



GREAT HEARTLAND
BUDDHIST TEMPLE
of TOLEDO

Fifth Annual Sangha Survey 2018 Summary

Leadership Council conducted this survey to better understand the needs of the Sangha, and it is conducted annually to track our progress. The survey was first conducted in 2014. We greatly appreciate the 67 individuals who participated this year. This summary of survey responses is for our Members to see an overview of the feedback we received so that we all have an understanding of our goals for the coming year.

2017-2018 Leadership Council

Jenna Zusei Hirschman, Chair
Michael Hoshi Leizerman, Treasurer
Cheryl Kinko Baughman
Channing Shogen Cecil
Heather Jigen Denlinger-Gallant
Julie Enmei Bondy
Olivia Kodō Bullock
Melanie Coleman Case

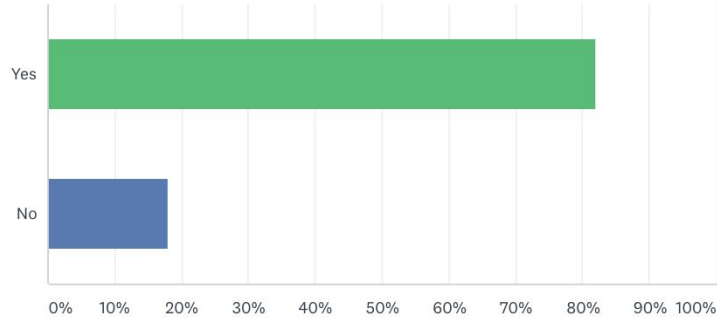
Drafted and compiled by Rob Kaishin Bondy

Q1

Customize Export

Are you currently a sangha member? (agreed to sangha covenant and donated)

Answered: 67 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	82.09% 55
No	17.91% 12
TOTAL	67

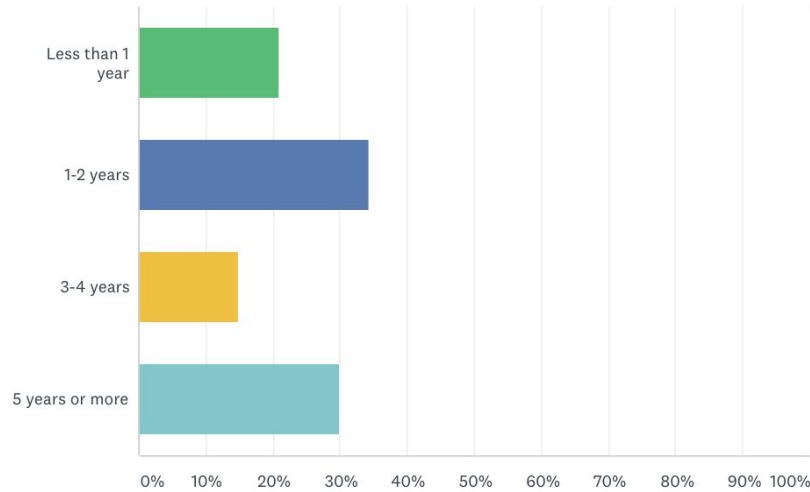
- 67 Respondents marks an all time high, beating the previous record set in 2014 by 19.
- 12 Respondents indicated that they were not official members of the Temple. Further anecdotal responses indicate that the body of respondents includes people who connect with community from a distance. (outside of geographic region and have not visited the community in person)

Q2

Customize Export

How long have you been coming to the Temple?

Answered: 67 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Less than 1 year	20.90% 14
1-2 years	34.33% 23
3-4 years	14.93% 10
5 years or more	29.85% 20
TOTAL	67

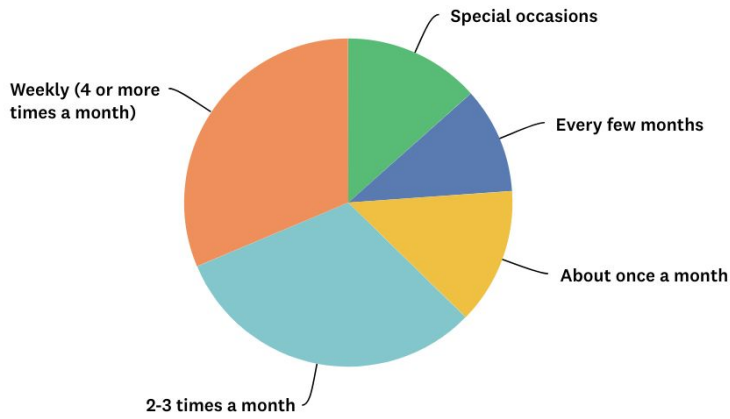
- Approximately 45% of those engaged in community have been around for less than 3 years.
 - *Editorial note from Kaishin: I recommend keeping this particular question in its current format for a number of years to better track any changes in these demographics*

Q3

Customize Export

How frequently do you visit the Temple?

