

WHEEL OF DHARMA

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Fukushima Tsunami Memorial Takes Place Aboard USS Ronald Reagan



Photo by Kate Leonard

On the third anniversary of the March 11, 2011 Fukushima Tsunami, The Honorable Jun Niimi, Consul General of Japan at Los Angeles, expressed his gratitude to Rear Admiral Patrick Hall, Captain Christopher Bolt, and the US Navy, aboard the USS Ronald Reagan.

This aircraft carrier led the naval group that assisted in the “Operation Tomodachi” relief effort after the tragedy.

The ceremony was held in San Diego. Rev. Dr. Kenji Akahoshi of the Buddhist Temple of San Diego led a moment of silence, the benediction, and the burning of incense (*o-shoko*) before a Buddhist altar. The ceremony was attended by some 1,500 sailors and several hundred guests from the Japanese and Japanese-American communities.

LGBT Seminar June 27.
Check CBE-BCA.org for
registration information.

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A Special Summer Session

南無阿彌陀佛

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Rev. Tetsuo Unno and Rev. Dr. Mark Ty Unno

Guest Speaker:
Rev. Harry Gyokyo Bridge

Presented by the Institute of Buddhist Studies and
Buddhist Churches of America — Center for Buddhist Education

Bumpy Ride Home

By Leo Joslin
Buddhist Church
of San Francisco

I would have fastened my seatbelt had I known it would be such a bumpy ride! Kenneth Tanaka’s book *Ocean* refers to the Bumpy Road as one of the Four Marks of Existence and I agree, having experienced considerable ups and downs while traveling various spiritual paths. However, after participating in the Kieshiki Ceremony [to receive a Buddhist name], it feels like I’ve finally arrived home.

I started my journey as a fundamentalist Christian. My mother was a Japanese woman who married an American soldier and moved to the United States, only to find herself in rural isolation. Unfamiliar with the culture and surrounded by strangers who spoke a different language, it was an unsettling time for her. A local Bible Church reached out and took her in, along with me and my brothers. I think that being a part of a community was important for her and this was the only one available at the



BCA Bishop, Rev. Kodo Umezu (center, second row) conducted the Kieshiki Affirmation Ceremony at the Buddhist Church of San Francisco at its 2014 New Year’s Day Service, assisted by Resident Minister Ronald Kobata (front, right) and Minister’s Assistant Elaine Donlin (front, left). Receiving their Buddhist names were (left-right): Frank Del Gaizo, Leo Joslin, Tim Simpson and Sandy Yamakishi.

time. The rigid dogma provided some structure and feelings of safety, but at a cost. While the message of love was there, it felt conditional. And there is only so much hell-fire and brimstone one can tolerate. It became especially horrific when, as a teenager, I realized I was gay and that my church said I was

damned. This was a huge bump in the road.

It was liberating to break away and leave small town America for college in Los Angeles. I slowly disconnected from the uncompromising belief system I had adhered to as a child and it was a painful deprogramming. I joined a more

liberal Christian church in LA but the scars of my earlier conditioning remained with me and I eventually dropped out.

My road then took a turn toward Buddhism. I attended a few services at Reverend Masao Kodani’s Senshin Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles. My partner at that time was a member and he told me that Reverend Kodani said it was okay to be gay and Buddhist. This was comforting, and I’m sure it planted seeds in my consciousness, but I was not ready to join another church after my earlier experience. And my eyes were not yet open enough to recognize home.

Moving to San Francisco, I made another attempt to get back on a spiritual path. The first Buddhist Community I joined was impressive with colorful banners, mysterious rituals, and guided meditation. However, I soon became uncomfortable with what felt like competition amongst members. They seemed focused on who had done more silent retreats, who had completed more course-

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Linda Castro, 1982

By Kemi Nakabayashi
Seattle Betsuin
Buddhist Temple

For Hanamatsuri service, “A Flower Grows” was sung by the Seattle Betsuin sangha with a special tribute to Linda Castro who passed away last December. Linda Luebke started her career as a nurse in Milwaukee, Wisconsin before moving to Oakland, California where she met Don Castro when he was studying at IBS. While in California, she pursued studies of her lifelong passion of music, earning a master’s degree in early music from Holy Names College. After moving to Seattle, she became certified as an elementary music specialist, a position she held for 16 years at Parkwood School in Shoreline, Washington. She attended

“A Flower Grows” In Remembrance of Linda Castro (Luebke)

Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington and earned a PhD in leadership. Linda was most recently a professor of music education at Indiana State University, a job she loved and in which she profoundly influenced the preparation of aspiring music teachers.

Rinban Castro’s first ministerial assignment in 1977 was at the Buddhist Church of San Francisco, where Linda Castro formed and directed her first choir. She also participated in other Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) musical activities. When they first arrived in Seattle in 1986, Rinban Castro recalls Haruo Fujino, father of Pauline Sakuma, greeted them and said to Linda, “I hear you are going to start a choir.” Indeed soon thereafter, she organized the Seattle Betsuin choir and conducted the group for many years. Seattle Betsuin choir members echo the sentiment of Irene Mano, one of the original choir members, “Linda taught us so much. She introduced us

to many kinds of music, both secular and non-secular. The variety was challenging and fun! The exposure was valuable and has helped us to try different new music.”

Linda Castro’s *Six Songs for Buddhist Children* was published by the BCA in 1990 as a Children’s Book with an accompanying Teacher’s Book. Initially, Linda was frustrated with the efforts to publish these gathas until Seattle Betsuin member Ayako Horike graciously offered to purchase the computer equipment Linda needed. Rinban Castro wishes to acknowledge the late Mrs. Horike now since her contribution was instrumental but anonymous at the time. Besides “A Flower Grows,” the book included “Silent in the Temple,” “How Sweetly the Lotus Grows,” “The Bodhi Tree,” and “Ganjin’s Journey.” Linda’s gathas have been especially popular in Hawaii since she introduced them there with Rev. Castro in the 1990s. Hawaiians especially liked “A Special

Place” because of the lyrics “an island in the sea” which they took to mean Hawaii. In actuality, the island referred to the *zabuton* cushion each child sits on in our children’s service. “A Special Place” is also the theme song of Buddhist Church of San Francisco’s “A Special Place Summer Dharma School” and the inspiration for its name.

Rev. Castro provided background information on the revered Chinese priest Ganjin in the Teachers’ Book for the song “Ganjin’s Journey” and noted that Ganjin’s story is beautifully related in the novel *The Roof Tile of Tempyo* by Yasushi Inoue, translated into English by James T. Araki. In the eighth century after others had declined the request of Japanese envoys, Ganjin agreed to make the perilous journey from China to Japan to establish Buddhist teachings. Ganjin finally reached Japan in 754 after six attempts over a twelve-year span. Rev. Castro wrote, “Due to the deep devo-

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Admiring the Dharma Moon

By Rev. Kodo Umezu, Bishop

Did you see the total eclipse of the moon last month? I sure did. I stayed up late and watched the moon change shape. I am sure many people are awed by the wonder of the universe. Those who looked at the moon had become one, regardless of creed, race, social status, livelihood, age, or gender. The moon brought everyone together as one to admire the rare celestial show.

This reminded me of an account that I heard from the late Rev. Ejitsu Hojo. Several decades ago, when the world-famous Buddhist scholar, Dr. D. T. Suzuki visited the Buddhist Churches of America, Rev. Hojo had the privilege of taking him around. One evening, Rev. Hojo was driving him to a temple where he was scheduled to speak. It was a beautiful, moonlit night. Dr. Suzuki, sitting next to Rev. Hojo, was looking at the moon in the evening sky and uttered, "I wonder how many people are admiring this full moon tonight?"

Dr. Suzuki's comment has, I believe, deeper meaning than just admiring the full moon. I don't think he was just talking about the moon. He must have had the dharma in mind. His comment was directed at all of us. While he was admiring the full moon, he was thinking of the dharma moon and wishing that more people would join him and look up to the dharma.

When we all look up to the same dharma, we will truly become one; what we call "the sangha." While the light of the sun is very bright and makes us see the outer world, the light of the moon is not so bright and allows us to pay more attention to ourselves. Therefore, the dharma is sometimes called the light of the moon. Under the light of the dharma moon, we can overcome our differences and share the joy of receiving the light.

We, the members of the BCA, are one under the dharma light. This dharma light is the compassionate light of wisdom. Under this light, we come to see ourselves being perfectly imperfect. When we recognize ourselves as such, we refrain from criticizing one another. We can see others as fellow travelers and companions if we live our lives revering the dharma light. When we receive the light of the dharma, we find the right direction in our life. With the light of Amida, we will find true contentment and meaning in this life.

