



## SHASTA ABBEY

*TEMPLE OF RADIANT WISDOM ON THE SOLITARY, PURE WHITE MOUNTAIN*

A MONASTERY OF THE ORDER OF BUDDHIST CONTEMPLATIVES

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Dear Friends,

Happy New Year's greetings to all of you. I am very pleased to tell you that the view from the Abbey is much different than at the same time last year when Mount Shasta was almost completely brown. This year we can see a healthy covering of snow well down into the tree line. Autumn brought us above average rainfall which should help our forest recover a bit.



The picture above was taken last March during Jukai, the annual Precepts retreat. The fourth ceremony of the retreat is Ketchimiyaku, Following Where the Precepts Lead. During this ceremony we walk behind the Abbess, following her wherever she goes, passing through the forest, the kitchen, the composting area, cloisters and so on, ending before the altar in the Buddha Hall. The ceremony shows us that with the Precepts as our guide we can safely find our way through the myriad conditions of life, always seeking to find the way to cease from evil, do only good and do good for others. In the past year we have had the opportunity to put this teaching into practice as we faced conditions that were new to us – drought and fire.

Our monastery gets water from two wells. As the drought in the Western US deepened, we realized that we could not take it for granted that the supply of underground water was being replenished and that we needed to change our water use habits. We looked at all the areas that we normally irrigate during the dry season and made the difficult decision of which plants we would have to leave to fend for themselves. We also looked for ways to use water twice which includes things like saving water used in the kitchen for vegetable washing and taking it out to our herb garden. Common drought practices like shorter showers and less flushing were also implemented.

*Established in 1970 by Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett, First Abbess*

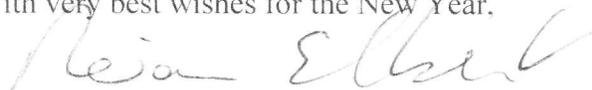
In August we faced our first fire. The Log Fire, a complex of several smaller fires, came as close as one mile northwest of our Compassionate Friend Hermitage, just over one ridge. The fire was huge with a force of 2300 firefighters. Two monks stayed for three weeks, helping out where they could, and Calfire used the hermitage as a staging area, a first aid site, and an access point to the southern edge of the fire. Thanks to their excellent work the fire never made it over the ridge. In September the Boles Fire struck Weed, our nearest neighboring town. Strong winds fanned the flames and in less than an hour 100 homes and two churches were destroyed. Other structures were destroyed or seriously damaged. Although we were never threatened by this fire, we were touched by the losses suffered by our neighbors, and joined in the community effort to help those who lost their homes by making donations to the organizations coordinating relief efforts and to the two churches that were destroyed.

Our monastic Community continues to thrive. On April 3 Rev. Master Kodo ordained her first disciple, Beckie Giordano, and gave her the name Houn Vera, "she who seeks the Truth". Rev. Vera's parents, sister and aunt came for the ordination and prepared traditional Italian cannoli for all. In June Rev. Leon came from the Columbia Zen Buddhist Priory to spend the summer months with us. Rev. Master Mugo arrived from the UK in September for a six month stay. At the end of October Rev. Master Koten arrived from Dragon Flower Mountain in British Columbia. He will be with us until later this spring while he researches information for a biography of Rev. Master Jiyu. It is always a great pleasure to have visits from our Dharma relatives with plenty of time to catch up on news.

The 2014 retreat schedule offered a wide variety of themes. In March, 29 people came for the annual Keeping of the Ten Precepts retreat to renew their vows and 10 took the Precepts for the first time. Rev. Master Ando led the June week-long retreat on Awakening the Heart of the Bodhisattva. During the week she explored with us the teaching of the major Bodhisattvas of our tradition. July's retreat was offered to the younger Sangha members and focused on Finding One's Path in Life. The participants found it very helpful, especially as an opportunity to discuss personal aspects of this challenge. In August we welcomed those who are contemplating a monastic vocation to the Considering Monastic Life retreat. Participants joined in the monastic schedule fully during the week and had many interesting discussions with the monks. The annual Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts retreat was held at the end of October and we closed the year with the usual Celebratory New Year retreat and the ringing of the great bell.

Our hearts are filled with gratitude to all of you who offered support to us during the past year. Without your help it would not be possible for us to maintain this monastery as a place of Buddhist teaching and practice, a place available to all who wish to come. Many of you come here regularly and we are able to thank you in person. Many of you have never been here but make offerings so that others have a place of practice. To all we offer our deepest gratitude.

With very best wishes for the New Year,



Rev. Meian Elbert, Abbess