

2009 Eastern Buddhist League Convention, Toronto, Canada, 4-6 September 2009

Our Canadian neighbors were the host of this year's annual EBL Convention. Heartfelt "thank you" goes out to members of the Toronto Buddhist Church, led by Tom Allen, whose warm and generous hospitality was appreciated by all the attendees. It was a perfect backdrop for consideration of the general theme: Raising Awareness of Shin Buddhism – Personal Challenges Today & Tomorrow.

It was an eye-opening and rewarding experience from hospitality Friday with a wonderful tour of the recently built Toronto Buddhist Church and thought provoking "survival games" led by Dennis Madokoro. Many drooled over the thoughtful construction and amenities of the new facility from its old Bathurst Street site. TBC planned the building to face the needs for the present and future sangha. Many of us were envious of the professional kitchen with stoves, dishwasher, refrigerator storage, electrical rice cooker stations, etc right off the spacious social hall. The library, with computers and reading nooks, was most "user friendly" and even comes with a chado (tea ceremony room) donated by a community member. For most of us, I believe, was the simple yet elegantly appointed hondo (service hall). The interior of the hondo is graced with beautiful light wood with high windows that have moving screens to control the sunlight into the hondo. The building gave us a the feeling spaciousness yet warmth.

Thought provoking presentations by Rev. Dr. Mark Unno (Associate Professor of Japanese Buddhism, Department of Religious Studies, University of Oregon) on "Ocean of Light: Vow of Oneness" and Dr. Jeff Wilson (Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and East Asian Studies,

Renison University College of the University of Waterloo) on "Relax, Trust, Thank: the Process of Awakening in Shin Buddhism" gave us all much to internalize. These "internalizations" were seeds which sprouted during the Study Group breakout session and shared by all at the Study Group Report wrap-up session ably led by Caroline Shepard. Through the reporting by the various groups we noted that there were many similarities of thought during the Study Group session. We also had the opportunity to ask questions during a Question & answer session and the learn most insights of the ministers who attended during a Panel Discussion.

The day concluded with more insights for those who attended an evening at the Famous People Players Theatre. We were served a delicious dinner then moved to a small theatre where we enjoyed a lively program of music, puppetry and dance presented by a company of individuals with physical disabilities but who surpass their physical difficulties through the theater art form. It was a most lively, colorful and uplifting program. We topped our night with delicious desserts and coffee with the opportunity to speak to the performers who also handle all aspects of the theatre (ticket takers, dinner management, wait staff servers) and how the program was felt by our fellow dinner companions. The closing Sunday service gave us the opportunity to listen to Rev. Dr. Unno again as he presented thoughts on Jodo Shinshu traditions transmitted through generations and on the transmission of the Buddha's Primal Vow transcending the ocean of suffering into the limitless ocean of light.

The NYBC contingent truly enjoyed and appreciated the hard work of the Toronto Buddhist Church is giving us a warm experience with much think about. It was a most rewarding experience going across the border!

In gassho, Nancy Okada

Saturday, October 24: Annual Autumn Festival!

Join us for a full day of food, friends, and fun for everyone! Here's the tentative schedule:

Saturday, October 24:

- 9-10 am: Volunteers needed to continue set-up, donations and baked goods accepted for selling at festival
- 9:30 am- 2pm: Martial arts demonstrations & competition in the dojo (basement)
- 10 am: Doors open for the Autumn Festival
- 10 am to 2 pm: Silent auction
- 2:30 pm: Performances by the Tachibana Dance Group of Japanese classical and folk dances in the dojo.
- 3 pm: Soh Daiko-taiko (Japanese drumming) in the dojo
- 4-5 pm: Volunteers needed to help clean up

Donations and Volunteer Help

If you have items to donate for sale at the festival, bring them to the NYBC the Sunday or evening before. Because of space limitations, only good quality items can be accepted. Clothing will not be accepted; good baked goods are welcomed.

Putting on the festival requires many helping hands before and after. Please stop by if you can volunteer time Friday evening or on festival day.

To volunteer, donate items, or rent a table, please see Ruth Funai or Steve Whitley. ☺