Answered: 67 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Special occasions	13.43% 9
Every few months	10.45% 7
About once a month	13.43% 9
2-3 times a month	31.34% 21
Weekly (4 or more times a month)	31.34% 21
TOTAL	67

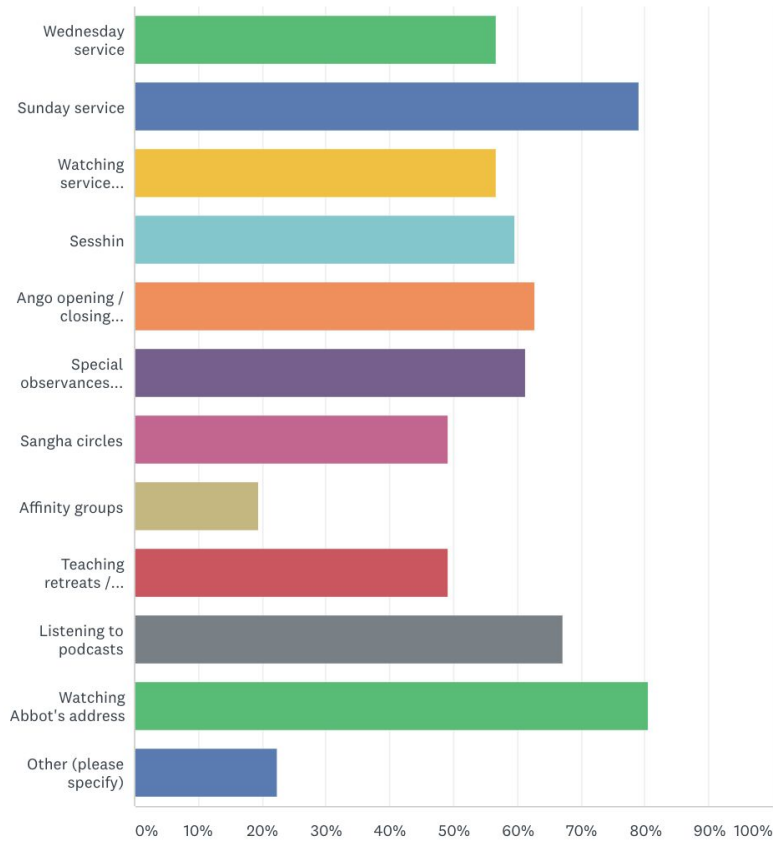
- Approximately 62% of respondents visit the Temple twice a month or more.
- Weekly visitation represented just under 1/3 of respondents
- Approximately 37% indicated visitation that could be classified as occasional

Q4

Customize Export

Which of the the following activities have you participated in the last 12 months? (check all that apply)

Answered: 67 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Wednesday service	56.72% 38
▼ Sunday service	79.10% 53
▼ Watching service simulcasts	56.72% 38
▼ Sesshin	59.70% 40
▼ Ango opening / closing ceremony	62.69% 42
▼ Special observances (Vesak, Bodhi Day, etc)	61.19% 41
▼ Sangha circles	49.25% 33
▼ Affinity groups	19.40% 13
▼ Teaching retreats / workshops	49.25% 33
▼ Listening to podcasts	67.16% 45
▼ Watching Abbot's address	80.60% 54
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 22.39% 15
Total Respondents: 67	

Q4 Write-in responses

Jukai	LC, Dharma Camp
None	Aikido
Arts night and Dharma camp	Cleaning work practice/DnD!!!
Live feeds	Multifaith services
W	Farm Samu
Jukai formation (part 1)	Arts Night
Samu /cleaning	I only can do podcasts, live in Oregon but have been following since early days of podcasts so feel connected
Multifaith Services	

