Rev. Sato commented that Shin Buddhism is a religion of awareness and a religion of gratitude. He said if we look into ourselves with quiet introspection we will become aware of our karmic reality, then at such a point we cannot but feel grateful for all that has been done for us. Gratitude is not a duty or responsibility in Shin Buddhism but is something completely natural and spontaneous.

After Rev. Sato’s words it was time to inform everyone of recent news and upcoming events and to finish the meeting, and then enjoy a delicious buffet with time to socialise and reflect.

To Have Good Friends is Everything The 156th London Eza

The 156th London Eza took place on 27th February 2022, the fourth day following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Despite the anxiety caused by the outbreak of a new war in Europe, as well as the ongoing pandemic, friends of Three Wheels were glad to gather in the peaceful atmosphere of the Sangha. Around fourteen friends also joined those meeting at the temple itself via video link, including guests from Nairobi (Kenya) and South Bend, Indiana (USA).



Rev Kemmyo Sato reading his Letter of Thanks to the late Mrs Ann Montgomery

The Eza began with a memorial service for Ann Montgomery, a founding trustee of Three Wheels, who recently passed away. Rev. Kemmyo Sato read out a letter of thanks in which he spoke of Mrs Montgomery's unstinting help, love and support for the Sangha. He recognised that her devout Anglican Christian faith deeply informed this work, and said that it was a wonderful expression of true interfaith practice.

After the service, Mr Sam Kelly and Mr Christopher Duxbury each gave a talk reflecting on their experiences as regular members of the Three Wheels Sunday Service during the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sam's talk was entitled "Amida's Light Reveals a Silver Lining from the Cloud of Lockdown". He talked about how he was a weekly visitor at Three Wheels before the pandemic, often helping with maintenance jobs around the temple, and how it was strange to be unable to visit and contribute. However, the move of Sunday Service online was "wonderful" and allowed him to "build relationships with Dharma friends through listening to their weekly experiences and reflections." Sam said he was "pleasantly surprised by the intimacy of the discussions and our ability to have real online encounters." He also explained how preparing for Sunday Service became part of his weekly spiritual routine: "[It has] given me the opportunity to reflect on what has taken place in my life each week, and to not just let each week slip into a kind of similarity with events just passing me by as though they had not happened..."

Sam, like Christopher later on, also described how

"Amida's Light shone through as [Prof. John White's memorial service] brought Dharma friends from the UK and Japan together at Three Wheels to share in a celebration of his life and achievements, during which we became even more aware of all he had done for Three Wheels and the Sangha."

He concluded by saying that, "Shinran Shonin speaks of ten benefits in a life of faith in Amida Buddha, two of which are: The Benefit of being protected constantly by the Light of Amida's Heart and the benefit of having great joy in our hearts. Through the medium of online Sunday Service Amida's Light has truly revealed a silver lining from the cloud of lockdown and given the Three Wheels Sangha added joy in our hearts, a true silver lining that may not have occurred without the intervention of the pandemic!"

Christopher's talk was entitled "Awakening to the Omnipresence of Amida Tathagata". He spoke of the great inspiration he and other Dharma friends got from Venerable Chimyo Takehara's letter which encouraged us to view the period of pandemic restrictions as a kind of "rainy season retreat" in which we could look more deeply into ourselves. This advice gave him great determination not to waste the precious opportunity, and he sought to follow Rev. Sato's advice about maintaining a steady and consistent practice.

Christopher talked about how participating in Sunday Service, and making the most of the lockdowns as a time of reflection, made him more aware of others' suffering, of all that has been done for him, and also of the Buddha-nature in others. He said that, "Without the Dharma in my life, I have no doubt my own feelings would have been heavy and negative, consumed with worry and other frustrations, and I would have only made those around me feel worse. In this way, I see the Buddha's working as small ripples of positive energy flowing out from the Buddha via Shogyoji and Three Wheels, but that ripple out well beyond just those people who have direct contact with the temple."