As the light of the moon reaches all without discrimination, the dharma sheds its light over all people. Let us together revere the dharma moon and praise the working of its light. Namu Amida Butsu.

Book Review: "Light of the Dharma"

The Rev. Dr. Hoshu Matsubayashi's new book commemorating his 77th year of life and over 50 years of Buddhist ministry, has recently published book titled "Light of the Dharma," which exemplifies his life work and his interpretation of how he was touched by the Buddha Dharma and the teachings of Shinran Shonin.



In Chapter 11, he uses the acronym "KISB" (Keep It Simple, Buddhists), to express his thoughts on the poetry of Shinran in making his teaching simple and basic, grounded in everyday experience. Dr. Matsubayashi covers various Buddhist holidays using the same approach, yet grounded in the doctrine. He also reveals some personal accounts grounded in the Buddha and Shinran's teachings.

It was joy to read this endeavor of Rev. Dr. Matsubayashi and I recommend it for all to read. It is available at the BCA Bookstore.

Gassho,
Seigen Yamaoka

Life is Maintenance: Back to Basics



By Rev. Fumiaki Usuki
West Los Angeles
Buddhist Temple

As you may know, this is the first passage from the *Dhammapada*. As simple as it may seem, it packs a mean punch. We may nod our heads in agreement that it speaks to us about life's struggles, yet we don't really heed its suggestion to correct our attitudes. Thus we continue to be absorbed in the ceaseless human condition that binds us to this delusional self.

We can't sleep when our minds are busy with anticipation and worries and, as a result, we become exhausted and try to make do with what little wisdom and energy we have. Life can be filled with constant challenges. Despite managing to live what we call a good life, it is also

We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world. Speak or act with an impure mind and trouble will follow you...

complex. During times of stress and doubt, we may be brought to ask that eternal question, "What is it all about?" This is described in Buddhism as the cycle of birth and death, which is ever present.

Buddhism can be simple for those who have learned to go with the natural flow of life. Yet many of us tend to make things a little more complicated than what we can handle. Is your life a high maintenance life?

How do we go beyond simply agreeing with the idea that *we are what we think*? Like the house or garden that needs constant care and maintenance, every life requires careful examination and infinite attention. It is when we actually realize this is true that a maintenance schedule is in order. A human being runs like any other well-oiled machine, and only you know your individual capabilities and nuances. It is of no use to hope that some kind and generous person will come to fix your problems, the way they would a broken toilet. No one carries the tools that fit your requirements; only the

Buddha does.

Right effort can be quite straightforward. It begins with an unwavering attitude. This attitude must be genuine and without pretention. It is the will and the sincere desire to be more wholesome in mind and body. Without the right attitude, we can still be led astray by the kind of irrationality and wishful thinking that create more difficulties. A sincere attitude allows us to be inquisitive about our own encounters and problems. Why did I just say that? What prompted me to do such thing? What would Buddha do in my situation? Such reflections signal a turning point in our lives. Then all our actions become natural, responsible, and caring, and we are inspired to keep learning more about ourselves.

As we grow and experience the wisdom of the Dharma, we begin to live a mindful and focused life. It is a healthy and natural process that mitigates the need to be defensive. The self blends with all things and is freed from the bondage we assumed was necessary. There

Dhammapada

is no ego and no selfish thought that craves attention. Rather, we feel the true liberation that naturally blends into all things and somehow we can breathe again. People become people; incidents are noticed but not challenged. Not all situations need an answer right at that moment. We learn to give everything a chance and the benefit of the doubt.

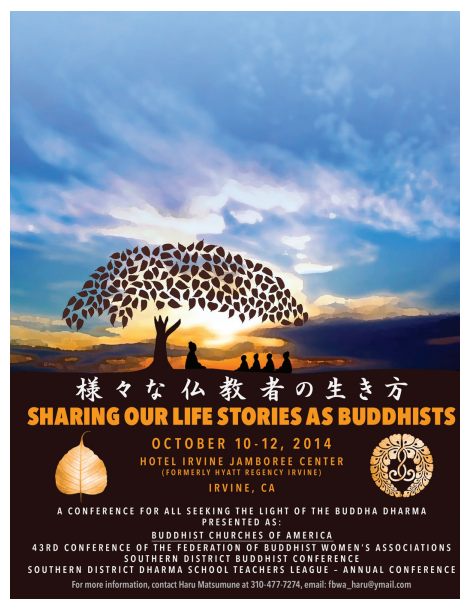
Then when we hear the phrase *we are what we think*, we know exactly what it means. We take it seriously; our agreement is no longer an empty nod. We become true Buddhists, realizing that unless we become aware of our own self at its most profound level, we cannot learn anything. Not knowing where to begin, many of us lack the inspiration, energy, or desire to give the Dharma a chance. However, if we listen deeply, we will be on the path to continuous learning and mindful living. There is always enough time for such an experience. We should allow ourselves to live life as it should be lived; fully and naturally, with humility and gratitude.

Sharing Our Lives as Buddhists A Conference for All Seeking the Light of Enlightenment, Oct. 10-12, in Irvine, California

An exciting and fabulous conference is awaiting you! Nine tremendous speakers from various Buddhist traditions!

I am excited to invite everyone to "Sharing our Life Stories as Buddhists," the 43rd national conference of the Federation of Buddhist Women's Associations (FBWA), which is presented biannually to bring together members from across the country to promote the Buddha Dharma. For the first time ever, the FBWA is joining with the Buddhist Churches of America Southern District temples to study, share and network with Buddhists of many traditions. The selected theme binds all of us and touches us regardless of gender, age, orientation, or history.

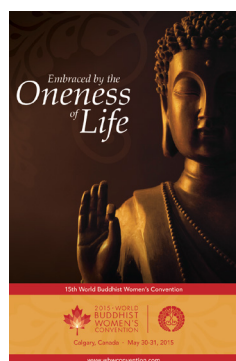
Just as traveling to a different culture teaches us about the uniqueness of our own culture, learning about the different Buddhist traditions helps us to better understand our own tradition. We come to appreciate that our view of the world is only one of many. Through sharing our life stories as Buddhists, we gain a deeper understanding of our own tradition, our lives and the world. Please join us from October 10 through 12, 2014, at the beautiful Hotel Irvine Jamboree Center, Irvine's premier lifestyle hotel, and share your life story along with the life stories of our nine very special guest speakers to learn, to share, and to be enlightened.



For more information, email: fbwa_haru@ymail.com. Flyers are downloadable at www.bcasites.net/FBWA

Gassho,
Dianne Kujubu Belli,
FBWA President 2013-2014

Editor's note: Registration for members of BWA chapters and Southern District temples are available through their group's contact. Individuals who are not affiliated may register at buddhistchurchesofamerica.org.



2015 World BWA Convention "Embraced by the Oneness of Life"

2015 WORLD BUDDHIST WOMEN'S CONVENTION

CALGARY, CANADA MAY 30-31, 2015

Please visit: www.wbwconvention.com

Registration is open: 1st deadline: May 30, 2014

Contact temple BWA representatives for important details.



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First-person articles should be around of 500 words, typed, double-spaced in Microsoft Word. The editors may ask for longer articles, or split in multiple parts at the editors' discretion. All other articles should be in news release form at maximum of 500 words. Documents should be sent as an email attachment to WODeditor@bcahq.org. Images, preferably in color, must be submitted as 300 dpi JPEG or TIFF in separate attachments and never embedded in a Word document. PDF is not preferred. The editors reserve the right to crop images and to edit articles. Articles and news releases are reviewed for publication on the 10th of every month.

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President's Message



By Dr. Kent Matsuda
BCA President
Enmanji Buddhist Temple

The State of the BCA

During the brainstorming sessions at the National Council Meeting held in Bellevue, Washington this past February, there was a request for a "State of the BCA" address. This column is intended to respond to that request.

One of the most pressing issues facing the BCA is the four million dollar loan we have with the BCA Endowment Foundation. In 2007, we initiated the first of three loans with the BCA Endowment Foundation. The first two loans were used to remove lines of credit/loans that we had with Union Bank of California. The third loan was used to pay off the last loan we had with California Bank and Trust. All the BCA Endowment Foundation loans have been consolidated into one loan. Since 2007, we have been paying interest on the loan, but none of the principal has been paid. The loan comes due at the end of June of this year.