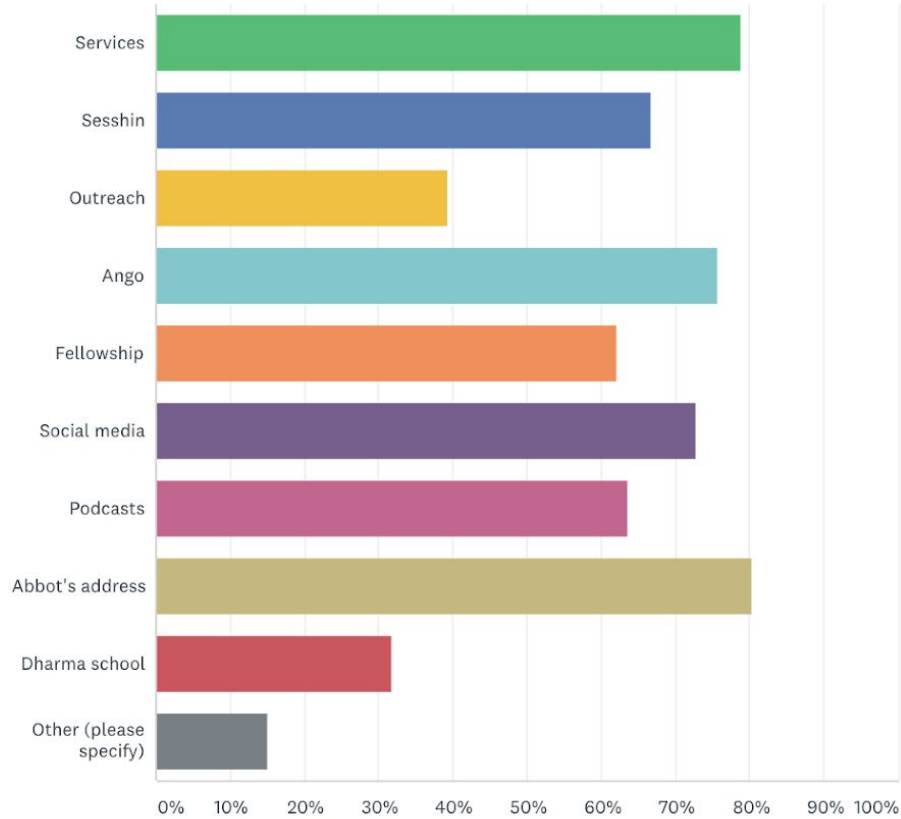
-
- The most engaged option among respondents was attending Sunday Service (79%)
 - Core “in person” components (Wed / Sunday service and Sesshin) were all accessed by more than 50% of respondents.
 - Sangha Circles and Teaching Retreats were indicated by 49% of respondents.
 - Recurring “other” options included Jukai, Dharma Camp, Arts Night, Multifaith Services and Samu activities.
 - *Editorial note from Kaishin: The options written in under “other” likely represent aspects of Sangha life that feel particularly important to those who wrote them in, and had they been options may have yielded higher numbers. These recurring write-in options will be considered for this list in next year’s survey.*
 - Watching to the Abbot’s Address series was the most common mode of engagement reported. 84% of respondents chose this option.
 - Online modes of connection were popular in general with 67% of respondents listening to podcasts and 56% watching service simulcasts.

Q5

Customize Export

What are we doing well? (check all that apply)

Answered: 66 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Services	78.79% 52
Sesshin	66.67% 44
Outreach	39.39% 26
Ango	75.76% 50
Fellowship	62.12% 41
Social media	72.73% 48
Podcasts	63.64% 42
Abbot's address	80.30% 53
Dharma school	31.82% 21
Other (please specify)	Responses 15.15% 10
Total Respondents: 66	

Q5 Write-in Responses

cannot answer about Dharma school,
Fellowship, Outreach

demonstrated that our seminary is something
important and wonderful.

Making activity options clear to members and
posting them on an annual schedule.

I love how the sangha operates, everyone just
helps

Aikido

Teaching retreats

Fundraising

Buddhism

seems good to me

It looks like a lot is going well. Wish I could
join

I think yesterday (Sunday, June 10)

- Services, Ango, Abbot's Address and Social Media were indicated by at least 75% of respondents.
- Outreach came in at 39%
 - *Editorial note from Kaishin: Looking back at the survey design and responses, it is possible that "outreach" is not a clear enough word, which might result in people not selecting it. This is conjecture on my part, however. I recommend clarifying or replacing the word in future surveys.*
- Dharma School came in at 31%
 - *Editorial note from Kaishin: Multiple anecdotal replies in the survey indicated that respondents did not know how Dharma School was going. Unless respondents have children that use Dharma School or they themselves have taught it, it is likely that the option was simple not selected due to a lack of information. At some time in the future it might be worthwhile doing a targeted satisfaction survey of Dharma School teachers, parents and even children.*
- No notable trends were observed in the 10 write-in responses

Please tell us about improvements that could be made in any of these (or other) areas.