Going for walks each day, after spending time quietly at home, Christopher found that "the Dharma very much comes alive in connection with others." He said, "[I] become more aware of the beauty in the world around us and the people we interact with as we go about our lives, which in the past I was missing as I hurried from one situation to another... The trees on my walking route seemed to take on personalities of their own. I am in awe of how they gently and naturally constantly adapt to the changes of the weather. Their impermanence reminded me that the world isn't fixed and rigid, and I reflected how this also extends to my own sense of self."

In conclusion, Christopher said that, "In the stillness I experienced in some of the quieter times during lockdown, I received an awareness of how much I am supported. Not just in the obvious ways of friends and family, but by innumerable contributions from others over the course of

history that have got me to the point of now being warm, safe, well fed and able to live a fulfilling life. I feel like now I have become more aware of this, it is easy to feel gratitude for all that has been done for me. All I can do is to kneel before the Buddha and say Namu-Amida-butsu with gratitude.”

Following the talks, the chairman Mr Andrew Webb thanked the speakers and said that it sometimes felt difficult to look back over the past two years, as they have been at once so tumultuous and yet also in many ways somewhat monotone. However, the two Dharma friends, he said, showed us all how to digest these experiences in our spiritual practice and faith experience.

Next, the floor was open for questions and comments. Mr Sammy Richards asked the two speakers about how one can avoid one’s practice wavering when caught in a sort of foggy, numb and lost state of mind. Sam and Christopher both felt that, for them, consistency of practice over time illuminates a reliable path forward, and Christopher said, “Something small like just kneeling in front of the Buddha shrine can bring you back to the right state of mind.”

Among the online participants, Mr Neil Chase, from the USA, said that the theme of “a silver lining” really resonated for him. He said that, “About two years ago my sense of ‘vow’ as being ‘my vow’ changed to an understanding of ‘a vow working in me’. This shift coincided with the invitation to start attending the London Eza meetings online.” Neil added, “In Christopher’s talk he spoke about ‘the Dharma coming alive for him’. That is something that I feel is true about this Sangha and clearly expressed in the emphasis on interpersonal spiritual encounter.” Rev. Sato said he was very pleased to hear that Neil had picked up the point that encounter is the source of truth.

Mrs Sanae Ishii spoke emotionally about her impression of how sincere Dharma friends are in their practice and her happiness to feel that she is walking the same road together in Sangha with them. Her daughter Miss Hitoe Ishii also spoke through tears to say that hearing Sammy’s sincere question earlier made her realise that she shouldn’t take for granted how fortunate she has been to be born and live in a temple.

Rev. Kenshin Ishii said that Shakyamuni Buddha’s expression, “to have good friends is everything” summarised the meaning of everyone’s reflections. He said that even living in the temple his spirit is always trying to escape and that he is often lazy, self-centred and attached to his own point of view. It is this way of life, he said, that causes wars like we are seeing with Ukraine and Russia now. He said that, “I have been given wonderful friends. Such friends already surround me but my mind is dark. My spiritual eyes are covered, that is why I cannot realise that they surround me. Outside there is blue sky with no clouds today – Spring is just there. I have to look into my mind and feel the light of Amida that is always shining in my heart.”

Concluding the meeting Rev. Sato thanked everyone and said, “My master D. T. Suzuki said that Amida Buddha represents the altruistic impulse or Buddha-nature that comes up... unconditional love. We become aware of this wonderful working of the truth through individuals like Mrs Ann Montgomery. I am so relieved to be able to report to her husband, my friend, Mr Stephen Montgomery about the present good condition of the Sangha which Anne’s wisdom and love helped to grow.”

Andy B.

The Three Wheels are the One Wheel and the Great Wheel Turns The 29th Shokai and the 157th London Eza

The 29th Shokai retreat was held over a cool but bright weekend toward the end of April 2022. It was attended by eighteen people (two online), including three people who were attending their first in-person Shokai: Max, Pedro, and Shane. We were happy to be able to gather together after such a long time and a lively chorus of conversation could be heard throughout the temple as the Sangha welcomed the arrival of a spiritual springtime into their hearts.

