



WHEEL OF DHARMA

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First Meeting of Japanese Buddhist Sects in U.S.

On February 22-23, 2016, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai America sponsored the first meeting of administrators from the traditional Japanese Buddhist sects with sanghas and temples in the United States. Held at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, representatives from the Higashi Honganji, Soto, Nichiren, and Koyasan organizations along with Bishop Kodo Umezue and Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara representing the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), and the Hongwanji-ha sect) came together for the first time in the nearly 120-year history of Japanese Buddhism in America.

The purpose of the gathering was to take a serious look at the future of Japanese Buddhism in America. Here, where the Buddhist Path is becoming relevant to more and more people each day, why is it that the Japanese Buddhist sects see such a great decline in membership? Is it just a consequence of the overall downturn of organized religion in America causing this situation?

Stimulating discussions and lectures were led by Professors Mark Blum of UC Berkeley, who spoke on “What Japanese Buddhism has to Offer 21st-Century America,” Duncan Williams of the University of Southern California spoke on the “Current State of the Japanese Buddhist Community in America” and John Nelson from the University of San Francisco, who shared his ideas on “Opportunities for the Future of Japanese Buddhism in America.”

At this first-ever gathering, the representatives/priests from the various sects had opportunities to share ideas, concerns, successes and challenges facing their temples, ministers, members, and communities. Looking at statistics on the status of religion in the Japanese American community, which makes up the majority of the membership in each sect, the representatives learned that 25% of the 1.3 million (325,000) Japanese Americans classify themselves as Buddhists. Among Japanese Americans, 46% changed religions while 52% stayed in the same childhood religion.¹

American Buddhists had the lowest percentage for attending religious services, with only 12% attending services weekly. Over 50% said they attended services maybe monthly or at least once a year, and nearly 40% said they NEVER attend temple services. Of the Japanese Americans who claim Buddhism as their religion, six-in-ten stated they were Jodo Shinshu or Mahayana Buddhists, while over 50% of Chinese Americans and Asian Americans as a whole stated they were “just a Buddhist.”

At the conclusion of this historic summit gathering, the group agreed to continue to meet to share common concerns, needs, and opportunities in an effort to expand Please see photo on page 8.

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Earthquake in Southern Japan

Our thoughts of sympathy and concern go out to the people of Southern Japan at this time of tragedy. May they find spiritual strength in the Nembutsu to live through this difficult time of loss and natural disaster.

- Buddhist Churches of America



The 9th Annual TechnoBuddha Conference took place at the Jodo Shinshu Center on March 25-27. Photo by Tim Shimizu. See Page 4

“Cultivating the Buddhadharma: Buddhism & Agriculture”

By Rev. Jerry K. Hirano, Chair, BCA Ministers Association

Part 2 of 2 Installments:

BCA National Council Meeting Opening Service Dharma Message - Visalia, California

I once asked my Honeyville members, “Why do farmers love to gamble?” One *Nisei* member, Tets Okada, told me, “Hell Sensei, this casino gambling is just kid’s play compared to our lives as farmers. Try putting a couple of hundred thousand dollars on seed, not knowing what the weather will be like that year. Now that’s gambling!” These same farmers built our temples, built our national organization and sowed the fields of this country for the Nembutsu teachings to take root and grow.

These farmers took a gamble and hit the jackpot!

They provided a place for their families and communities to listen to the Nembutsu teachings. BCA is an amazing organization, with temples, education centers, a graduate school. We are the envy of every other Buddhist sect in America. However, now I find many of the children and grandchildren of the farmers passing on the bet.

Where the *Issei* and *Nisei* would have raised, their grandchildren prefer to pass. My *Sansei* generation, is acting like Kasibaradavaja, “What am I getting from my membership dollars?” It is no longer about creating a Sangha for the future generations’ welfare. It is about me, me, me! What do I get now?! And if it’s not about me, I don’t really care, or care to find out what’s going on.

BCA and local temple organizations are just looking to maintain what they have. The legacy of the *Issei* and *Nisei* was not about playing it safe—they went for broke! All because of love and concern for their families and future

generations.

I hope members of BCA can learn to love what we have, and take pride and great care in what we have. For if you really love something, you want to see it grow. I love my daughters, and because of my love for them, I want them to grow. It hurts, emotionally and financially, to send them to college, for them to leave my home; but for them to grow, that’s what I have to do for their benefit. In the long run, when they benefit, so do I.

We are living in a time when our Japanese American community has grown and prospered financially beyond the dreams of our *Issei* forefathers. However, when that financial dream of “getting what I want” is accomplished, many people become disillusioned with life. They begin to think, “Is that all there is?” It’s interesting that the *Issei* and *Nisei* backed up their bets on our temples, for the Dharma is the one solution for this existential angst that their children may now be experiencing. *Namo Amida Butsu* is all about entrusting our self-centeredness to Amida Buddha, not to the stock market.

