

**VICTORIA ZEN CENTRE
BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY CEREMONY
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA – INTERFAITH CHAPEL
SUNDAY MAY 25TH, 2008
1:00PM-3:00PM**

The Buddha's Birthday Ceremony is a celebration of the birth of the historical Buddha – Siddhartha Gautama in 563 BCE. It is also an opportunity for Buddhist practitioners of all traditions to come together and celebrate the teachings of our founder. At the Victoria Zen Centre, the ceremony includes Ven. Eshu telling the story of the Buddha's Birth, a brief talk about some of the teachings, and then the assembly participates in chanting and walking meditation while each person bathes the baby Buddha in sweet tea. After the ceremony there is an opportunity to socialize and enjoy some birthday activities.

BEFORE THE CEREMONY

**Please ensure cell phones and electronic devices are turned off.
No food or drink is permitted in the Ceremony hall.**

Are guests usually invited by a formal invitation?

Buddha's Birthday is a public event to which all are welcome. No invitation is necessary.

Are children and families welcome?

Absolutely! Children are most welcome to attend the ceremony with well behaved parents.

APPROPRIATE ATTIRE

Men and Women: Members of the Zen Centre should wear their practice uniforms (gi). For guests, loose fitting, but dressy casual clothing, should be worn. The head should be uncovered, and shoes will be left outside of the ceremony space. Modest jewellery is permissible. There will be cushions for those that wish to sit on the floor, and chairs for those that prefer to sit in chairs.

THE CEREMONY

Where will the ceremony take place?

At the UVic Interfaith Chapel <http://www.uvic.ca/buildings/cha.html> on **Sunday May 25th, 2008 at 1:00pm.**
The ceremony is brief, 45 minutes – 1 hour, after which there is a social time.

When should guests arrive and where should they sit?

Arrive early. Guests will be met at the door by a member of the Zen Centre, who will help with seating.

If arriving late, are there times when a guest should *not* enter the ceremony?

A member of the Zen Centre will be seated by the door, and will indicate if it is appropriate to enter or not. If not, please wait outside the celebration hall and you will be welcomed in when it is appropriate.

Are there times when a guest should *not* leave the ceremony?

Guests should plan to remain for the entire service. Of course, as this is a family event, bathroom emergencies are entirely forgivable.

Who are the major officiants, leaders or participants at the ceremony and what do they do?

Celebrant: Venerable Eshu – Leads the ceremony.

Shika: Elder Doshu Lars Rogers – Rings bells and leads the chanting

Shoji: Sets the pace on the drum for chanting and walking.

What books are used?

A booklet script of the ceremony will be placed on each seat, so that guests can follow along. Please feel free to keep this booklet after the ceremony if you wish, and feel free to ask questions afterwards.

To indicate the order of the ceremony:

Venerable Eshu will guide the assembly through the ceremony, recognizing that many of the guests and members have never participated in the Buddha's Birthday Ceremony before.

Will a guest who is not Buddhist be expected to do anything other than sit?

Guests are invited to participate in all aspects of the ceremony along with the membership, if this does not violate their own religious beliefs. By participating, we also become a part of the ceremony and offer our own hearts, minds and voices in celebration.

Are there any parts of the ceremony in which a guest who is not a member of the faith tradition should *not* participate?

No.

If not disruptive to the ceremony, is it okay to:

- **Take pictures?** Yes.
- **Use a flash?** Yes.
- **Use a video camera?** Yes.
- **Use a tape recorder?** Yes.

Can donations to the Victoria Zen Centre be made at the ceremony?

Yes. Donations to help support the work and function of the Centre are welcomed, with a suggested donation for guests of \$5-\$20.

For members, the Buddha's Birthday is a time to express gratitude in the form of a financial gift for the teachings of our founder as they are received through the activities and programmes of the Victoria Zen Centre, and they are encouraged to give as much as they are able.

The Victoria Zen Centre is a federally registered Charity, and will issue a receipt for all contributions received with name and address information in December of 2008.

AFTER THE CEREMONY

Will there be a reception after the ceremony?

Yes. There will be some short activities for children and guests after the ceremony in the reception area and on the lawn just outside of the Interfaith Chapel. (30-45 minutes). Questions are most welcomed at this time. Any of the Zen Centre members (easily identified by their black uniform) can be approached with questions.

Is there a traditional form of address for clergy who may be at the celebration?

Ordained clergy are referred to as "Venerable" (i.e. Venerable Eshu).

Elders are referred to as "Elder" (i.e. Elder Doshu).

Is it okay to leave early?

Yes. If you are unable to stay for the activities after the Ceremony, you are free to go, and we hope that you will have enjoyed your time with us.

For more information, please contact the Victoria Zen Centre: phone: (250) 642-7936

Email: office@zenwest.ca