Answered: 39 Skipped: 28

Responses

More outreach. Social media seems to be, I dunno, flat? Not much discussion about any issues but this may just be a reflection of the nature of practice. Can we do teaching retreats without triads?

Podcasts often aren't current (but it's okay :))

From a distance member perspective, everything seems to be done exceptionally well! I can't comment on the dharma school, which very well may be going great, but everything else seems great via the podcasts/service recordings/Facebook. I feel very connected, and feel like I could connect myself even more when I have the ability to log on to FB more than just once a week :)

I feel that outreach could be more diverse. My fear is that in an attempt to be more diverse, we may be selectively excluding or isolating specific groups or people, or at least not pursuing select groups. I think part of the advantage and challenge of diversity is that it is heterogeneous in nature. The more similar our sangha becomes, the less diverse we are. Having a presence at pride events and womens events are wonderful. But could we reach out to people and groups that differ from that/us? College Republicans, pro-life events, greek life, athletic events, etc.? I think we may find that those groups are composed of (mostly) sentient beings seeking cessation of suffering

Dharma school teachers are committed and awesome but I wish as an adult community member we got to understand more of the overarching structure/theme of the lessons.

Better audio quality on the streams would be nice. Sometimes it's difficult to hear what the reverends are saying during their talks.

GHBT is getting better and better. Each year it is better organized and more efficient in carrying out its programming. I would say, let's just keep doing what we're doing, and get better at it!

There are many formalities that can be observed, and while basic instruction is given, it might help if certain moments had better exposition. There are often new members or visitors who I can fumbling about, and mimicking movements or words, but they don't know what's happening or why it's happening. Also, perhaps some moments of teaching etiquette and what is and what isn't acceptable inside for a visitor or practitioner might be handy.

NA

I am often overwhelmed by the amount of opportunities to engage with the temple, which is a good problem to have! It can, however, result in feeling like one is "drinking from a fire hose." For newcomers like myself, this might contribute to a sense that the learning curve is too steep, or the necessary time commitment is too great for us to get started in practice and participation.

It would be nice if live feeds were also on youtube channel.

Maybe it would be possible to create some kind of an online possibility for an q&a session

I can't think of any!

More predictable Wed service. Will there be dokusan or not?

I'm trying to stay away from social media (Facebook) as much as possible, but I feel its an important tool to stay connected to sangha. I wish there was an alternative, but unfortunately Facebook does a good job of being a communication center. Oh well.

I cannot think of anything. Love it all!

Morning/evening meditation sessions or some form of meditation gathering every day would be amazing.

Please offer the teaching retreats in July or August instead of June. Or change the month from year to year.

This is probably petty, but if the environment could be more controlled inside, it would more conducive to services, medication, etc. Having the back doors open is awkward, listening to sounds outside. Sometimes it's very stuffy and humid inside.

Open an optional means of participating in Sesshin at the temple.

Maybe more teaching for those who have been through Jukai? Mini-sesshin - one day retreats at the temple?

There is nothing wrong with them. I just don't participate in those things.

set term limits on Leadership Council positions

It would be nice if the liturgy guide was updated, with some of the positions a little more filled out. ...this feels like nitpicking.

Teachers/ spoken to reach out through social media to check in on ones practice for those who cannot attend in person a lot

Less spamming

sit more

I'd like to see us dividing up workloads/duties in a more even way, so the same people aren't doing the same jobs and/or the same people aren't doing most of the jobs. I don't think this is something that happened on purpose or is anyone's fault; it's just a natural human tendency. But I have ideas on how we can even things up and pull more people into the "fray." (I know that many people do want to be more involved; I think they just don't know how.)

I would like to see more of the membership attend regularly after completing Jukai. It seems like the temple recruits new members very well but member retention could be improved.

there is too much going on at times

Do-an.... I like your talks...you have good things to say... rather than the Jodo style talks, I'd like to have more of you talking to us directly or giving a teisho.