We are also not that welcoming to the non-Japanese coming to our temples. The reason I most often hear is, “They don’t donate.” However, how many of our Japanese American families are really donating to their temples? How many of your temple members donate over \$1,000 a year to BCA or your temple? I’m quite sure that \$1,000 a year

Continued on Page 6

Dharma Chant: A Buddhist Oratorio Premieres on May 21, 2016 in Boston

Boston, Massachusetts will be the scene of a highly unusual musical premiere in May: composer Richard St. Clair’s hour-long oratorio “Dharma Chant: A Buddhist Oratorio in Three Parts” for chorus. It is a work spanning some 20 years since he first began his study of Shin Buddhism to the present. “Dharma Chant” will be performed by the celebrated Commonwealth Chorale (www.commonwealthchorale.com) under the direction of David Carrier. St. Clair’s music is in the traditional expressive style of Western religious *cappella* music.

The concert will take place at 8 p.m. on Saturday, May 21 at the Church of the Holy Name, 1689 Center Street, West Roxbury, Massachusetts.

The lyrics for the music are from three Dharma sources:

The Pali Canon and its teaching on Nibbana and Metta; Bodhisattva Vasubandhu’s treatise *Jodoron* (the Gatha portion); and Master Shan-tao’s great Gatha, *Kisamboge*. The Vasubandhu and Shan-tao texts are famous Pure Land writings highly prized by Shinran Shonin. None of these texts have been set to Western music before.

St. Clair, Harvard educated and now retired from MIT, first encountered Shin Buddhism in 1996. He has a regular column for his poems of faith (“Poems and Sayings”) on the Amida-ji blog of Romanian Shin Buddhist priest Rev. Josho Adrian Cirlea (amida-ji-retreat-temple-romania.blogspot.com). Some of St. Clair’s Shin Buddhist poems have been translated into Japanese by Rev. Hisao Inagaki.

For tickets, visit: www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2207918

Ohara School



Northern California Chapter Ikebana Exhibition
May 14 & 15, 2016 - 11am - 4:30pm - Free Admission
Buddhist Churches of America - 2940 Divisadero Street - Berkeley, California
Donations: \$10, \$20, \$30, \$40, \$50, \$100

BCA Jodo Shinshu Center 10th Anniversary Series



Bringing Everyone Together

By Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop

In April I visited Japan with my wife, Janet and Amy, my eldest daughter, to attend my parents' memorial services held at my home temple in Fukuoka. It was too early for cherry blossoms but it was nice to visit with my brother and sister. Memorial services usually bring everyone together to reminisce about how things used to be.

Whenever I go back to my home temple, my brother asks me to help him with his daily dharma activities. One of them is to go to members' homes to conduct monthly memorial services. Monthly memorial services are not held at my home temple. My brother goes to the members' homes, conducts individual memorial services, and talks to whoever is there. I believe he visits over 10 families a day. Some families have more than one memorial service per month.

This time, Amy wanted to go with my brother and asked him if she could do so. He gladly agreed to take her with him. She sat behind my brother and chanted together with him. She told me that she enjoyed her visits with three families.

When I was growing up, I didn't particularly care for this system. Now when I think about it, it is a great, supportive system within the sangha community. Many people used to wait with anticipation for my father's visit. My father would check on the members' wellness when visiting them. At the same time, the visit allowed members to think about their loved ones and the dharma that helps our life. I heard that Christian ministers in Japan envy the system.

Another interesting experience was to see how our ancestors revered their temples. They had the highest respect for their temples and ministers. In my uncle's temple, I saw a gorgeous *kago* (palanquin; a covered sedan chair). The temple has two; one for the minister and another for sutra scrolls. Amazing!

In the name of civilization and modernization, we may be discarding or



My daughter, Amy, next to the kago.

forgetting some very, very valuable things: the tradition of holding memorial services and respect for our religious foundation. Buddhism is not Humanism. It is Buddha-ism. Humanism—attaching prime importance to human matters—has been overtaking our societal and world view. Buddha-ism is the way to take refuge in Buddha. By doing so, we can find the true and real path that we need to follow.

We are very fortunate that Shinran Shonin appeared in our history and showed us the quick and easy way to the Pure Land. In May, there is a special service to commemorate the birth of Shinran Shonin called *Gotan-e* or *Fuji Matsuri*. By coincidence, my father's memorial day happens to be May 21, the birthday of Shinran Shonin.

To Create a Single Flower



By Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara,
Center for Buddhist Education

On April 2, I had the opportunity and great honor to officiate the wedding of Rev. Hironobu Shoji and Ms. Kaori Hara at the Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan. Cherry blossoms were in full bloom all

over the city. The *sakura* arching over a small stream of the Takasegawa River were especially beautiful. The couple said they set the wedding date at the beginning of April because they wanted to celebrate their wedding with beautiful cherry blossoms.