The retreat began on the Friday evening with the traditional Vow of Sincere practice, which was given by Mr Max N-L. Max lives in Hong Kong but is staying in the UK until the summer, and has been helping Rev. Sato with his translation work. Max said in his Vow, “Rev. Ishii’s invitation for me to give the vow of sincere practice was like a Bodhisattva from the Pure Land shaking me awake and reminding me of the preciousness of this opportunity to practice with sincerity. [...] In line with the truth of impermanence [...] I vow to treat it with sincere reverence, as if it was the only Shokai I could ever attend.”

Following Max’s impression, Rev. Kemmyo Sato gave his Talk of Welcome. He shared three Buddhist teachings. The first was the “Teaching of the Seven Buddhas”: “Reject evil. Do good. Purify your mind.” The second was the teaching of Prince Shotoku: “The origin of doing good lies in taking refuge.” The third was the ethos of D. T. Suzuki, based on a comment of Thomas Paine: “Doing good is my religion. The world is my home.” Rev. Sato said that all of these teachings reflect the “pure act” of the Buddha for us. The meaning of “pure act” can be understood by the late Prof. White’s words, “Just do for the doing.” Rev. Sato said that “pure act” is another way of expressing the Buddha’s Compassion, while “awareness” corresponds to the Buddha’s Wisdom.

Rev. Sato told us that even though “doing for the doing” is very hard because of our blind passions, we should just become aware of our karmic situation and say sorry for it while taking refuge in the “invisible Other”. “Other”, he said, “means ‘beyond my consciousness’, ‘beyond thought’”. In that momentary instant of taking refuge, the

mind is pure.

Following the welcome service to the Buddha, and the evening meal, we held the first group meeting.

Mr Martin L said that he is often self-critical and that makes it hard for him to accept gifts or appreciation from others. However, from the pre-Shokai meetings and a conversation with Rev. Ishii, he has come to realise that the main thing is for him to just focus on realising what he has been given and then naturally he will respond, even if he doesn't always realise he is doing so.

Mr Amit K said that from his pre-Shokai group discussions he realised that he never had a heart open to graciously receiving. He said, "My critical mind is always suspicious of other intentions and what they want from me. From coming to Three Wheels this outer shell is gradually eroding."



The Participants of the Shokai Retreat

Mr Andy B said that when he was reflecting on the Sixth Spiritual Offering, of "giving someone a seat", he remembered how Prof. John White would always sit on the floor at Three Wheels meetings and that every time Rev. Ishii would always offer him a chair, which he would unfailingly decline. Andy used to think, "Rev. Ishii you know he doesn't want a chair – why don't you remember his preference?" Looking again at those scenes from the perspective of the teaching in the Seven Spiritual Offerings, Andy realised that every time Rev. Ishii offered Prof. White a seat he also gave him all the other offerings of gentle eye, kind countenance, sincere heart and so on. When John reached the end of his life, because of the continuity of Rev. Ishii's respect and love, he felt completely confident and assured that he could put his whole life and being entirely into Rev. and Mrs Ishii's care. The relationship between Prof. White (who helped found this Sangha) and the Ishii family (who now help lead and care for it) became something so profound and beautiful. Recognising this, Andy said he could really feel a vast difference between Rev. Ishii's way of practicing the Seven Spiritual Offerings and his own shallow and narrow attitude.

Ms Liz B and Mrs Tina S could not attend Shokai or the Eza as they both have sons who are very sick. Nonetheless both sent messages to the Sangha and Tina also baked a cake, despite her stressful situation, which everyone received as a beautiful expression of her love and support for Dharma friends during their retreat.

Liz said, "After the first pre-Shokai meeting, my son was in hospital with kidney stones so my life was upside down. During this time I felt very close to the Dharma as it was the only way my mind would settle. I realised how much I needed Amida's Compassionate Light when I was feeling so lost and afraid [...] During this difficult time I received gifts from complete strangers; this happened when two people in different situations just smiled at me in a really open and kind way. This really lifted my spirits and I realised how something small like a smile could have such a big impact on another person's state of mind."