Updating the webcam used for the altar cam. The angel cam service is spotty and sound quality isn't great. I appreciate that the service is streamed through an iPod on a stand now, but I like that fixed camera option as well since I don't always have the Facebook app available to stream from, and sometimes the camera movement makes me slightly motion sick.

I do believe that we need to work harder at inclusion, and while we need to maintain tradition and ritual, we should remember that integrity/authenticity sometimes means easing up on some of our rigidity when appropriate and safe.

I'd like to see different practice retreats, such as art, music, pottery, cooking, etc. as zen practice

Have nothing to change

None really

Better climate control at the temple.

I'd like to see a shift to a balance of special ceremonies during Wednesday Services. For a variety of reasons, I don't attend Sunday Services. Therefore, I never participate in special services. Also, I can't make every Wednesday, even though that is my intention. Having a sitting group or service on alternate days, would be welcome.

Streaming, or putting up later, some of the special classes would be fabulous. Ie the recent series on death. I've had mixed success when you've streamed before, (some may be due to my end, slow bandwidth) Have you considered offering online classes like SFZC does for example? Probably a huge technical challenge but maybe you have a large enough virtual sangha to make it worth it ???? I have to guess about some things, like a recent reference to the amusing " tentdo" which I assume is a summer tent for sesshin? Hope to make it out for a sesshin one day. Is there on site space to camp in summer?

Trends

- 2 responses express a concern that there is too much to take in from the perspective of a newcomer. Too much to learn in terms of etiquette.
- 3 responses express concerns about environmental factors affecting accessibility to service / sesshin.
- 2 responses bring up the issue of inclusion
- Regarding responses that address the teaching opportunities and programming offered: two notable comments include the desire for a more predictable schedule in which people know if Dokusan will be available on a Wednesday, as well as a comment about the tendency to do major celebrations and observances almost exclusively on Sunday, missing the 'Wednesday Crowd'
- 6 responses that address our technological components.
 - *Editorial note from Kaishin: given our proficiency with our fb simulcast, is the lower quality picture and sound from the Angel Cam worthwhile at this time?*

Q7

Export ▼

What else would you like to tell us?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 27

Responses

sending love from afar <3

Nothing I can think of. As a distance member I am so thrilled to be able to be part of the Sangha. It's incredibly special to me. Folks have been so welcoming and supportive and I feel remarkably connected for being so far away!

felt a bit of hostility from the leader guy last time I was there. haven't been back since.

Sesshin has been running especially smoothly lately and I'm so grateful for both the depth of practice and just general liturgical experience that makes that happen.

All above. Let's try not to lose too many Jukai students once they're through.

I began visiting because I wanted to better practice meditation as it is a component of the martial arts I practice. And yet I think I've found something more. Appreciate what I see and what everybody does.

I often treat involvement like its an allergy of mine. I am SO grateful that you do not! Thank you for your practice! _^_

Miss you guys

I very much enjoyed my experience with you, however my current health is not allowing me to participate in many activities (typically, I can complete about 3 tasks per day and that does not allow for an independent lifestyle)

Your way of approaching and teaching the dharma has been of a really high value in different areas of my personal life. Thank you and may you be well!

I'm really glad to have this Sangha in my life. This temple gives me a place to really be myself and be accepted for it. I can't be grateful enough for that. _^_ Deep bows to this entire community.

Love the library...great addition this year

I would like if Wednesday service would start earlier. I would like if Sundays could be a bit more like Wednesdays - more zazen, teisho, even dokusan. I am extremely grateful for the Teachers - for their devotion and for all the sacrifices they make on behalf of Sangha. I am extremely grateful for Sangha and for being fortunate enough to be a part of such a deeply caring, sincere, and devoted group of practitioners. If it was necessary to scale back anything, I would hope Wednesdays and Sesshin would not be cut, but I would not be too affected, personally, if the more "social" and "churchy" things like affinity groups, sangha circles, dharma school had to be cut. But I do realize these are valuable to many members. I am mainly interested in the core mission - Zen practice - whatever that means! I worry sometimes that we're becoming too big and too complex of an organization, trying to be everything for everyone. Not that this is all bad, as long as we keep clear the focus on Zen practice and that the many other activities don't steer us away from the core mission.

Always a beautiful share!