Unfortunately for me, when I first arrived in Kyoto I couldn't enjoy the beautiful *sakura*. Since it was my first time officiating a wedding at the Hongwanji, I was extremely nervous. To be honest, I was more nervous than at my own wedding about 13 years ago. However, thanks to the support of many people, I was able to perform the wedding without any big mistakes. (There were some minor ones, though.)

After the ceremony, we went to a restaurant near the Kamo River for the wedding

reception. The groom, bride, and participants enjoyed nice food, warm messages from friends, and hilarious video clips. At the end of reception, Kaori read a thank you letter to her parents with grateful tears in her eyes. This was a really touching moment. Then, on behalf of both sets of parents, Rev. Hironobu Shoji's father, who is a Jodo Shinshu minister, delivered a message.

His speech expressed gratitude to all the people who had supported Hironobu and Kaori. He referred to the Japanese word *goen*: the direct and indirect connections that cause things to happen or arise. He shared a Japanese poem: "All things in heaven and earth work very hard to create even a single flower" (Jpn. 花一つ咲かすのにも天地いっばい総がかり). I was just fascinated by the beauty of cherry blossoms in Kyoto. However, the poem reminded me of the important reality that many things, such as the sun, air, water, soil, wind, insects and so forth, complicatedly work together in order to create these blossoms. As in the poem, it is not an overstatement to say that all things in heaven and earth directly and indirectly support the blooming of even a tiny cherry blossom.

In the same way, everything in this world is the result of the support of countless things. Nothing can exist by itself, but everything

can come into being due to the support of innumerable causes and conditions. This is an essential Buddhist teaching called "interdependence." When we see a flower in front of us, we do see a flower. However, in a Buddhist sense, we should also see all the things behind the scenes that have supported the blooming of this flower. When we reflect upon ourselves and the things around us with such a view, we come to see things differently than before, and a deeper appreciation should arise within us.

Truly listening to the Buddhist teachings, we become aware of things that we have been ignorant of. Our lives should become more profound and fulfilled by such awareness. Therefore, those who have experienced such changes have a sense of joy or gratitude, as expressed in the passage the "Three Treasures." In considering the benefits that we receive, Buddha is the one who makes every effort to dispel our ignorance and lead us to the awareness of true reality. This is compassion in Buddhism.

Through the compassionate work of Buddha, we come to live our daily lives with deeper appreciation. At the same time, our lives are grounded in our sincere and continuous gratitude towards Buddha, the one who has actually liberated us from ignorance and led us to deeper awareness.

"American Shin Buddhism: New Voices" Southern District Conference in San Diego: June 18

By Ralph Honda
Buddhist Temple of San Diego

"American Shin Buddhism: New Voices – Listening, Hearing, Being..." is the theme for this year's Southern District and BWA Conference that will take place on Saturday, June 18 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in San Diego.

The Buddhist Temple of San Diego (BTSD) and Vista Buddhist Temple (VBT) are serving as co-host temples.

Over 200 delegates representing the 14 temples and Sanghas from throughout the district are anticipated to attend.

Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA bishop, will open the conference,

followed by inspiring speakers for the morning Dharmathons and afternoon panels, in separate English and Japanese sessions. Presenters include a diverse cross section of ministers and lay members. Download the flyer with speaker details at the BCA website: BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org

During lunch, the Southern

District Buddhist Women's Association will hold its general meeting.

Conference registration fee is \$65 per person on or before May 20. The fee after May 20 is \$85.

For more information, please contact Ralph Honda (BTSD) at rkhonda205@gmail.com or Terri Omori (VBT) at fomori@aol.com

San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin

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The San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin was founded in 1902. Originally known as the San Jose Hongwanji Buddhist Church, the church received *Betsuin* status in 1966. In its long history, it has served as a gathering place to learn and share Shinran Shonin's appreciation of the Buddhadharmas.

Although, the Betsuin was founded in 1902, its *hondo* (main hall) was not completed until 1937. Since then it has undergone several major renovations. In 2002, renovation and refurbishment of the onajin altar was finally completed.

For many years a plaque has hung above the onajin. The characters written there, *Kai Ho Zo*, come from *Juseijo* which means "To open the Dharma storehouse." This is the pledge of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara. It has been a reminder that as we enjoy the compassion of Amida, we are encouraged to share this with others.



