Handout
Benefits of Shin Buddhism
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BENEFITS of SHIN BUDDHISM

Today, we hope to **clarify** some **confusion** of Shin Buddhism.
This workshop will interpret Shin from a contemporary viewpoint.
Confusion due to vail of Christianity, different cultures, truth related in mythical stories, and popular misconceptions of Buddhism.

21st century interpretation of Shin, from a **Shin perspective**, not through the lens of others.
Truth of Buddhism is very profound and deep, that masters, scholars, & philosophers may discuss. It also gives guidance on living a **harmonious life** for all, based on these deep truths.
Today: introducing a **simplified guide** with a **specific path**. It is not traditional but is necessary in America as an introductory step. Bishop **Yamaoka**: **West needs an educational** system.

In **Japan**, the land of its origin, **Shin influenced Japanese culture**, values, language.
Concern for others is a fundamental value. Our parents, grandparents could not answer doctrinal questions: 4 noble Truths, 6 Paramitas, or Dependent Origination.
But they **lived** the **Shin Dharma, by experience**.

JODO SHINSHU BUDDHISM
JODO: Pure Land Pure Realm (state of mind).
SHINSHU: True Sect – clarify difference between Jodo Shu (Pure Land).
BUDDHISM: Awakening Process.

Shin temple is where we learn the awakening process of the mind to align with truth.
"AWAKENING PROCESS OF THE MIND TO ALIGN WITH TRUTH"

Define Truth: Beyond definition. Many meanings. For today's seminar: just 2 levels.
1) **Practical**, observable **truth**. Ordinary, everyday.
   Sun rises in east, sets in west. Clocks, commerce, social life dependent on truth.
2) **Universal truth**: No east/west. Zoom, satellites, planets, universe. **Deep truth- Invisible**.

Being aware of 2 levels may help us clarify some of the teachings.

Inspired by **Vasubandhu's 5 Gates**, we offer an accessible path that leads one to an awakening for the common, ordinary person.
Following this path of benefits, we can have a better insight on doctrine.

1st Benefit: **Path & practice specifically** for **ordinary people**, at any time, at any age.
Our practice is waking up to what we have already **received.** Not in the future.
"AWAKENING PROCESS OF THE MIND TO ALIGN WITH TRUTH"

We have received so much more from others than we could possibly achieve.

Gratitude (Thank you - Na Man Da Bu)

Acknowledges our recognition of receiving Benefits.

Practice of gratitude leads to the basic experience of Nembutsu- "Na Man Da Bu."

Awakening the spiritual in the ordinary.

Gratitude is an initial practice for ordinary people.

It brings the Buddha's teaching into ordinary life.

"Shin Buddhism is about appreciating what we have,
to balance the desire for what we don't have."

"Middle path."

It is a **shift** from **"please,"** a desire for what I want, to **"thank you,"** to appreciate what I have.
Nembutsu is our key. Namo Amida Butsu **wakes us up** to the **benefits** already received.
Reveals our humility, respect, harmony, and transcends a person toward the spiritual realm.

2nd Benefit: to **belong to a Shin temple** or community. Being with others on the same path.
Buddhist Truth is based on natural laws, not belief.
3 Marks of Existence

1st Mark: Interdependence- All things connected and affect each other.

2nd Mark: Impermanence- All things change. (change mind to align with truth)

- True of all things on earth. Settled mind & harmony result when our lives follow these natural laws. Middle path means balance. Natural homeostasis.
- The temple is my dojo (place of practice) to balance self/others, body/spirit, impermanence/interdependence, desire for self/serving others.
- All of our concerns resolved by adhering to basic truths. Becoming more spiritual.
- Everyone is part of the whole (accepted just as we are). ME-WE.
- Benefits of being part of Shin sangha (temple): mutual support in learning to live in relationship and change. (sangha-community-world).
- Supported by a local & national organization (BCA) to learn the Dharma. Deep and wide resources & qualified clergy to help educate us.

Middle Path: The goal is balance; nature seeks equilibrium.
Many Americans do not recognize that our basic dualistic view of reality cannot resolve issues.
Right/wrong, good/bad, us/them, life/death. Wholeness includes both sides.
Process of osmosis. Mingling, marinating with sangha members absorbs Shin values.

3rd Benefit: knowing the **true nature of self**.

3rd Mark of Existence: The nature of self.