Currently, the BCA will not be able to pay off the loan when it comes due. The BCA and the BCA Endowment Foundation have had discussions about renegotiating the loan. One solution involves the BCA Endowment Foundation isolating the BCA funds held by the BCA Endowment Foundation. The BCA currently has about \$8 million in funds held by the BCA Endowment Foundation. The BCA Endowment Foundation has proposed a new arrangement with the BCA, where all the BCA funds will be placed in a special portfolio. This portfolio would remove the BCA funds from the rest of the BCA Endowment Foundation's holdings. The BCA Endowment Foundation would further isolate \$4 million of the BCA's holdings and would become the caretaker of the isolated \$4 million. As the BCA pays back the \$4 million, the isolated money would come under BCA control again.

In a future column, I will discuss how the BCA will raise the money to pay back the \$4 million.

Lest you think that the BCA has adequate cash to pay off the BCA Endowment Foundation loan, please realize that the BCA funds currently in the BCA Endowment Foundation are mostly endowed accounts that are being held for a single purpose. Most of the BCA funds are designated for Buddhist Education. The earnings on the funds help BCA pay for programs that are produced by the Center for Buddhist Education and other organizations throughout the BCA. The principal amount in the funds needs to remain intact. Having the funds under the BCA Endowment Foundation's care means that the BCA will be assessed a maintenance fee, just like the temples' custodial accounts. This will decrease

the earnings that could be used for our programs. The full impact of this arrangement has not yet been determined, but this issue will be discussed at the National Board Meeting this May.

BCA Headquarters staff has recently been involved in making adjustments on the way we administer the ministers' 403(b) deferred compensation money that comes from the Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan. It appears that this problem can be solved without jeopardizing the money the ministers currently hold in their own accounts.

With the advent of the Affordable Care Act earlier this year, the BCA needed to provide ministers with a new health insurance plan since the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) policy that we used previously was no longer going to be offered. The current solution to this plan involved designating some temple ministers as employees of the BCA. This way, they could be offered another health insurance policy regardless of which state their temples were located in. Few ministers are taking advantage of this plan. Also, making the ministers employees of the BCA may not be the best solution to the problem. We are continuing to work on this issue.

Many new ideas were discussed during the last National Council Meeting brainstorming sessions. Judy Kono, chair of the BCA Communications Committee, is currently working on many of the issues that relate to communicating with BCA members. Mrs. Kono is also trying to get more religious materials out on the Internet and in the form of e-books. Her able committee has a lot of work to do.

Next year's National Council Meeting will look different from what we have done in the past. I would like to see more activities and sessions aimed towards BCA members who are not delegates for the meeting. I would like to see the meeting look more like the district conventions that are held in the Northwest and Southern districts. I would like to see a shorter business meeting. To that end, Bishop Umezu and I are trying to work with the organizing committee in the Southern District to see if we can have sessions that provide BCA members with materials and information that they can use at their temples and in their capacities as temple leaders. I will discuss this in detail later in this year.

Finally, we will be making many changes in the BCA Bylaws that will, hopefully, make our bylaws more concise and consistent in content. This effort is being spearheaded by Rick Stambul and will be discussed at our upcoming National Board Meeting.

Goin' Down the Road

By Rev. Harry Gyokyo Bridge
Buddhist Church of Oakland

"The road" is a powerful metaphor. We find it in ancient Asian cultures, whether in the Tao of China or the Path of Buddhism. We can also find it in popular American culture, from simple expressions like "hit the road" (either as "time to go" or "get out of here"), to *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, to the song "Life is a Highway" from the movie *Cars*.

It is interesting to note that the "Tao" of Taoism simply means "way" or "path." This must have helped when Buddhism entered China, because Buddhism also speaks of the spiritual life as a path, or *marga* in Sanskrit. Buddhism actually speaks of many paths, including the Eightfold Noble Path, the Middle Way, or the distinction between the Path of Sages and the Pure Land Path. This also contributes to the idea that Buddhism is better described as a "way of life" instead of as a "religion." "Way" can mean a method or style of living, but of course it can also refer to this idea of path.

I am thinking about the road

and paths and travel today, because this morning I flew down from Oakland to Orange County for a meeting, and now I am flying back home. I think this is my first daytrip to Southern California! Although tiring, it was also nice not to have to think about what clothes to bring—just my laptop and iPhone. More importantly, however, I am really amazed and humbled when I realize that many ministers have gone on these kinds of trips over the years in support of the Buddhist Churches of America and for the sake of the Dharma.

One of my favorite expressions in Shinran's writings is *ondobo/ondogyo*, sometimes translated as fellow practitioners/fellow travellers. To me, this ties into the notion of the Pure Land Path that I mentioned earlier. However, this path isn't a solitary path for me to walk alone; instead, I walk it in the company of others. Even as a minister, I am not better than anyone else, I am not more capable. Instead, I try and learn from everyone, whether other ministers, members, people in my community, long-time friends, even people that I may

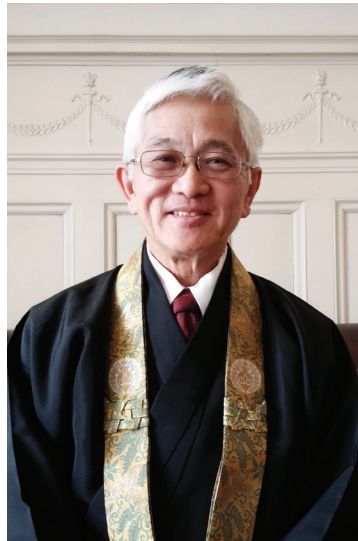


not particularly like.

In fact, I am not sure that my fellow practitioners and fellow travellers necessarily need to be Shinshu, or even Buddhist. Instead, maybe it is better to recognize that we are ALL on a journey, regardless of religious affiliation. This doesn't mean that I am not dedicated to Jodo Shinshu. If anything, I find that my pursuit of the Path of Jodo Shinshu is strengthened by ALL of my various interactions. May all of our journeys be fruitful, may all beings be happy and well, may we all attain great awakening in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss.

Namo Amida Butsu

Reverend Earl Ikeda Joins BCA



The BCA is pleased to welcome Rev. Earl Ikeda as one of its newest ministers. Born and raised on the Island of Hawaii in the city of Hilo, Rev. Ikeda is married to Myra Ikeda and they have a son, Brian.

A graduate of Hilo High School in 1966, Rev. Ikeda

received a BA in Japanese from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. After working for a year at the Offices of the Japanese Consulate General in Honolulu, an opportunity came to study in Kyoto, Japan.

Through the introduction and sponsorship of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, Sensei attended Ryukoku University and lived and studied at Kaikyoshi Kenshu-sho, the Study Center for Overseas Ministry. It was there that he met many outstanding ministers training to go abroad. These ministers helped him to gain and develop a deeper understanding of Jodo Shinshu.

It was through their influence that he entered Tokudo training and received Tokudo Ordination in 1972. Returning to Hawaii to help with his family's business, Sensei was also requested to assist at the Hilo Betsuin and other temples within his hometown of

Hilo.

In 2000, he returned to Kyoto to receive Kyoshi certification. One year later, he received Kai-kyoshi status from the Hongwanji in Kyoto.

As a minister for the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, Rev. Ikeda served several temples throughout Hawaii including West Kauai Hongwanji, Puna Hongwanji (overseeing Naalehu and Pahala temples), and Moiliili Hongwanji Missions before retiring on January 31, 2014 and coming to the mainland. Sensei joined the BCA on March 1, 2014 and was assigned to the New York Buddhist Church.

Rev. Ikeda's interests include *wagashi* (Japanese confectionary making), Okinawan music and dance, and *shojin ryori* (monastic cooking). Sensei looks forward to continuing his ministry and sharing the Dharma with the members of the BCA.



Longmont Buddhist Temple

The Longmont Buddhist Temple was established in January 1925 as the Longmont Kyudokai by inspiring founding members: Kikutaro Mayeda, Kunihei Miyasaki, Daijiro Furuiye, Motozo Matsuda, Seizo Fukaye, Goroku Kanemoto, Toyokichi Kawano, and Kamekichi Shimoda. With only 20 families, in May 1929 they built Showa Hall in Lafayette to hold Buddhist services on a regular basis.

They held Buddhist services with ministers from Denver Buddhist Church and later became a branch of the Tri-State Buddhist Temples with services held on a monthly basis. They conducted Japanese language classes during the summer vacation in an effort to keep their children aware of their heritage. One of the milestones of the Temple community was the granting of United States Citizenship to some of the members in 1952.