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Articles should be around 500 words, typed, double-spaced in Microsoft Word. The editors may ask for longer articles, or split in multiple parts at the editors' discretion. Documents should be sent as an email attachment to WODeditor@bcahq.org. Please include the article's author or contact, temple, and suggested title. 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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Individuals may mail, email, fax or phone in change of address requests and subscription cancellations to the BCA National Headquarters at the address above. Please include the following: Subscriber's name (as written on current subscription); address currently being used; New address and/or name changes; requested action (e.g. change of address, name, subscription cancellation, etc.); phone and/or email of person requesting the change; date of request. Please allow up to 8 weeks for changes to take effect. BCA local temples should send update requests as usual.

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A New Beginning



By Ken Tanimoto
BCA President
Watsonville Buddhist Temple

To first start off, I want to introduce myself. My name is Ken Tanimoto and am your BCA President the next two years. Even though I have been a member of Watsonville Buddhist Temple for the past 31 years, my temple roots are from Central California, with Selma being my hometown and Fresno Betsuin being my home temple.

I have fond memories of growing up on a farm in Selma with my parents, grandmother, and siblings. Most of all I enjoyed attending Sunday School, treasuring the time I had with my Dharma School friends. Yes, I did learn Buddhism now and then, but spent most of my time having fun with the Sangha members, young and old. It was that era that gave me the foundation of my spiritual life.

I remember my grandmother recited *Junirai* every morning. When I passed her, without looking at me she handed me her *nenju* to bow to Buddha. I always thought, "Wow, she has eyes in the back of her head!" But even more, I noticed how contented she was reciting the sutra before the altar. *Junirai* started her day with harmony and peace, and in turn, it gave me joy to see her so happy.

My greatest *Nembutsu* teacher was my father. Like many of the *Kibei* (*Nisei*, or second-generation Japanese Americans born in the US but raised and educated in Japan before the war), he had a difficult time readjusting to a different culture. It was at an especially difficult time; he was in a relocation camp. What affected him the most was the mental anguish of postwar readjustment. I was a little boy at the time. What I remember was how clinical depression was affecting his life and his family. I felt sadness, and sometimes even fear. What I wanted was a father.

What brought him out of suffering were two events that forever changed his life. There was a kind and compassionate doctor in Selma who advised Dad to get treatment for his illness. The medical treatments helped his physical symptoms of depression. Then my grandmother

asked Rev. Gibun Kimura, *Rimban* (head minister) of the Fresno Temple to come over and talk with Dad. I remembered Rev. Kimura giving my father books on the Buddha's teaching, and also just listening to him.

After reading many books, attending many services, and listening to the Dharma, my father became a true follower of the Dharma. In essence, the Dharma helped save his life and his family.

After that period of Dad's life, he would share his joy, share his wisdom with others, and help anyone who needed anything. And this is how Dad impacted my life through embracing the Jodo Shinshu teachings.

I have realized that embracing the Dharma brings me great joy and meaning. I would like share this joy by giving members of the Buddhist Churches of America my time and energy for the next two years, as well as by supporting Bishop Umezu's vision of why Jodo Shinshu Buddhism is absolutely the most important thing in our lives.

I look forward in the months ahead to visiting BCA Temples, hearing the teachings of the Buddha, listening to the members, hearing about your successes, and most all, being part of your Sangha.

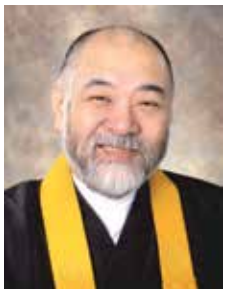
41 Receive Buddhist Names (Homyo)



The Kieshiki Affirmation Ceremony was conducted by Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop, for the following members of the BCA, (from top to bottom): March 12, 2016, Buddhist Church of Santa Barbara: 6 members, assisted by Rev. Masanori Watanabe; March 13, 2016, Oxnard Buddhist Temple: 31 members, assisted by Rev. Masanori Watanabe; April 9, 2016, Buddhist Temple of Salinas: 4 members, assisted by Rev. Orai Fujikawa.

Buddha-nature Comes Alive!

By Rev. Kakei Nakagawa,
Rinban, Fresno Betsuin



In the month of May, we observe *Shuso, Gōtan-ye* (Founder's birthday celebration service) to appreciate Shinran Shonin's *Nenbutsu* teaching, which enables us to attain true and real Buddhahood.

However, because his achievements were in an Eastern country rather than a Western one, his teachings are not well understood in America yet.

When Westerners read Shinran's writings, they often misinterpret his meaning. Although I take refuge in the true Dharma, it is hard to have a true and sincere mind. This self is false and insincere; I completely lack a pure mind.

Extremely difficult is it to put an end to evil nature;
My mind is like a venomous snake or scorpion.

My performance of good acts is also poisoned;
Hence, it is called false and empty practice. (*Gutoku's Hymns of Lament and Reflection, 94 and 96, Collected Works of Shinran, p. 421*)

These are expressions that are a result of Shinran's thorough, faultless introspection, but can be very easily misunderstood. Very recently, a certain scholar read the abovementioned and concluded, "There is no concept of Buddha-nature in Jōdo Shinshū."

