

The Eastern Buddhist Society Lecture Series

Dispelling Taboos and Offering Warm Companionship: The Suicide Prevention Priests of Japan

Date and Time: Thursday, June 18th, 2026, 17:00~18:30 (JST)

Place: Multimedia Room, 3rd Floor, Kōrukan, Otani University
Online via Zoom Webinar

Speaker: Jonathan S. Watts

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Abstract:

In 1998, Japan entered a dark period called the “karmically disconnected society,” also known as the “era of 30,000 suicides.” The Japanese Buddhist tradition seemed an unlikely resource at the time for helping citizens with their struggles, having been pejoratively dubbed “funeral Buddhism.” Nevertheless, priests found themselves on the front lines of the suicide pandemic, attempting to deal with the carnage of broken families. Individual priests also began to reach out to “persons who wish to die” by establishing talk cafés, creating suicide prevention hotlines, and reaching out through the internet. During the late 2000s and early 2010s, these activities grew into a movement of priests working both within their own denominations and collaboratively across sectarian lines. More recently, collaborations have emerged with the public sector, breaking through the “separation of church and state” wall. This work has also extended to international collaborations with Buddhists from other parts of Asia.

Notes: The Lecture will be in English.

URL: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82037063695>



Video Webinar QR Code

About the EBS

The Eastern Buddhist Society (EBS) was founded by D. T. Suzuki, Beatrice Lane Suzuki, Sasaki Gesshō, Akanuma Chizen, and Yamabe Shūgaku, with the main purpose of communicating the meaning and significance of Buddhism to the West. Since its founding, the Society has published an English-language journal, *The Eastern Buddhist*.

東方仏教徒協会 (The Eastern Buddhist Society)



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