To expand Buddhist services to reach the entire Longmont area, founding members in 1955 ordered a beautiful altar from Japan. That altar today now resides in the current building along with scrolls of Shinran and Rennyo from Japan which were donated on behalf of George Kanemoto, son of Goroku Kanemoto. In 1969, founders converted a former schoolhouse in Longmont into the current Longmont Buddhist Temple which provides a gathering place for Buddhist teachings. Longmont Buddhist Temple received temple status from the BCA in 2010.

Longmont Buddhist Temple
Highway 287 and Pike Road
Longmont, CO 80503
www.longmontbuddhism.org

Note: This series introducing BCA temples correlates to the 2014 BCA Calendar.

NEW HOURS

BCA Bookstore is now open Wednesday to Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.





BCA Education News & Highlights - Take Refuge in the Light of Joy!

Interview: Rev. Nobuhiro Fukagawa, Kangaku



Photo by Glen Tao

The following interview with Reverend Nobuhiro Fukagawa, Kangaku, appeared in the *Horin* (Japanese section) April 2014 *Wheel of Dharma*. Rev. Fukagawa is a professor of Jodo Shinshu Studies at Ryukoku University and was recently appointed as a Kangaku of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha. Kangaku are considered the highest authority for Jodo Shinshu doctrinal understanding. In March 2014 Rev. Fukagawa gave a series of lectures for the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley and at the Spring Pacific Seminar in Gardena.

Wheel of Dharma (The Wheel): Is this your first visit to the United States?

Rev. Fukagawa: This is my first trip to California. I have previously visited Hawaii on two occasions. In 1979, I spent one year there doing research for when I was a doctoral student at Ryukoku University. I have many fond memories from that time. Hongwanji ministers such as Rev. Shoin Hoashi, were very supportive of me, and gave me opportunities to speak at many temples. This was a very enriching experience from my student years. I returned to Hawaii last year as a lecturer for a ministers' seminar.

The Wheel: Who was your primary teacher at Ryukoku?

Rev. Fukagawa: Professor Takamaro Shigaraki. He is well known as having a progressive interpretation of Jodo Shinshu. In contrast, I was also guided by my father Rev. Rinyu Fukagawa, who also serves as a Kangaku, who is oriented in a more traditional orthodoxy. I feel fortunate to have been influenced by their contrasting views in developing my appreciation of Shinran Shonin's teachings.

The Wheel: I understand you are from Yamaguchi Prefecture.

Rev. Fukagawa: Yes, I am the 19th generation resident minister of my family's temple Sainen-ji in Nagato city. I commute to Kyoto to teach at Ryukoku University during the week, and on weekends I return to the temple to take care of my ministerial duties.

The Wheel: Nagato city is well known as the home of a beloved Buddhist poet, Misuzu Kaneko (1903-1930). With you and your father both being Kangaku, it appears that Jodo Shinshu flourishes in your area.

Rev. Fukagawa: Yes, Shin Buddhism has been a major part of the religious life of people in my home town for many generations. Jodo Shinshu priests from this area have been encouraged to study the teachings and devoted to their ministry because of the devoted followers who support them. Children raised in our area seeing the devotion of their parents' daily observances at their family *obutsudan* (family Buddhist altar) come to appreciate spiritual life. Just bowing in *gassho* to the Buddha becomes a natural and meaningful religious education for children.

The Wheel: Do you have children's programs at your temple?

Rev. Fukagawa: When I was still a student at Ryukoku University I began a summer retreat activity for children in my community. It has continued for over forty years. Through this program children who had never interacted with priests, other than when they attended memorial services, had the opportunity to see how ministers were not strange people who dressed in black robes and conducted rituals. In participating in the retreat with them the young people realized that ministers were not so unusual after all. As they became familiar with the meaning of what goes on in the temple they eventually became regular attendees to temple activities.

The Wheel: What is the content of the retreat program?

Rev. Fukagawa: I introduce the basic rituals and etiquette of *gassho*, *oshoko*, and sutra chanting. For the teachings I would talk about Shinran Shonin, and Amida Buddha. After explaining the meaning of *itadakimasu* and *gochisosama*, I've heard from parents that the children would say, "Mom, don't forget to *gassho* before we eat!"

The Wheel: How do you teach children about Amida Buddha?

Rev. Fukagawa: Basically, I describe Amida Buddha as a Buddha who without anger or judgment watches over us. Of course I explain that "watching over" is not like a prison guard or a critic. Through the compassionate eyes of Amida Buddha our mistakes and foolish acts are understood, without being condoned, [and] are not condemned with punishment. This awareness of Amida Buddha provides a sense of warmth and assurance.

However, some parents question this approach, and advise me to say that, "The Buddha will punish (*bachi*) you when you do something wrong." They feel that this is how children can learn right from wrong. My response to them is to recognize that as limited human beings we cannot help making mistakes. No matter how sincerely we try not to, we still make mistakes. Therefore, I am assured by Amida Buddha who does not condemn and bring about *bachi*. Both children and adults make mistakes, and find ourselves in situations over which we have no control, but Amida Buddha's compassion never rejects us, accepting us as we are. Through taking refuge or having faith in the Heart/Mind of Amida Buddha, we enjoy a life of peace and understanding.

The Wheel: Lastly, what are your thoughts on *shinjin* (awakening/entrusting/faith)? Recently, as more people in the west are looking into Jodo Shinshu, they are asking about *shinjin* in terms of how it happens, or awareness of when it occurs.

Rev. Fukagawa: Essentially, it's not that important to know when we receive *shinjin*, because it is not a condition of Amida's salvation. However, since each of us has our unique characters and experience, we find that there are those who have an awareness of *shinjin* awakening, and others who don't. As an example, when I was younger I didn't care for the taste of beer, but now I enjoy it. I don't recall when I began to like the taste, but gradually as I would have a beer at a party, or during an *otoki* (after memorial service meal) I acquired a taste for beer. On the other hand, there are some people I know who can recall the first time they really enjoyed how a beer tasted. Similarly, there are those who do not remember when they began to have a sense of *shinjin*, and others who can recall a moment of awakening, such as, "When I was listening to a Dharma message at my father's memorial service." The point of this example again, is not a matter of our own memory or determination. They are not conditions for Amida's working to save or awaken us. The essential issue is whether in this present moment we can realize and appreciate Amida's constant efforts to awaken us.

Jodo Shinshu Correspondence Course - Monthly Essay

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As It Matures, What Do You Think Buddhism in America Will Look Like?

By Rosalie May
Seattle Buddhist Church, Betsuin

"When we observe Buddhist history, we see that wherever Buddhism has spread, it has merged with the native culture and taken new life and new forms."

— Dr. Alfred Bloom, *Streams of Tradition: Buddhism, East to West*

What new life and new forms will American Buddhism take? In the digital age Buddhism is spreading rapidly among Americans, in a variety of different ways. As more Americans become aware of and convert to Buddhism, Buddhism is bound to change. Dr. Alfred Bloom and Dr. Ken Tanaka have laid out their ideas on the future of American Buddhism, believing it will be democratic and based in American ideals such as freedom and equality.

Dr. Bloom says:

"American Buddhism will be based in American values such as freedom, equality, the value of the person, a social awareness and pursuit of justice and peace. It will be non-discriminating and accepting of people regardless of race, gender and sexual orientation. It will be democratic, developing indigenous leadership. It will be marked by environmental awareness and economic justice."

Similarly, in his article in *Dharma World* vol. 38, Dr. Tanaka describes six characteristics that set American Buddhists apart from traditional Asian Buddhists: Democracy, Engagement, Rationalization, Privatization, Present Life, and Humor. I think some of the American attributes that they both mention point to the direction in which American Buddhism is taking. I also think that American culture will permeate American Buddhism.

Democracy and Equality Democracy is a thoroughly American ideal. In terms of Buddhism, this includes equality for women, particularly in leadership roles, and equality between monks and laypeople. It also includes racial equality. The absence of monks in *Jodo Shinshu* gives it a head start as far as that is concerned, but other sects of Buddhism set monks apart from laypeople. Women growing up in America are being raised to consider themselves equal to men, and women will bring that desire for equality into Buddhist temples and meditation centers, where women may not have previously held positions of leadership. American is made up of many different races, and Americans from all races will want to become Buddhists, though in many Asian countries race can separate religion. I expect to see more women leaders in American Buddhism, more equality between leaders and laypeople, and a racial mixture in Buddhist organizations.