On the contrary, Shinran Shōnin does not deny Buddha-nature. We should be aware that the concept of Buddha-nature appears in sutras as the viewpoint of the Buddha, not the viewpoint of ordinary people. Buddha-nature reveals the absolute value of Buddhahood, which subsumes

all sentient beings in itself. It is not possible for sentient beings to attain Buddhahood.

Shinran mentioned, it isn't said that we have the possibility to become a Buddha, but the meaning of Buddhahood is that it grasps all sentient beings equally. As Buddhahood was regarded by the Buddha, there can't be any distinction of being able to attain it or unable to attain it.

The person who attains shinjin and joy
Is taught to be equal to the Tathāgatas.
Great shinjin is itself Buddha-nature;
Buddha-nature is none other than Tathāgata. (*Hymns of the Pure Land, 94, Collected Works of Shinran, p. 351*)

Twenty-six hundred years after Śākyamuni Tathāgata has gone, there is no Tathāgata except the six syllables of the natural voice of Śākyamuni Tathāgata, "*Na-mo-a-mi-fā-bhab*," which is the manifestation of absolute wisdom and compassion. And when the meaning of the word "*Nenbutsu*" is proven to oneself, doubt about one's Buddha-nature disappears.

My heart has a bur of chestnuts.
My whole body also, is full of thorns
I, fearing for myself,

whimper all alone.

You don't cry, Natsuyo.

However, you whimper a lot

You who fall must fall.

You who sink must sink.

You who fall are here, therefore.

Amida joins and never lets you fall.

When I hear this voice,

Joyful indeed, I'm in Amida's grasp.

I prostrate myself unconsciously.

I cry happy tears.

I leave myself to Amida.

Do we go to the Pure Land or not?

I really don't care, Na-mo-a-mi-dah

Has autumn come? The bur of chestnuts,

Nuts of six syllables dropped from inside

of it.

Na-mo-a-mi-da-bhuh, the Tathāgata,

takes me home. On the way,

Ah, it hardly happens but it truly happens,

Na-mo-a-mi-dah

— *Natsuyo Matsumura*

We'll be together at the temple on the day of Gōtan-ye, listening to the message from the Buddha through the *Nenbutsu*, the essence of Dharma.

A Personal Remembrance:

Rev. Dr. Shunji Yokota a.k.a. John Ishihara
(1948-2015)

By Ken Tanaka,
Musashino University, Tokyo

Professor Shunji Yokota (formerly John Ishihara) passed away on November 17, 2015 in Shiga Prefecture, Japan, due to illness.



Within the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), Rev. Yokota was better known as John Ishihara. Born in Los Angeles, he attended the Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, where he was active in Boy Scouts. He served as minister at two BCA temples: Gardena Buddhist Church and Orange County Buddhist Church, from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s.

He earned degrees at Chapman College (B.A.); Ryukoku University (M.A.); and the Claremont Graduate School

(Ph.D.). Dr. Ishihara held academic positions at California State University; Long Beach; University of Calgary in Canada; and Chikushi Jogakuen University and Kyoto Women's University in Japan.

His many publications focused on comparative theology from the perspective of Jodo Shinshu thought as represented by his Ph.D. dissertation, which was entitled, *The Shin Buddhist Doctrine of Amida and the Self: Christ/Amida; Sinner/Bombu*. Prof. Yokota will be deeply missed, for he was one of the very few Shinshu scholars working in the area of comparative theology.

On a personal level, we shared a lot in common, for we are both "products" of the BCA, were raised and educated in the U.S., got married in Japan, completed our Ph.D. program in the same year, and held academic positions in the U.S. and Japan.

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Our Newest BCA Minister

By Rev. Nariaki Rajan Hayashi
Ekoji Buddhist Temple



It is a pleasure to introduce myself to my new BCA family. My name is Nariaki Rajan Hayashi and I recently came from Kyoto, Japan as a new minister for the Buddhist Churches of America to share and spread Shinran Shonin's *Nembutsu* teaching here in America.

I was born in Hawaii, so I guess that makes me a *Nisei*. I moved back to Japan when I was eight years old. I come from a temple family with roots in Kagoshima, Japan. My family includes my parents, two brothers, and me and my wife.

After my graduation from Kansai International Language University, my first

job was working in the hotel business as a salesman for over five years. The hotel business was a wonderful job, and proved to be a challenging career. However, while working so hard to achieve good results at sales, there was always a feeling of emptiness in my personal time. The more I succeeded, the more I sacrificed, spending more and more time at work. I quickly found out that, yes, the Japanese do work too hard.

