

VISIT TO THE AVATAMSAKA MONASTERY:

RELECTION BY DARLENE HEYNEN

On a cold night last November, 2019 a group of people from the St. David's ActsBook Study were privileged to have a tour of the Calgary Buddhist Temple.

It is located just off the Louise Bridge on 10th Street in what used to be the Mountain Equipment Co-op site. As we gathered in the lobby I was excited and looking forward to the evening as I knew very little of the Buddhist faith.

Our guide took us up to the 2nd Floor Meditation Room, a large carpeted area with very little furniture or adornment. After removing our shoes we were instructed to walk around the room. This we did this for approx 20 minutes.

We were then asked to sit down, some on the floor on pillows, most of us in chairs. We faced the wall and the lights were turned out. As we sat in silence, a multitude of thoughts were going through my brain., what I would have for dinner tomorrow night, my Christmas shopping list, the songs we had practiced in choir. I was not able to clear my head. At the end of 20 minutes we were asked to resume walking and again sat in silence. We did this 3 times.

By now Frans is trying to get my attention and cycling his forearms. If you know him as well as I do this means, "I've had enough, let's go". I, on the other hand, have gradually slowed my thoughts and am able to sit and contemplate my breathing. So, I ignore him because we need to see this through.

After doing the reading in the book called "HOLY ENVY" I find the fundamentals of the Buddhist faith appealing and not that different from my own beliefs. Buddha never claimed to be God. He said the things that happen in life are often, but not always, a consequence of our own actions. If you don't like it, you need to change your ways.

He teaches compassion for your fellow human beings and working towards lasting peace. This needs to start with yourself. The Buddhist faith is about the teachings of a man, about life and living mindfully. Many of our problems are not out there but in **here**.

The book speaks about spinning our wheels, trying to control things we **can't** and ignoring the one thing we **can**, which is changing the way we look at things.

In developing **my** faith and beliefs I have to live with a question and ponder my thoughts. After our visit to the temple I could see how developing the ability to clear my head and possibly meditate would be beneficial.

Barbara Brown Taylor states that Jesus was not an **ANSWERMEN!** More often than not, he answered a question with another question. He wants us to think deeply and not just accept an answer as given.

I like the point that Buddhists are not evangelists seeking to convert. Ghandi spoke of the **evangelism of the rose**. He said a rose does not have to preach. It simply spreads its fragrance and allows people to respond. I see this in the faith of Buddhism.

That evening last Fall, following the meditation, one of the monks explained their way of life and answered many questions about Buddhism **openly and honestly**.

We had a tour of the Worship Room or what we would call a Sanctuary. It is decorated with over 10,000 miniature Buddha statues. It felt like a **very holy place**.

In conclusion, like Barbara Brown Taylor, I would never leave my roots, but I do find the teachings and the little I know of Buddhism interesting and attractive. I believe **this is Holy Envy**. I can see how one could incorporate, in tandem with Christianity, aspects and practices of this faith.

By the way, when we got home that night, Frans **also** felt that he had been able to clear his mind and meditate in his own way.