Rationalization The philosophical and psychological aspects of Buddhism are studied and used by Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike in America. The Institute of Buddhist Studies even offers a Certificate in Buddhism and Contemporary Psychology. Americans are taught to think rationally about the world, and Buddhism does not contradict that in any way. I expect American Buddhism will become a more scientific and less mystical Buddhism than it is in Asian countries, and that Buddhism and psychology will become even more popular.

Social and Environmental Awareness Social engagement is an important part of Buddhism everywhere, but it is more pronounced in America. Helping the environment is very popular right now, and Buddhist temples are embracing environmentalism as it represents the Buddhist idea of interdependence. For instance, Rinban Castro, a *Jodo Shinshu* minister in Seattle, started the group "Eco Sangha", which encourages all Buddhists to engage in ecological conservation. Expressing compassion to all living things manifests as helping the poor and the weak. I believe American Buddhism will have strong environmental and social justice aspects.

Privatization The individualism that most Americans highly value comes through in their religion as well. Many consider religion to be a private affair, unlike in Asian cultures where it is more family and community centered. I don't think that Buddhist temples and centers will go away in America, but I do think individual worship will be a popular expression of American Buddhism.

I think American Buddhism will involve more equality, will focus less on the mystical and more on the scientific aspects, will involve more civic engagement, and will allow for more private practices. I think in addition to these qualities of American Buddhism, American customs will become a large part of American Buddhism. Some sects of Buddhism, like *Jodo Shinshu*, have already had to make these changes in the face of discrimination. In many ways *Jodo Shinshu* has already begun to adapt to American customs. If you were raised Christian and you walk into a *Jodo Shinshu* church in America, it will seem familiar to you. Neatly lined rows of pews invite you to sit. If you stay for the service, you will sing hymns (*gathas*) you will hear a sermon (*dharma talk*) and the whole thing will be led by priests (*ministers*) who wear special robes and sometimes speak Latin (*Japanese*). Partway through the service, the children will be dismissed for Sunday school (*Dharma school*). I hope that future adaptations of American culture into Buddhism are not based on fear and discrimination, but on simply making Buddhist centers more comfortable for Americans. This way, everyone who wants to have the opportunity to hear the Dharma of the Buddha, difficult though that may be.

Namo Amida Butsu

Rosalie May is enjoying her newly married life to fellow minister's assistant Matt May. She is grateful to be studying under Rinban Castro at Seattle Betsuin.



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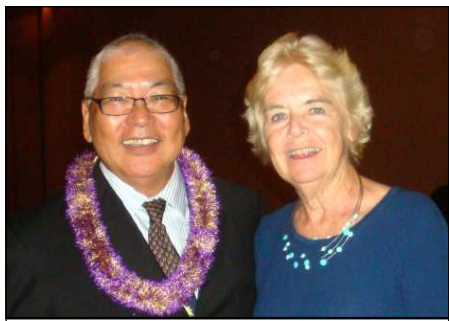
Join George Takei and Presenters from Across the US "Being Gay, Being Buddhist" A Seminar for the Whole Sangha

Pieper and Lois Toyama to speak on "Parenting our LGBTQ Children"

On June 28, 2014, CBE will present a half-day seminar focusing on Shin Buddhism and the LGBTQ community: *Being Gay, Being Buddhist*, with keynote speaker George Takei, guest speakers Pieper and Lois Toyama (HI), and presentations by Hoshina Seki, President of the American Buddhist Study Center (NY), Fred Pelger, Minister's Assistant at the Tacoma Buddhist Temple (WA), and Elaine Donlin, Minister's Assistant at the Buddhist Church of San Francisco (CA). Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara, Co-Director of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) will be the moderator. The event will be from 10 am to 3 pm (registration opens at 9:30 am) at the Jodo Shinshu Center, 2140 Durant Avenue, Berkeley, California. Registration information is at www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org. The BCA member rate is \$30 until May 28. Seating is limited and early registration is encouraged. This event is open to the public. For information, email: cbe@bcahq.org or phone: (510) 809-1460.

George Takei, actor, social justice activist, social media mega-power and author, will be the keynote speaker. He is not a stranger to the BCA. Growing up, he attended Senshin Buddhist Temple in Southern California. As a UC Berkeley student, he attended the Berkeley Buddhist Temple (see April issue of the *Wheel of Dharma*). He was the distinctive voice narrating the Jodo Shinshu Center fundraising video created nearly ten years ago. And George Takei and his partner, Brad, were married in 2008 by Rev. William Briones, BCA Rimban (head minister, Los Angeles Betsuin).

"Parenting Our LGBTQ Children" will be the topic of the guest speakers, a dynamic husband and wife team based in Hawaii. Pieper Toyama is the Head Master Emeritus of the Pacific Buddhist Academy, and the President of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (Hawaii Kyodan). Lois Toyama has been a school teacher and education advocate for decades and is currently the Second Vice President of the Hawaii Federation of Buddhist Women's Associations. Both are members of the Jikoen Hongwanji Mission in Oahu.



Pieper and Lois Toyama

Pieper Toyama is the founding head of the Pacific Buddhist Academy. This high school, in its

tenth year, is the first Shin Buddhist high school in the Western Hemisphere. One of the primary missions of the school is to develop students with the courage and skills to nurture peace within themselves, in their communities, and in the world. Peace education is integrated into every facet of the school's curriculum and operations, which are driven by the values of gratitude, compassion, mindfulness, and unconditional acceptance of others.

In 2010, when the state of Hawaii's governor vetoed a civil union law that had been passed by the legislature, the Hawaii Kyodan affirmed its support for gay rights and sponsored grassroots education through personal stories (Hawaiian 'talk story' style). The Toyamas, along with others, shared family stories of providing unconditional love and support for their LGBTQ children.

In a *Honolulu Star Advertiser* article (10/23/2010), Pieper Toyama shared that when their daughter finally came out to them after high school, they were greatly relieved that "she was free to be her true self and live openly with her partner... The people who are important to her are part of our family. Our lives are so much richer for that." Furthermore, he continues, "my wife and I decided we were not going to be silent anymore. There were so many years that we were so quiet. The Buddhists are quite silent on the subject, even though the teachings are clear on the equality of all people and how interdependent they are." Having decided to speak out, he concludes, "It's (been) great. We are finally living the teachings. My wife and I believe (that) the more people learn (about gay people), we are able to create more and more safe places for our kids to share who they are."

CBE Co-Director's Message:

The Parable of the Lost Son

by Rev. Marvin Harada, CBE Co-director

Recently I read a wonderful story that comes from the *Lotus Sutra*, from my readings of the writings of Rev. Haya Akegarasu, a Jodo Shinshu minister of the Higashi Honganji tradition. Rev. Akegarasu read numerous books of philosophy, the Bible, Confucious, literature, and of course, many Buddhist texts. He often quotes passages from a variety of sources in his books. I would like to share this story of a lost son that originates in the *Lotus Sutra*, a Mahayana sutra.

Once there was a wealthy man, whose son became lost when he was a small boy. He did not find his son for many years, but one day he saw his son. His son was a poor peasant, and when the wealthy father approached the boy, the boy ran away out of fear, wondering what such a wealthy man would want with him.

The wealthy man then asked another person to hire his son to work for him cleaning the bathrooms in his house. The boy was hired and worked at cleaning bathrooms. Eventually, the wealthy man had the boy promoted to cleaning other rooms in the house. In time, the wealthy man revealed to the boy that he was really his long lost son. The boy, having been touched by the heart of his father, now realized that he was truly in his own home.

This beautiful story can be interpreted in many ways. We are like the lost son, wandering aimlessly trying to find our true self, our true home. The wealthy man is a metaphor for the Buddha, trying to bring us home. It takes time, and we are skeptical at first. We even might run away from our first exposure to a real teacher or someone who encourages us to seek the path. Initially, we have to *do something*, like read books, attend services, listen to sermons, recite the Nembutsu, the way the boy had to clean the bathrooms. But in time, we come to discover our true self, our true home, our true spiritual parent.

Although this story appears in the *Lotus Sutra*, not a Jodo Shinshu sutra, to me, the story can be interpreted in a Shin Buddhist manner that expresses the spiritual journey of the Nembutsu.