Reflecting on this experi-

ence and what I was going through, I came to realize that the teaching of *Nembutsu* gave me an opportunity to pause and consider what life is. At the same time, it helped to fill the emptiness in my heart. Thus, from this experience, I believe that the teaching will guide me, and hopefully the members of the BCA, to a greater journey and meaningful life.

The wonderful teaching which Shinran Shonin left for us has and continues to be propagated over many generations. Truly, the teachings are relevant in this age. I look forward to being part of this propagation effort with the members of my new home, the Ekoji Buddhist Temple, and with all the members of the BCA.



BCA Education News & Highlights - Live a Real Life!

TechnoBuddha 2016: Modern Mindfulness

By Calvin Tamano, Buddhist Church of Sacramento

At the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, CA, the 9th annual TechnoBuddha Conference was held from March 25-27. A lively group of 65 young adults came to discuss their beliefs and enrich their lives in Buddhist culture. The event, led by a volunteer committee, is meant to foster Buddhism within 21- to 39-year-old individuals who have aged out of the youth-related programs like the Young Buddhist Association (YBA) at Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) temples, but who have maintained a loose affiliation with other temple-related organizations.



The 2016 TechnoBuddha Conference Committee

This year's theme was "Mindfulness," a subject that opened up conversations regarding the internal approach to understanding oneself, or more externally-focused ideas about politeness in society. Rev. Henry Adams of the San Mateo Buddhist Temple led the discussion in his keynote speech, relating the concept to his experiences as a youth. Having been raised in a Christian household and having spent time abroad in India, he went on a self-reflective journey to find his personal faith while being mindful of how it would be perceived by his host family and his immediate family back home.

Throughout the three-day conference, a diverse mix of workshops were held to appeal to the personal and spiritual interests of participants. The classes ranged from Buddhism 101/201, mixology, Enneagram studies, photography, and yoga, all with the overarching theme of mindfulness. Group discussions were held intermittently for participants to continuously express their thoughts and strengthen the community bond. "I loved it!" said first time attendee Heather Ichinaga. "I liked seeing old YBA friends and meeting new ones. Everyone was so nice and made you feel welcomed."

As always, we are very grateful to the Jodo Shinshu community, and the support of the people at the Center for Buddhist Education. Every year there are several volunteers who spend hours helping prepare food, and we thank you. Judy Kono has been an absolute phenom and her love of the community is inspirational. We hope to live up to her expectations. And of course, Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara's guidance and friendliness is beloved. For all the support receive, we are eternally grateful.

Next year will be the 10th TechnoBuddha Conference. In preparation, a new committee was quickly formed to start organizational efforts early. The new co-chairs Kimberly Koga and Steve Tamekuni have returned to once again spearhead the efforts. When asked about her thoughts for the decadal gathering, Kimberly stated she was looking forward to seeing new faces at the 10th annual conference in April 2017, then promptly returned to penning the roughly 12,106 ideas she has in mind. Although it is still 2016, the historic "Number 10" is already shaping up to be a massive event. Look forward to it!



Jr.YBA Meets for 2016 Conference in Palo Alto

By Noel McGuire, Berkeley Buddhist Temple

On March 19, Junior Young Buddhist Association (Jr. YBA) members from all five districts in California came together at the Palo Alto Buddhist Church to attend the 2016 Bay District Jr. YBA Conference. The theme of this year's conference was "Lilo and Stitch: Ohana Means Family, Sangha Means No One Gets Left Behind or Forgotten." Delegates followed Lilo, Stitch, and their family and friends on their journeys through life, and searched for the importance of family and friendship in both the characters' lives and in their own as well.

The day was filled with icebreakers and workshops, all aimed to encompass the themes of Sangha, compassion, and the three temptations (greed, anger, and stupidity, a.k.a. GAS). Delegates participated in obstacle courses, human game boards, discussions, and even made their own candy leis. Intertwining Buddhist teachings with interactive social activities, this year's conference brought over 100 Jr. YBAers together in their pursuit to gain a better understanding of the Dharma.

The Jr. YBA members and advisors were given the honor of listening to keynote speaker, Bishop Kodo Umezū during the opening service. We were not only guided by Bishop Umezū's words of wisdom, but were also guided throughout the day by ministerial advisors Rev. Dean Koyama and Rev. Candice Shibata. Other participating ministers included Rev. Henry Adams, Rev. Harry Bridge, Rev. Yushi Mukojima, and Rev. Zuikei Taniguchi.

The Bay District Jr. YBA would like to thank all ministers, delegates, advisors, and parents who attended for taking the time to join us at this year's conference. Without your constant support and guidance, the event would not have been possible.

