

Daiden (Great Hall)

The original great hall, built with the patronage of the shogunate, was an elaborate one-story structure. It was even larger than the massive hall at the Chion-in Temple, which is the headquarters of the Jodo (Pure Land) sect in Kyoto. Unfortunately, the original hall burned down during the Meiji period (1868–1912), in the wake of the anti-Buddhist movement of the 1870s. A replacement hall was destroyed in the aerial bombardments of World War II. The current hall was built in reinforced concrete in a relatively minimalist style in 1974.

The temple's principal figure of Amida Buddha is enshrined on the second floor of the Daiden. Believers of the Jodo sect come here to chant "Namu Amida Butsu" (I take refuge in Amida)—a practice called *nenbutsu*, or repeating the name of the Buddha, by which anyone can achieve enlightenment.

A statue of Honen (1133–1212), who founded the Jodo sect, is to the left of the main altar. Honen spread Buddhism beyond the elite to the common people. On the right side is an altar dedicated to the Chinese patriarch Shandao (Zendo Daishi in Japanese; 613–681), who preached the importance of *nenbutsu* centuries before Honen, and whose writings inspired Honen.

Temple priests perform rituals and offer prayers three times a day—at 6:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 5:00 p.m. Visitors are welcome to attend these daily prayers as well as special events at the hall, including ancient court dance and music performances held in April and December.

There is a Treasure Gallery in the first basement, the graves of 1600 believers in the second basement, and a training hall on the third floor.