The Dharmakara Series: Our Lifelong Learning Challenge

INTRODUCTION TO THE SANBUTSU-GE: Gatha (verses) in Praise of the Buddha (Part 4)

by Rev. John Iwohara

This is the continuation of a series of articles on the *Sanbutsu-ge*.
The reader is also encouraged to visit the on-line site: Dharmanet.org



<http://www.dharmanet.org/coursesM/Shin/I.html>

Sanbutsu-ge literally means "Gatha in praise of the Buddha." The praise that becomes the contents of the *Sanbutsu-ge* is the praise that Amida Buddha as a Bodhisattva gave to the Buddha who first shared the Dharma with him. In other words, the *Sanbutsu-ge* gives the background story behind how the Wheel of Dharma was first turned by Amida Buddha.

In the previous article I talked about how the Dharma taught by Sakyamuni Buddha, and in particular the Dharma found in the Larger Sutra, can still be heard as part of the living tradition that is Jodo Shinshu. It is a Dharma that is specifically designed for the "foolish" person as represented by Ananda. It is a Dharma that helps us to see how even an ordinary person can still do extraordinary things. Some of the extraordinary things that we can do is help a person hear the Vow of the Buddha, help lead a person to understand that their life is embraced and not forsaken, and to help someone meet with an entire tradition that spans centuries of time. We can do all this with each and every utterance of *Namo Amida Butsu*. Part of the reason why we continue to chant the *Sanbutsu-ge* is because it is a verse that informs us of the arising of the Vow of Amida Buddha or the source of the *Nenbutsu* that is shared as *Namo Amida Butsu*.

In talking about the *Sanbutsu-ge* more directly, however, we are told that previously there were fifty-three other Buddha who, in succession, constantly shared the Dharma. Following these fifty-three Buddha, the Buddha Lokeshvararaja appeared. The name Lokeshvararaja becomes *Sejizaiou* in its Chinese translation, or "Sovereign Monarch of the World." We are further told that there was a King who, upon hearing the Dharma being presented by The Sovereign Monarch of the World Buddha, is so moved by the message that he decides right there and then to abandon his Kingdom and his Kingship. He becomes the monk Dharmakara. Dharmakara becomes *Houzon* in its Chinese translation, or "Dharma Storehouse" in English. It is this Bodhisattva who will address The Buddha Sovereign Monarch of the World, and praise him in the verse that we have come to know as the *Sanbutsu-ge*.

Before actually talking about the verse itself, it is important to consider the meaning of the names that have been introduced to us by the *Sanbutsu-ge*. I would like to do this because names have particular importance in understanding the doctrinal nuances of Pure Land Buddhism, especially because Pure Land Buddhism focuses on the Name of Amida Buddha, or *Namo Amida Butsu*. The names that we have been introduced to in this truth-revealing narrative are Lokeshvararaja and Dharmakara.

Lokeshvararaja is the Buddha who is given the name of "Sovereign Monarch of the World." This Buddha is the teacher of the Bodhisattva who would later become Amida Buddha. One might ask, "We were introduced to fifty-three previous Buddha, so why would this Buddha be the one who opens up the Dharma to Bodhisattva Dharmakara?" One reason is because prior to becoming Dharmakara, the Bodhisattva was once a King himself. Dharmakara meets with Lokeshvararaja whose name suggests that he is the "King of Kings." This King, however, because he is a Buddha has no army, no kingdom, and because of this possesses no material treasures. This King, therefore, cannot conquer an external enemy nor can he manipulate a potential alliance with the promise of material wealth. How, then, does Lokeshvararaja Buddha become the King of Kings?

Because Lokeshvararaja is incapable of conquering an external enemy, the focus of the King of Kings has to be the conquering of the self. The conquered self is no longer attached to the ego. It is the "egoless" self, or the self of "non-ego." This egoless self is important because this self understands one of the fundamental Buddhist tenets, or the idea that *all manifestation (existence) is non-substantive*. In other words, it is the self that understands that nothing, including the self, can exist in and of itself. It is the self that understands that all existence is due to limitless causes and conditions. It is, for example, what allows Sakyamuni Buddha to know of the fifty-three Buddha prior to Lokeshvararaja Buddha. How does the Buddha, the Sovereign Monarch of the World, conquer the self? The only thing that Lokeshvararaja has at his disposal is the truth of the Dharma. It is because the Buddha imparts the Truth, a truth that can liberate all of humanity and deliver the greatest of riches, that he is able to become the King of Kings and help Dharmakara onto the path of the Buddha-Dharma.

The second name we are introduced to is Dharmakara, or Dharma Storehouse. Although this part of the narrative comes after the conclusion of the *Sanbutsu-ge*, we are told of how Dharmakara asks Lokeshvararaja Buddha to explain the Dharma to him fully so that he can achieve Enlightenment. In reply, the Buddha says to the Bodhisattva that he should already know how to accomplish this task. The Bodhisattva tells the Buddha that he cannot because it is too broad and deep for him to comprehend. The Buddha then consents to the request and tells the Bodhisattva that fulfilling the Path is like reaching the wondrous treasures at the bottom of a great ocean that a person is able to reach after scooping out the water of that ocean one cup at a time over many kalpa¹. In this explanation, the Buddha seems to be telling the Bodhisattva that the path he seeks will be arduous. It is as if the Buddha is asking the Bodhisattva, "Are you prepared?"

After this, the Buddha then explains the positive and negative aspects of the beings and the coarse and refined aspects of the different Buddha-Lands to the Bodhisattva. After this, the story goes on to tell us that the Bodhisattva then spent five kalpa of contemplation to formulate his forty-eight Vows, which he then related to the Buddha. Following this declaration of his forty-eight Vows, the Bodhisattva then speaks in verse to reiterate the intent of his Vows. This verse is commonly known as the *Jusei-ge*, or "Gatha (verses) of the Repeated Promises." After having fulfilled his Vows, the Bodhisattva becomes the Buddha Amida.

Although this is basically the narrative found in the first section of the Larger Sutra, the name Dharmakara is significant. When Lokeshvararaja tells the Bodhisattva that he already knows how to become a Buddha, it is because he already had within himself the entire Dharma Storehouse. The question then becomes why is this person only a Bodhisattva and not a Buddha? What is the difference? In next month's issue I would like to spend a little more time talking about the meaning of Dharmakara.

¹Kalpa is a measurement of time. It measures an extremely long period of time.



What the Institute of Buddhist Studies Means to Me



By Rev. Jerry K. Hirano, IBS Class of 1984

When I think about what the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) means to me, it has nothing to do with the physical structure, although the Jodo Shinshu Center is an incredible facility for IBS to use. However my personal experience with the essential nature of IBS has manifested in more than four different physical locations. IBS is not about facilities, but about people sharing their lives to reflect a Jodo Shinshu lifestyle.

My first contact with IBS was at an outreach seminar at the Buddhist Church of Ogden in the mid '70s. It was there I met Rev. Haruyoshi Kusada. Rev. Kusada

was the first person I met who seemed to manifest all the qualities of a person of *shinjin*. He was someone I admired and believed could help me decide what to do with my life.

After graduating from the University of Utah, I moved to Berkeley to enroll at IBS. At that time IBS was on Haste Street; that building is now a dormitory for students. I worked at Berkeley Bowl market during the mornings and early afternoons. In the late afternoons, early evenings, and one full day a week, I would take classes. They were wonderful classes taught by a variety of people: Bhante Seelawimala, Rev. Toshio Murakami, Dr. Leo Pruden, Rev. Shojo Oi, Rev. Hoshu Matsubayashi, and many others. Their knowledge of Buddhism and how it related to my life was so inspirational. Throughout those years, Rev. Kusada continued to be the heart of IBS. I don't remember any particular teaching from him, but his presence and kindness transformed and touched me more than any formal lecture could.

I was fortunate to graduate from IBS and further my studies in Japan, as was the norm for American-born ministers back then. However, the connection to IBS and, in particular, Mr. Hiroji Kariya, was a huge influence and inspiration. He was neither a minister, nor the son of a minister, nor a

Buddhist scholar. However, when he visited us students in Japan, he would talk about his inspiring vision for Jodo Shinshu in America and how we former IBS students were a large part of that vision.

When I returned to Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) as a minister, Rev. Russell Hamada convinced me to become a member of the IBS board of trustees. Over the past twenty something years as a board member, I have had the pleasure to serve with many wonderful lay members and ministers. However, Mr. Hiroji Kariya as the chairman of the IBS board of trustees for many of those years has remained an inspiration to me.