Buddhist Churches of America
Jodo Shinshu Center 10th Anniversary Commemoration Series

Buddhist Art and Book Fair

June 24, 25 & 26, 2016

Gallery Hours:
Fri., 6/24: 3 pm - 8:30 pm
Sat. 6/25: 10 am - 4 pm
Sun. 6/26: 10 am - 2 pm

Jodo Shinshu Center • 2140 Durant Avenue, Berkeley, CA
- FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC -

Featuring:

Seeing the Wisdom of Compassion: The Art & Science of the Heart Sutra Paintings by Tsuneo Iwasaki

Gallery Hours: Friday, June 24: 3 - 8:30 pm, Saturday, June 25: 10 am - 4 pm, Sunday, June 26: 10 am - 2 pm
Lecture by Dr. Paula Arai: Saturday, June 25: 11 am

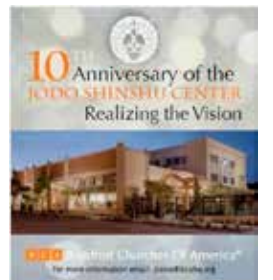
The Other Buddhism: Amida Comes West & Other Works
A Book Discussion with Caroline Brazier

Friday, June 24: 6:30 - 8 pm

Browse the BCA Bookstore.

Open during events listed above.

Enjoy special discounts on a unique collection of titles specializing in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, altar items, children's books, and gifts. Regular bookstore hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 11 am - 7 pm.



The Buddhist Church of Santa Barbara & BCA Center for Buddhist Education present

RESOLVING LIFE'S PROBLEMS

Through Buddhism

Conversations on Shin Buddhism in Your Daily Life

"Resolving Life's Problems Through Buddhism," is a monthly public lecture series to be held by the Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) in conjunction with the Buddhist Church of Santa Barbara, starting in May. **The series is Free and Open to the Public.** Rev. Marvin Harada (CBE Co-Director and resident minister of the Orange County Buddhist Church) will lead the discussions on **Sunday evenings from 7-8:30 pm.** Topics are: May 15: Matters of Life and Death; June 12: Relationship Issues; July 24: Buddhism at Work; August 14: Self-Esteem. The **Buddhist Church of Santa Barbara** is located at 1015 East Montecito Street (cross street is North Alisos Street, near South Milpas and the Eastside Branch Library).

Contact Rev. Masanori Watanabe: minister@OxnardBuddhistTemple.org or call (805) 483-5948; Rev. Marvin Harada: mrharada@aol.com or call (714) 323-6843; or call the Buddhist Church of Santa Barbara at (805) 962-3633, for more information.

2016 BCA Educational Events

Programs subject to change. Events at the Jodo Shinshu Center unless otherwise noted. This is a partial listing.

May 3-5 * Minister's Continuing Education Seminar: East Meets West: Jodo Shinshu from Higashi and Nishi Perspectives. Dr. Mark Blum and Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto continuing the discussion for ministers.

May 13-15 * Ohara School of Ikebana exhibition, including flower arrangement demonstration. Hosted by the JSC as part of the 10th Anniversary Commemoration.

May 20 * Gotan-e. A celebration of Shinran Shonin's birthday. Service Dharma message by Rev. Jerry Hirano, Salt Lake Buddhist Temple. 6:30-8 pm.

June 9-11 * Tokudo Preparatory Training #3.

June 24-26 * Buddhist Art & Book Fair. Art Exhibit: "Seeing the Wisdom of Compassion" by the late Tsuneo Iwasaki and related lecture by Dr. Paula Arai, Sat. 11 am. Exhibit Fri. 3-8:30 pm, Sat. 10 am-4 pm, Sun. 10am-2 pm. Book discussion with author Caroline Brazier (*The Other Buddhism: Amida Comes West*), Fri. 6:30-8 pm.

August 19 * IBS Symposium: Shin Buddhism & Globalization. 1-5 pm.

August 19-21 * Summer Pacific Seminar: Jodo Shinshu Beyond Borders. Keynote speakers: Dr. Ugo Dessi and Dr. Elisabetta Porcu.

August 20-21 * Jodo Shinshu Correspondence Course August Workshop, in Dusseldorf, Germany.

BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org Email: cbe@bcahq.org Phone: (510) 809-1460



BCA Education News & Highlights - Live a Real Life!

Crossing Cultural Barriers: Jodo Shinshu in Taiwan

By Alan Hirahara, Berkeley Buddhist Temple

This article was written by Berkeley Buddhist Temple member Alan Hirahara who, together with his wife Ashi, is temporarily living in Kaohsiung, Taiwan and traveling in East Asia, doing volunteer work for the Nembutsu community. Up until their move, Alan was the volunteer chef for many Center for Buddhist Education programs and activities.



Nembutsu followers in Taiwan: (left) Kaohsiung Sangha in front of the temple for Ruimo Sensei's four-year memorial service; (below) Alan Hirahara teaching English to children at a Jodo Shinshu school. (Lower left) Jodo Shinshu minister Ishida Katsubiko (second from left) came from Japan to interview Shifu (far right) for his temple newsletter, eating lunch with the Kaohsiung Sangha.

