

Salt Lake Buddhist Temple Visitor's Information Guide

Welcome to the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple. This guide will outline some of the basic activities and protocols you may encounter or have questions about as you participate in our services/events.

Our standard service on Sunday mornings is conducted through the directions provided by the service chair. As you participate you will notice some differences from a general Christian service including the burning of the incense, *sutra* chanting, *gassho* and the recitation of the *nembutsu*.

Prior to the starting of the service, the congregation will burn incense in front of the altar (*Onaijin*—Oh-Nigh-Gen). *Oshoko* or burning of the incense is symbolic of cleansing or opening the mind and preparing oneself to listen to the teachings or “*dharma*”). Along with this ritual, individuals will offer a monetary donation called *osaisen* (Oh-sigh-sen).

During the *sutra* chanting the congregation will chant the *sutras* using the service book. The *sutras* are chanted to praise the virtues of the Buddha and can be chanted by anyone who reads English or Japanese. Although it is written in classical Chinese as well as English characters, the Chinese pronunciation is not the same as in the Japanese language.

Gassho is what you will see the congregation do as they come before the altar (*onaijin*) as well as when they recite the *nembutsu*. It is done by placing the palms together comfortably in front of oneself with an *onenju* (Oh-Nen-Jew) encircling the hands.

The *onenju* is a string of beads that holds a number of symbolic meanings within itself. However, when encircling the hands in *gassho* it represents the joining of the *Amida Buddha* with oneself. When this occurs, the individual usually will simultaneously recite the *nembutsu*.

The *nembutsu* is “*Namo Amida Butsu*”. The congregation will recite this phrase throughout the service as an expression of appreciation. Literally translated it means to take refuge in the *Amida Buddha*.

Donations to the temple are always welcome and should be offered as an expression of selfless giving (*dana*--dah-nah). It is standard protocol to donate for any occasion that instills a feeling of gratitude for the family or individual.

Members usually offer a donation during special services (*Ho-onko*, Nirvana Day/*Nehane*, *Ohigan*-spring & fall, *Hanamatsuri*, *Gotane*, *Obon* and *Bodhi* Day). It is also the custom to give for funerals, memorials including *Shotsuki Hoyo* (Sho-su-key-ho-yo), weddings, birth of a child and whenever the temple provides a service or good to the member.

Generally, members will offer donations with either a check or cash enclosed in a small, plain, white envelope with the occasion written on the front and their name and address in the lower right corner. For convenience, an address label can be used. Donations are often left in the offering bowl or near the incense burner, or they can be mailed to the temple.

These contributions are automatically recognized in the temple newsletter. If donors do not wish to have their donations publicized, a message accompanying the donation is recommended.

Hopefully, this brief guide will provide answers to your questions regarding basic protocol at the temple. Further question/concerns can be directed to any of our members or our minister, Rev. Jerry Hirano at anytime.

We appreciate your interest in our temple and invite your continued attendance at our services and events. Further information can be found at www.sl buddhist.org.