These two individuals, Rev. Haruyoshi Kusada who nurtured us students and Mr. Hiroji Kariya who shared an inspiring vision, made a huge difference in my life and thinking about IBS. These two individuals manifest the pillars of what IBS means to me: teachers and ministers guiding and sharing with students their sincerity and knowledge, and members of the BCA who believe in this mission of leaving a dynamic Shinshu legacy for future generations. Although the physical structure and size of the institution has changed over the years, the fundamental qualities of nurturing future BCA ministers by lay and clergy remain the heart of IBS.

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Over the years, the support of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) leadership and its members has been the key to the growing development of the current Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) as the learning center for BCA ministers. For

that, we must be thankful.

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I recently learned that Rev. Lee Rosenthal of the Pasadena Buddhist Church has just retired. Indeed, he is already settled back in Colorado. Congratulations, Sensei

Rosenthal!

Do you all see what I am getting at? The BCA ministers who were taught and mentored by my generation are retiring. Out of the list you see above, many will consider retirement in the next five to ten years. Not many people realize that it takes a minimum of three years of full-time study toward a Masters Degree, in addition to preparation to qualify for two levels of ordination. This is why I feel a sense of urgency in trying to establish this annual giving fund to support the studies and ministry preparation of our ministerial aspirants. So please consider a small amount that you can afford to contribute each year, because this will ultimately help us all in keeping our temples going.

Thank you!
Gassho,
Rev. Seigen Yamaoka
Vice President for Development,
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Linda Castro

Continued from Front Page

tion of Buddhist missionaries like Ganjin, the Buddha Dharma has now circled the earth. As part of that effort, the Jodo Shinshu priests Reverends Shuye Sonoda and Kakuryo Nishijima arrived

in San Francisco in 1899 to serve what later became the Buddhist Churches of America. They were responding to a petition sent to the Honpa Hongwanji in Japan the year before by a group of Japanese immigrants. In the petition are the words, 'Our burning desire to hear the Dharma is

about to explode from every pore in our body....' May we be reminded of, and join in these powerful sentiments as we sing praise to their efforts on our behalf." We in Seattle think "the sun breaking through a gray and misty canopy" refers to our area and remember Linda fondly

when we sing "Ganjin's Journey."

The Seattle Betsuin sangha extends our condolences to Linda's family, including her sons and daughters-in-law Quincy and Caitlin Castro and Ted and Hanine Castro.

In gassho.

Institute of Buddhist Studies Friends of IBS Ministerial Scholarship Fund

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Bump...

Continued from Front Page

work, who was practicing best livelihood and so forth. It felt like I had entered the spiritual Olympics! And so I moved on to another Buddhist tradition, but again was put off by what felt like stark surroundings and meditators who seemed to scowl between sittings. A little too intense for me and again I dropped out.

I now realize that many of the bumps on the road were due to my own shortcomings as a foolish being. Focusing only on what felt like negatives, I overlooked the beauty inherent in these traditions. I now know that every tradition has something precious to offer and, had I opened my heart, I may have been more aware of my misdirected judgments toward others and more open to the essential dharma.

The road was to become severely bumpy. My mother was ill and work stress was becoming horrendous. One day, feeling like I was at the edge of a cliff, I began reading Hiroyuki Itsuki's book *Tariki* and something shifted within me. I learned about the Other Power path of Nembutsu. I began to recognize my vain attempts to rely on self power. What I needed to do was relax and let go, like the sailor mentioned in Tanaka's book. Doing this, I was better able to handle the eventual death of my mother. I also became more skilled at managing life and Trusting and Thanksgiving becoming my practice. And as my partner constantly reminds me, it does require practice! While the First Noble Truth affirms that it will remain bumpy, life is ultimately good and I feel grateful to have finally arrived at my true spiritual home. Kieshiki symbolized this return and welcome home. Namu Amida Butsu.

今月の法話

「仏法は心の栄養」

オックスナード仏教会
開教使 渡辺正憲



開教使としてオックスナードのお寺にお世話になるようになっては5か月がたちました。これまで毎日いろいろな苦労もあ

私は、33歳の時に浄土真宗の僧侶になり、広島でいくつかのお寺で勤めさせていただきながら、生活を通して真宗を学ばせていただいたと感じています。その時に、特に印象に残った二つの出来事をお話ししたいと思います。

一つ目は、私がまだ僧侶になりたての頃の話です。広島の実家であるお寺で、初めて報恩講の講師をつとめたのですが、不慣れなこともあって、とても緊張し、正直自分で何を話しているのかも分からないくらいでした。終わった後、失意のまま車に乗りこんで自分のアパートに帰ろうとしていた時に、報恩講に聴聞に来られていた60代の女性の方が、向こうの方から車に近づいて来ました。私は、きつと文句を言いに来たものだと思って身構えていましたが、その方が近づくと、泣いて泣いておられるのが分かりました。その方は、「今日は、良い話を聞かせてもらってありがとうございます。と、言いました。そう言ってもらった時、私は何とも言えない複雑な気持ちになりました。きつと、慰めをいってくれたらどうかと思いました。しかし、泣いていたのは一体どういうわけか？そんなに心打たれるような話をしたのだろうか？それから、1年と経たないうちにその方はご自宅で突然亡くなられました。私は、それを聞いたとき、その方の涙ながらの感謝の言葉の意味を考えていました。

もう一つは、呉のお寺で勤めていた時のことです。こちらも報恩講の折、ある御門徒さんのお宅を訪問した時の話です。仮にNさんと呼びます。その方は、お寺の朝のお勤めに毎回参加されていたので、親しくさせていただいておりました。ご自宅での報恩講のお勤めということで、正信偈の誦経と法話をさせていただきました。

「仏様の話を聞くことがとても嬉しかったんです。そして、正月を迎えて、新年の法要に、ふだん朝のお勤めにお寺にお参りされる方々が来られていました。しかし、いつも必ずお経が始まる前に来られていたNさんがその時は遅刻してきました。珍しいことだと思っていたら、元旦の翌日お寺に電話があり、枕経に来てほ

しいということで、誰だろうと思いき名前をきくと、Nさんだということです。そんなはずはないNさんは昨日元氣にお寺に来られたではないか、ご家族の誰かが亡くなったのかもしれないと混乱しながらも、とにかくNさんのお宅に伺いました。仏間に遺体が布団に覆かされておりました。顔には白布が被せてあったので、誰なのか確認できませんでした。とにかくご遺族が集まられていた。お仏壇の前で誦経を始めました。誦経の途中で、女性が入って来て、ご遺体の白布を取りのけるなり、「お姉ちゃん、どうして死んだの！」と泣き崩れました。ちらちらとご遺体のお顔を見ると、間違いなくNさんでした。自分の中で何かぐらっと揺れました。そして、報恩講の時に優しい言葉をかけてもらったことを思い出して、誦経しながら涙が流れてきました。誰もが命に限りがある。と仏教から学び、人にも説いていたはずなのに、いざ親しい人の死に接するとなるとやはり動揺するものだと痛感しました。

浄土真宗の葬式では、白骨の御文章を読みます。その中に「朝には紅顔ありて、夕べには白骨となる身なり」とあります。紅顔（こうがん）とは、血色のいいつやつやとした顔のこと、若くて元氣なことを表します。ですから、朝に行きたくて出て行った人が、夕方には亡くなられて帰ってくるというようなことです。八代目のご門主である蓮如上人が書かれたお手紙の一節です。私自身、その事実をどこかよそ事のように聞いてしまいがちでしたが、命あるものとして生まれた以上、まさに無常の世を生きていく私のこととして聞かれないでいた。この二つの出来事から教えたかったと思っています。そして、もう一つ自分にとって大切だと思ったのが、お話ししたお二人に共通することが、亡くなる前に仏法を心から喜んで聞いていらしたということ。明日をもう知れない無常の世にありながら、仏様と共に歩むことが本心に嬉し、ありがたいという風でした。

私は、僧侶として仏教を勉強させていただいています。が、やはり大切なことは、ただの知識や教養として仏教の教えを理解しようとするのではなく、日々の暮らしの中に教えを聞かせていただき、大事なことを感じとっていくことだと思います。お釈迦さまも「義に依（よ）りて語に依らざるべし、智に依りて識に依らざるべし」と言われたと親鸞聖人の『教行信証』の中に記述があります。教えの本質を感じ取ることが大事で、言葉の一つ一つの表現にこだわらざるべし、仏智を仰ぎ、自分の考えを分別の絶対のよりどころとするべきではないということだと思います。

