



# BUDDHIST CHURCH OF MARYSVILLE

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## Hiking the Path, with Team Castle

### Message from home, Number 2.

April 7, 2020

In the last Hiking article, I wrote about the reminder of what my Ojuzu means to me. How my simple beads remind me that even during these times of social distancing and isolation at home, I am not alone. Even more importantly, my life continues only due to the efforts of others. Every day, I am surrounded by incredible caring, support, and understanding.

The Meditation Sutra reminds us that Amida Buddha is not far from here...and us! If we keep in mind that all of us too are threads in this universal kharmic blanket that Amida wraps us all up in, then we too are not far from each other. So while we have to practice social distancing, we should not let that get us down as we have our teachings, our practice, and most importantly, each other!!

While so many out there reading these thoughts truly love the Marysville Church, they may find the "practice" of our Jodo Shinshu tradition difficult without access to the church and being able to attend regular services. I too have to admit, I find it much easier to focus while up on the altar, chanting, sitting, and looking at such a beautiful place. I guess I am spoiled as I have always had it easy with a temple always open and ready for service.

This is a great reminder to me that Buddhism in America did not start with churches and beautiful altars, but began in homes, with families gathered around home Obutsudans.

Carol's dad often told us stories about growing up on the Big Island of Hawaii. A few miles outside Hilo, pop grew up in a small cane village made up of employees of the sugar cane plantation. Buddhism before the church was built outside of Hilo, was practiced at home. The local assigned minister would travel by horseback to the plantation "camps" to visit families, share the Dharma, and often conduct family memorial services and Makura-gyo (pillow services) for those who had passed away.

Daily practice occurred early each evening, when everyone was home from work and school. Service was simply chanting together as family, hands together In Gassho, and reciting the Nebutsu...Namo Amida Butsu.

The more things change, we often find ourselves back at the beginning! With the MBC temporarily closed, we all find ourselves back home and maybe start wondering how do we practice our tradition?

Remember, Amida is not far from us. We are often told that the Pure Land too, extends in all directions for infinity. So, that means we too, wherever we are, we are in the Pure Land with Amida...just like sitting in the Marysville Buddhist Church, looking at our beautiful altar.

So while we are at home, if you are fortunate to have a home Obutsudan, please remember to open its front doors, place flowers, a small rice offering (Buppan), and any other offering you see appropriate (we have candy corn!). Light the candle, light incense, and place your hands inside your Ojuzu In Gassho...and we are all together when we recite the Nembutsu.

If you do not have a home Obutsudan...no worries! Make your own special place. Set aside some place in your home that you can dedicate just a little space, a small table or spot on an empty bookshelf. You can use a small scroll or calligraphy of the Namo Amida Butsu characters, a picture of the Buddha, or anything to respectfully symbolize Amida. A small candle, flowers, or a plant will do just fine. A small offering can be added, or not. And maybe a space for your Ojuzu to rest when you are not carrying it could be the final addition. Now you have your own special place to sit, meditate, chant, or simply focus your thoughts on Amida...Namo Amida Butsu.

If we can each carve out only 5-10 minutes each day to sit quietly and focus our thoughts, then we can all be together as our Nembutsu is all the same. By placing our hands together In Gassho, we too come together by reciting our own shared Namo Amida Butsu.

In Gratitude,

Namo Amida Butsu

Keep on Hiking!!

Team Castle