Tina wrote to us, "During the discussions pre-Shokai, we touched on the expression of body language being another form of communication. For me this is quite close to my heart, as my older son is non-verbal and therefore the expression of body language really is his only form of communicating. Just seeing how he reacts and behaves can give clues, as to what is on his mind and the most important thing is paying attention to this."

On the Saturday morning, after a peaceful meditation period led by Mr Dave Z and service to the Buddha, there was a second zadan meeting. At this meeting Mr Sean S. spoke about his experience of reading the Sutra on the Seven Spiritual Offerings from the perspective of someone with autism. He said it is difficult or impossible for some people with autism to know if they are giving or receiving the gentle eye and kind countenance. However he said that he could really understand the "giving of the heart" and that his time working in the Peace Corps in Oman showed him the importance of hospitality.

Mr Andrew W told Sean about how he had met a lady with autism recently. He said she was always such a kind, friendly, bright person who he looked forward to meeting. The lady told Andrew, "Whenever I see your son he is always smiling. However because I have autism I don't smile." Andrew said that even though this lady said she couldn't smile, he had never noticed it because she always conveyed her loving kindness in many other ways.

Ms Kei S spoke about how, during a phone call, her mother used a strange made-up word which made her laugh. When she teased her Mum about it, her mother replied, "I made up the word to make you laugh. I always want to hear you being happy." This made Kei realise how much her mother is always thinking about her.

On the Sunday afternoon, following the closing ceremony of Shokai, the 157th London Eza was held on the afternoon of 24th April 2022. Rev. Kenshin Ishii shared his own reflections on the theme of the preceding retreat in a talk entitled "On the perfection of Dānā". His talk was too rich to summarise adequately here, however a few notable points follow.

Rev. Ishii said that, “even our lives and bodies are gifts from our parents, so everything in our lives are gifts for each of us. [As such] I feel that the English word ‘giving’ as a translation of *dānā* cannot be always applied because it tends to make me arrogant in assuming that I am a giver. [...] it is better for us to say ‘I share’ rather than ‘I give’ because what you are presenting is not just your possession.”

Through considering and deepening this thought, Rev. Ishii said that he came to understand why Shinran Shonin, the founder of Shin Buddhism said, “I, Shinran, have no disciples, because, when I expound the Tathāgata’s Dharma to sentient beings in the ten directions, I am simply acting as an envoy of the Tathāgata.” He said that we can clearly see that Shinran Shonin did not seek to give his own teaching but only shared his joy of entrusting himself to Amida Tathāgata and his great satisfaction of being saved by the Tathāgata. Rev. Ishii said, “I cannot help feeling Shinran Shonin’s genuine sincerity towards the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, as a Nenbutsu practitioner, one of the sentient beings to be saved.”

Rev. Ishii also told us about a recent encounter he had with Max N-L, as his own experience, which helped him understand Prof. John White’s poem, “The Meaning and Purpose of Three Wheels”. He said that when he asked Max to give the Vow of Sincere Practice for the retreat, Max sincerely accepted the opportunity and expressed his deepest gratitude for the opportunity to look into himself. When Rev. Ishii heard this response, he felt great joy. Through this experience he remembered John’s poem. “When Max’s sincerity allowed him to be grateful for receiving the opportunity, then I immediately became a receiver of his gratitude. Through our dialogue, out of the diversity of him and me, unity and harmony were immediately born. It was absolutely a spiritual encounter for me with Max in one turning wheel of the Three Wheels (giver, receiver and gift). This experience made me realise what ‘pure’ means in this poem. This purity is nothing but ‘sincerity in gratitude’. I came to understand that what John wanted to ‘share’ with all of us by composing this poem was based on what he had learnt and experienced through his spiritual encounter with Venerable Takehara and Dharma friends in the Shogyoji sangha in Japan.”