- The ego-self (personal mind) determines our state of anxiety/wellness.
- Parts & functions of the ego-self (psyche).
- Expanding the ego-self.
- Makeup of the self. Body/Mind – Mass/Energy

Everything is dictated by the natural laws of impermanence and interdependence. Our **ego-self** has the ability to be aware of our reality, also provides the ability to be attached to our ego-self and reject interdependence and impermanence. Our **attachment to our self,** causes us to **suffer**. Based on natural psychology of human behavior and spirituality.

Transitional steps:

1- Not entire ego-self is evil. Modern psychology defines the psyche in portions.
Not entirely evil or *bombu*. Just part of us is called our shadow.

2- Another means of seeing ourselves is to expand our ego, to include others as self.
We do this naturally, our personal ego expands as we have children.
Spouse and family become an integral part of us (ego-self).

We may identify ourselves as an employment group, temple community, city, team, or country.
Temple education is:
- Oriented toward families – children & youth activities, mutual support, elder care.
- Doctrine & practice suited for ordinary people to be in relationship.
Enhance practical life and anticipate spiritual life.

3- **True nature of self**. $E=MC_2$ is noted as an accepted truth. Applies to everything on earth.
It basically means that **Mass and Energy** are **two forms of the same thing.**
Tree branch (mass) burns to release (energy) heat & light.
Energy in the forms of sunlight, water, and nutrients added mass to the tree as it grew.
Humans: Body (Mass) & Spirit (Energy). Spirit = ideas, memories, discussions, chants, rituals.
As infants, we gain mass by our mother's milk, sun, water, nutrients, air, and love.
Our body mass grows and so does our inner energy or spirit.
Body- Attached more to body: separate entity and temporary.
Spirit: Connection of body to others. Relationship. Now, past, future.
Each of us is part mass (body) and part energy (spirit). Discomfort means unbalanced.
Spend less attention on body-self. More on spirit, relationship with others.

4th Benefit: to **give service and support others**.
Bodhisattva ideal and *dana* (engaged compassion) gratitude in action.
- express our gratitude by sharing this truth with others for their benefit.
- Gratitude leads me to accept my interdependence and being accepted, just as I am.
- The temple is my dojo (place of practice) to balance self/others, body/spirit, impermanence/interdependence, taking for self/serving others.
- Family oriented: Children's education, youth activities, social activities, elder care.
- Bodhisattva ideal: one who is determined to include all others before oneself.
These activities are not to gain merit for ourselves. *Dana*: selfless giving.
- Individuals are able to join with others to make contributions as a group to charities, & others.
- Experience relationship with others. Teaching & leadership opportunities. Expand self.
- As Bishop Harada would say: we change from saying "I have to do it" to "I get to do it."
- We find great worth and benefit from serving others.

- Temple activities supporting ecology (EcoSangha), charities (*dana*), wellcare, Japanese culture & arts, crafts, music, health, & others.
- History of temple support of members.
  - Issei-Nisei supported spiritually through immigration, discrimination, separation.
  - Local temples provided support – refuge after war incarceration.

5th Benefit: to realize **our spiritual nature**.

Spiritual awareness: Nembutsu- "Namo Amida Butsu," reminds us of the Spiritual nature of ordinary life.
- Services and rituals embody our spiritual nature.
- Memorial services, *Shotsuki*, Obon, *Ohaka-mairi*. Still connected after death.
- Our present spiritual relationships with each other now, continue after transition.
- How might we expand our spiritual nature? Temple is our Dojo.

- Our spiritual nature may not be in the form we expect.
- Ordinary life is spiritual. Shin helps us wake up to true reality.
- Knowing this, how much different would we live and relate to others and to the conditions and situations of life?

SUMMARY

- Gratitude: introductory step to the experience of the Nembutsu.
- Temple dojo: Place for the practice Shin values.
  Services, rituals, Dharma talks, discussions, activities provide a place of learning and enhancing our lives with the wisdom & compassion to counter ignorance.
- Nature of true self: the individual is only part of the interdependent spiritual relationship.
  By considering ourselves as an interconnected spiritual being, the individual ego-self is less threatened and stressed.
- Service to others: Bodhisattva ideal expressed by including and serving all.
- Spiritual nature of ego-self: spiritual life keeps us connected to those who have passed.
  Spiritual nature of ego-self can change our relationship with all, right now.

Nembutsu- "Namo Amida Butsu" is our key to connect with our spiritual self.