Being a part of the sangha has changed my life dramatically. The support and love that flows through it so smoothly is absolutely incredible! I feel so blessed! Thank you!!!!

One of the earnest communities I've ever come across Thank you

I am finding great inner peace by attending. The readings are difficult and take me many times to review and comprehend, its all so new. I love the small group discussions when possible.

It's wonderful that there is so much commitment to supporting the whole Sangha and getting the word out about practice to the larger community as well.

So grateful for the sangha and our teachers! Very excited to see how our new novitiates will strengthen our community/practices.

May you be well, happy, and safe. And may your heart rejoice within you.

You may be doing Dharma school well, but I am not involved. However, I love listening to the kids, learning what they did that day. I am enjoying the phasing out of what little talking is in done in sesshin. Please be patient as the rest of the sangha goes in through the transition from announcing what is being done to just knowing. _/_

Grateful and honored to practice with this community _^_

I love what's happening at the Temple. My practice and the Sangha have become a huge part of my life. I feel super grateful to be a part. Deep bows to everyone for making this wonderful place happen.

Great group. Great practice

hmm, sit more

The teachers have expressed intentions about trying to open a retreat center that allows for year long retreats. I fully support this idea and would like to know if there is a 10 year plan in the making to start the retreat center. If the leadership council can come up with a financial plan then I would definitely like to get involved to support such ambitions. thank you for the time and commitment in keeping the temple running.

I love you all. :-) Deep bows. _^_

Thank you for everything. Keep up the great work

Many bows for everyone's hard work and special thanks to the postulants.

Is it possible to have services on Saturdays? I work midnights and would like to come in, but I never have time. We all have to sleep, and Sundays are the days I do so before I go to work.

Thanks for all you provide for us! _^_

I can't thank everyone enough for how much the temple has brought into my life. I found the podcasts during a time that I was experiencing extreme sadness and doubt. There were days that listening to Rinsen's Dharma talks were what kept me going through each day. There is an old episode from way back when about the story of the Buddha told on Bodhi Day that I still find comfort in even now. The way the teacher speaks not just to the adults in the room, but the little ones as well continues to affect me every time I listen. Thank you, to the teachers for their wonderful guidance. Thank you to everyone that puts so much effort into every service and every small detail that makes things that much better. Thank you to the postulants for showing everyone so much love and compassion as you help the teachers guide us along our path. And a huge thank you to the podcast team. Without your efforts, I may not have ever made that first step through the front door and into the heart of the Sangha. _^_

GHS is a ray of hope in a world that is too often far too dark. Thank you all for your practice _^_

BTT creates good. Keep it up.

Thank you for your practice!

Not much

I just wish I lived closer so I could attend services more often.

Love you.

I deeply appreciate being connected via the Podcasts and Abbott's address and emails. I've sent money but haven't taken the next step to "join". Just know there are solo practitioners out here that sort of feel like sangha... but of course don't have real friendships or dokusan and temple rituals... ????

Very glad Sensei asked for Abbot's Address topics. Please keep working through the list.

Trends

- The vast majority of these responses are expressions of gratitude and affection
- 2 comments express concern or negativity. One person had a negative experience of the "leader guy" and has not come back. Another response is wary of the community getting too big and complex of an organization.
- 2 comments related to accessibility. One was based on personal health. One was addressing the plans to eventually build a facility and being interested in helping fundraise for the endeavour.
- at least 6 comments regarding programming, including some mention of service times.

Cross-Question Trends

- Between Q6 and Q7 there were three, unique respondents that brought up Jukai. Two of the 3 responses specifically expressed concern about low retention after Jukai. The third response expressed a desire for specific programming directed at people who have completed Jukai.

END OF SURVEY

Notes for future consideration

- Survey responses were at an all time high.
- Recommend using the same questions (with some option changes in Q4 and Q5 to note changes over time.)
- Various filters and questions are available through Survey Monkey for a cost. These things would allow us to easily look at subgroupings of questions, such as:
 - The tendency of people to access just Wednesday or Sunday services
 - The tendency of newer vs. older members to attend sesshin
(might not be useful at this time, but could be as the community grows)
- Some responses might not indicate what they appear to, due to design
 - People who are not involved in Dharma School might not think about if it is going well.
 - Words like “outreach” might not be clearly understood and therefore people may not be able to state whether or not they feel it is going well.
- We may want to add write-in responses for Q4 and Q5 to the checklist for next year

-Kaishin