Following Rev. Kenshin Ishii’s talk, Mr Andrew Webb chaired a discussion among the Dharma friends who were present.

Mr Neil Chase, joining the meeting online from the USA, said that he often worries whether he is doing a good job as a father. However, Rev. Ishii showed him that, “I am just giving what I received” and he said that this “released me from some of my anxieties as a parent.” He added that this sense of relief gives him a space for faith to develop, as he realised that he needs to just let go of his own ideas about what he should do and simply share what he has received.

Mr Christopher Duxbury said that listening to the talk he remembered an occasion when he went to stay with his mother for a week. While he was staying he tried to help

her by doing everything. Whenever she said, “At least let me help with one thing”, he refused. Hearing Kenshin-san’s words, he realised that his mother wanted to express her parental love to him but he accidentally took away her opportunity because of his self-oriented way of trying to do something good.

Mr Andy B spoke about how Rev. Ishii had asked Mr Pedro S. to clean the stone water basin (Chouzubachi) in the Three Wheel’s Garden before the Eza. Andy saw that Pedro worked really hard, even removing and cleaning every individual stone from underneath the basin, and also missing the first part of the lunch break to complete his work. Andy said that even though it was Pedro’s first Shokai his attitude was much better than Andy’s own attitude to practice.

Pedro replied that at home his parents also had a water basin at their house and he had simply copied the way they washed it. He felt that he should show the same respect to the temple as his parents showed to the home where he was brought up. Rev. Ishii said in response that if you take responsibility for even one small thing at the temple – like washing the water basin – then the temple will become your own home.

Mrs Sanae Ishii then stated what she felt by listening to the Dharma talk. In the story of the Nirvana painting, Shakyamuni Buddha’s mother released medicine from the Pure Land, but the medicine did not reach Shakyamuni Buddha. Listening the words by Kenshin-san, “Let us not just look at what we receive, but let us receive the love and compassion which lies behind gifts”, I realised that I had been brought up by many wonderful people who have been teaching me with parental love.

To conclude the meeting Reverend Sato expressed his thanks to Rev. Ishii for his talk. He said, “Your wonderful talk covered everything from Early Buddhism to Mahayana and Shin Buddhism. Listening to it I felt a great sense of relief and peace. As you know, Prof. John White, through his encounter with Ven. Chimyo Takehara, started to work for Three Wheels and promised to walk the one road with us all. He put all his energies into it and gave up his own career. He was an embodiment of Ven. Takehara’s prayer for world peace. After twenty years had passed John remembered a comment from Rev. Kojun Shinohara that it will take 30 years to make a temple in the UK. John remarked to me, “Taira, Three Wheels has started working as a temple.” At that time I disagreed with my him, however now I am happy to agree that the Three Wheels have indeed started working here. Everybody is happily involved in this Three Wheels Dharma movement. John and Hiroko would be extremely happy to hear Rev. Ishii’s talk and to see how he is being supported by his wife Sanae and their two very sincere children. The Three Wheels are turning as One Great Wheels

Andy B.

Meetings to Read the Letters of Shinran Shonin

We are very pleased to announce that Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato has begun a series of meetings to read and discuss his new translation of the Letters of Shinran Shonin, the founder of the Shin Buddhist tradition. Encouraged by his great friend, the late Prof John White, to begin this monumental work Rev. Sato has been making a fresh new translation which corrects a number of errors found in earlier English versions of the Letters.

At the meetings we have the opportunity to read the Letters together, ask Rev. Sato any questions about their meaning and discuss them in the light of our own experiences. It is a very special opportunity to listen to the voice of our founding teacher Shinran Shonin through the Letters he sent to his followers.

Please visit the Three Wheels website for the dates of the upcoming meetings. We look forward to seeing you there!

The Last Poem of Prof. John White

**When persimmons
light**

**the grey days,
there is sunshine**

wherever you look

This is the very last poem composed by Prof. John White which he wrote on 5th November 2021, the day before he passed away at Three Wheels.

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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