

The Daifukuji Gift Shop

by Rev. Jikō Nakade

When I first thought of having a temple gift shop in 2010, I imagined it occupying a corner of the small room (choba) located off the temple porch and making available three hard-to-find items in Kona: ojuzu, fine incense, and zafu (meditation cushions). I asked temple member Clear Houn Englebert, who had both a passion for the Dharma and retail experience, if he'd help with the shop and he agreed to volunteer. Our temple board provided startup funds. The shop quietly opened. That was nine years ago.

From its simple beginnings, the shop began to grow. And grow some more. Some items were ordered and others were donated. Before long, the small room wasn't big enough and items began to spill onto the temple porch, requiring gift shop volunteers to arrive at least an hour before any event to set everything up and then to stay at least an hour afterwards to put everything away. This happened month after month.

The time had come to look for a bigger space for the shop. The storage room in the basement looked promising, but it was filled with all sorts of things. Here was a good chance to clean up, but where would we move all of the things we needed to keep? We had to find alternate storage spaces. With the help of our samu group that does the weekly cleaning of the temple, a lot of junk was taken away and the needed-to-be-kept items hauled to their new locations. The emptied-out room was painted; the old floor tiles were removed. Track lighting was installed, along with shelving & display cases. It was a tremendous undertaking, made possible by many sangha volunteers. Everyone shared the vision & brought it to fruition.

Why was so much time and energy invested in expanding this gift shop? Because it is a valuable vehicle of the Dharma. Through this shop, Buddhist teachings go out into our community. Through items such as books, scrolls, cards, art, statuary, and meditation cushions, the Buddha-Dharma is being spread far and wide. Without a doubt, this is the primary mission of the Gift Shop. It is a wondrous Dharma gate.

Next, proceeds from the shop directly support our temple and lending library. Many of the books and videos found in our library are purchased through the gift shop. We've gotten so many books over the years that we've donated boxes of them to other temples and to the Prison Mindfulness Project. Moreover, the gift shop has not only returned its start-up fund, it has also made generous contributions to the temple's Dharma fund.

Having a beautiful gift shop has sparked the interest of our island community. The shop has been featured in several local publications. On Bon Dance night and the day of the Daifukuji orchid show & bazaar, it was abuzz with visitors. This gift shop is a jewel in the basement — a Dharma jewel, for sure. I am grateful to the many volunteers and sangha members who support it and make it shine. Please drop by the next time you're in Kona. <http://www.daifukuji.org/giftshop.html>