だからこそ、お寺に参って聴聞をするということの意味があるのだと思います。例えば、人は食事をしなければ死んでしまいます。しかし、三日間、四日前に食べたものをほっきり覚えていられる人はまれだと思います。しかし、口にしたもののが栄養となりその人を今日も生かしているのは紛れもない事実です。それと同じように、心にも生きるための栄養が必要だと考えています。それは、宗教であったり、哲学であったり、生きる意味を問いかけていく道であると思います。日本では、いまだに毎年3万人以上の自殺者があると聞きます。日々の忙し暮らの中で、へとへとに疲れ果て、自分の生きる意味を

見失ってしまうのかもしれない。私も、20代の頃、仕事が多忙でうまくいかない上に上司に注意され、非常に悩んで死んでしまいたいと思うことがありました。しかし、もしあの時、仏教の教えを知り、自分の命の尊さに対する問いかけをすることができていたら、また違った考え方ができたかもしれないと思います。

時々、「忙しくてお寺に行っているひまがない、それどころか念仏する余裕すらない」と言われる方がおられます。忙しいという字は、心が死ぬ（し）と書きます。どんなに物質的に恵まれていても、心の栄養が欠乏している。それは人間らしい生活と言えるでしょうか。そして我々にとって本当に何が大切なのかという問いかけを忘れてはいけないと思えます。忘れるという字も、心が死ぬと書きます。自分の命が尽きる時、何もかもが分りつかなくなり、最後は大切になってくるのが心の在り方だと思えます。心の栄養である仏様の智慧を聞かせていただけたらというのには、人生の喜びだと私自身も考えておられます。そのことを、お話ししたお二人の方々が、命を通して私に教えて下さったのだと思っています。南無阿彌陀仏。

よこいぞ、ニューヨークへ

今月は3月からニューヨーク仏教会駐在開教使となった池田アール先生にお話をうかがった。

先生はハワイのご出身ですね。ハワイとニューヨークでは気候や環境がだいぶ違っていると思えますが生活には慣れましたか？

そうですね。3月に来たのでニューヨークはまだ寒かったですね。私は若い時、日本に留学していましたが、冬にアメリカに来た事もありますが、ニューヨークの寒さにある程度を覚えていたのですが、妻は生まれてからずっと夏のハワイでしたので、冬が寒いという事をはじめて経験して驚いていました。冬が終わって春になってくると、公園などで木々が芽吹いているのを見たのですが、私にはこういうことがとてもめずらしく新鮮に思え、自然の恵みや暖かさに感謝しました。

ニューヨークに来る前はハワイの開教使をされていたのですか？

2000年に教師をいたたいてから開教使として三ヶ寺に駐在しました。最初はウエストカウアイ本願寺、それからプナ本願寺、最後はモイリリ本願寺です。

開教使をされる前は何をされていたのですか？

ハワイ島のヒロ別院の近くにあったクラッカーの会社に勤めていました。この会社は父も勤めていた会社で、私は1976年に入社して約20年間支配人の仕事をしていました。96年ごろその会社を退職した後、日本の建設会社に勤めました。ハワイ島のマウナケアという山に

スバル望遠鏡を建設するというので、通訳を探してました。それで私に声がかかったのです。その会社との契約が99年に終了して、さて何をしようかな、と考えたときに当時のハワイの総長、与世盛先生が「君は得度をもっていたね。今、カウアイのお寺に開教使がいらないから、次の開教使が来るまでちょっと手伝ってくれないか？」と言われたので、ウエストカウアイ本願寺を開教使補というポジションでお手伝いすることになったのです。それから教師をいたたいて、正式に開教使となりそのまますカウアイのお寺に勤めることになりました。

いつ得度を受けられたのですか？

1973年です。私は1971年から76年まで日本に留学してました。龍大の聴講生のステイタスで滞在し、日本の文化と浄土真宗の教えを学んでいました。ハワイに帰ってからは、ヒロ別院の近藤輪番からたまに話をたのまれて、お寺でお話することもありました。あの当時は得度だけで教師を持つていない私はお内陣に入ることができませんでした。

浄土真宗を学ぶために日本に行かれたのですか？

結果はそうなりましたが、最初の動機はちがいます。私はハワイ大学で日本語を専攻していたので、日本へ日本語と日本文化の勉強をしに行きたいと思っていたのです。大学卒業後、数年間、ホノルルの日本総領事館に勤めたのですが、どうしても日本に行きたくなくなり、大学時代に仲よくなった友人を誘って留学することにしたのです。それでまず、ホノルルの東本願寺へ相談に行きました。なぜかという、私は実家のヒロにいる時、東本願寺の日曜学校に行っていたからです。私の池田の家族は浄土真宗の西本願寺ですが、母は東本願寺の門徒だったので、母は私に東本願寺へ行くようにすすめ、ダルマスクールもジュニアYBAも東本願寺でした。ですから、日本行きのことをホノルルの東本願寺のお寺に相談に行ったのです。ところがその後なかなか返事がこなかった。どうしようかと思っていたら、ハワイの西本願寺の当時の総長、今村先生と会う事になったのです。今村先生に日本行きのことを話すと、「本気ならなんとかしてやろう」ということで、一週間のうちに龍大の聴講生になる手続きをしてくださりました。私の友人の家族はハワイの慈光園本願寺の熱心な門徒で、その関係で今村先生に会うことになったのです。今村先生は、留学資金の援助のことも考えてくださいました。私と私の友人は僧侶になるつもりはなかったのですが、せつかくの申し出を断りました。それでも龍大に行く手続きと、住むところの手配までしてくださりました。後に私が得度を受けることになると、得度にかかる費用をすべてだしてくださって、今村先生にはたいへん感謝しています。

龍大に行かれたことで僧侶になろうと思われたのですか？

それもありましたし、京都で住んだ寮で学んだことも影響しています。寮は本願寺国際センターができる前の、開教使研修所でした。当時はアメリカやハワイからの留学

生は、和光寮に住んでいましたが、私が行ったときは満杯だったので、私は日本人の開教使候補が学ぶ開教使研修所に住む事になったのです。寮長は南米の開教使だった横藤明哲先生でした。横藤先生はとても厳しかったのですが、それがとても勉強になりました。朝のお勤めの導師をしないと言われ、「でも私は経験もないし、得度もないし」と断ると「それでもいいから、やって覚えなさい」というやり方で、怒られながらお経の唱え方やお荘厳の仕方などを教わりました。研修所には龍大から先生が講義に来られて、私はその時はじめて仏教や真宗を体系的に学び、聞いていくうちに、真宗は深い教えだと思ふようになったのです。京都に行くと二年ほどしてから、親鸞聖人生誕八〇〇年の記念法要があったのですが、それに参加したことが得度を決心するきっかけとなりました。その法要には海外からも大勢参拝されたという。ときに毎日何千人と本山にお参りされる方々を見て、「これは何だ？義務でもないのに、日本各地や世界各地からどうしてこんなに多くの人がお参りしているのか？」と親鸞聖人の念仏の教えが人々を動かしている力を目の当たりにして感動したのです。それでこのふるえるような感動を下さったご開山聖人にご恩を報いたいということ、得度を受けることにしました。

京都では当初の目的だった日本の文化も学ばれたと聞きました。

そうですね。留学中に本山御用達の精進料理の料亭で、2年ですが見習いとして修行させていただきました。そこは昔ながらの日本のやり方なので、先輩がいちいち教えてはくれません。皿洗いをしながら、板前さんが食材を切ったり盛りつけたりするのを見て学ぶ、「見て盗む」というスタイルです。とても勉強になりました。寮では横藤先生の奥さんから生け花も習いましたし、日本の生活は学ぶ事が多く充実していました。和菓子にも興味があったので、それも習いたかったのですが、京都の和菓子屋さんの敷居が高く、その夢はかないませんでした。けれども、ハワイに帰った後、ロサンゼルスのある有名な日本人和菓子職人さんと知り合いになり、その方から和菓子の作り方を学びました。その職人さんから習った事をいかして、ハワイで和菓子のお店をすることにしました。

最後にひとことお願いします。

ニューヨークはとても刺激的な街です。経済、文化、ファッション、音楽など毎日のように新しいものが生まれています。仏教のこともそうで、仏教がいよいよ盛んになって、アメリカの仏教が形成されているように感じます。78年に海野大徹先生がハワイに講演に来られて、「浄土真宗は世界の宝なので、それを広くアメリカに伝えたい。そのためには日本文化の枠を超えて、アメリカの浄土真宗を形成する必要がある」とおっしゃっていたのですが、そのことがいつも頭の中にありました。今その新しい仏教の活動の真只中にあり、そのお手伝いをできることがありたいです。