Jodo Shinshu has historically been an ethnocentric sect of Buddhism. That's why I was quite surprised when I first met my wife Ashi five years ago and discovered she was a Jodo Shinshu follower from China. Ashi's minister and teacher, Ruimo Sensei, had moved from Japan to Taiwan to build a temple ten years ago. He developed Sanghas by visiting people and giving Dharma talks in Taiwan. Although he passed away five years ago, his nun assistant Ruikaku San, or "Shifu" as she is known, has continued his work. (*Shifu* is the Chinese word for female teacher.) Ruikaku San was ordained as a Jodo Shinshu minister in Japan. I've been quite fortunate to witness firsthand the results of their work to spread the Dharma.



Over the past five years, Ashi and I had made three trips to Taiwan. We decided to sell our house in the San Francisco Bay Area and move here for a few years. During this time, we have traveled with Shifu to several cities, participating in retreats and lecture sessions. Every week we go to the temple that Ruimo Sensei built to do maintenance work and to hear Dharma talks given by Shifu.



Shifu's followers are devout and hungry for the Dharma. They eagerly await the printing of each book that she translates from Japanese into Chinese; books which were written by Ruimo Sensei's teacher, Rev. Zuiken Inagaki. It's quite moving and uplifting to see a young Sangha with many families and children who recite the *Nembutsu*, chant sutras, and sit quietly through two-hour Dharma talks.

We also hear from members of how they were inspired by Shifu's Dharma talks, and how she has dynamically applied the Dharma to their daily lives. Sangha members stand up and share their stories, often tearfully, of how the Dharma has transformed their lives. This is the engaged Buddhism that Shifu teaches.

Wherever we go, it's challenging for me since I don't speak Chinese. I'm studying daily but it's a difficult language and progress is slow. I have to rely on rough translations of Dharma talks and conversations with Ashi. I often don't know what's going on, but I simply enjoy being around people brought together by the Dharma. I don't need to speak Chinese to feel the warmth of their big smiles and the hospitality of the fellow Nembutsu followers we encounter.

Although the spread of the Nembutsu teaching into Taiwan is recent and on a small scale, it is significant because it is crossing major cultural barriers which have been in place for centuries. The Nembutsu teaching brings with it a unique and universal message for all people, whether they reside in Japan, San Francisco, Taiwan, South America, or Europe. Shifu often says that it's not the size of the Sangha, but their understanding of the Dharma that counts.

Through the efforts of the Nembutsu community, dedicated ministers, priests, nuns and followers, Ashi and I are able to experience and be part of the re-emergence of Jodo Shinshu in East Asia. For this, we are very grateful.

The Dharmakara Series: Our Lifelong Learning Challenge

This is the third part of a five-part guest series on the Juseige. We hope you enjoy it.

Reflections on the Juseige: The Name Heard throughout the Ten Directions

By Rev. Henry Adams

When do you say the Nembutsu? Many of us say the words "Namo Amida Butsu" when we come to the temple for services. How about in your daily life? You might say it before and after meals or when taking a moment to pause and reflect before your home *obutsudan* Buddhist shrine. The Nembutsu is the recitation of the words "Namo Amida Butsu," which one might literally translate as "I take refuge in Amida Buddha, the Awakened One of Immeasurable Wisdom and Compassion."

I often find myself saying the Nembutsu in the car when I see an animal that has died on the road after being hit by a car. I feel sadness that this animal has lost its life because of the existence of the road that enables me to travel quickly and comfortably to my destination. For me the Nembutsu affirms the powerful, and sometimes uncomfortable truth, that my life is possible due to the support and sacrifices of all the other lives around me.

If you were to come to our house on a rare evening when both of our sons are asleep in bed by 7:30 p.m. and my wife and I find that we have a whole evening to relax and catch up on things we have been meaning to do around the house, you will certainly hear the Nembutsu of joy and gratitude.

There are times when we also turn to the Nembutsu in times of stress and difficulty, such as the loss of a loved one. In troubled times, the Nembutsu is not a prayer for Amida Buddha to solve our problems. We realize that Amida Buddha is not a supernatural being who controls the working of cause and effect, so there is no sense in praying to the Buddha and asking for things that we would like to have happen or asking the Buddha to prevent things that we do not want to happen. That is not what Amida Buddha is about.

Living in the Nembutsu, with the teachings of Shinran as our guide, we encounter the Great Compassion of Amida Buddha in the *Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* and the Forty-Eight Vows of Amida Buddha. The essence of those vows is reiterated in a section of verse known in our tradition as the *Juseige*, which we chant regularly during our services. The third verse of the *Juseige* expresses the heart of the Nembutsu as we receive it:

GA SHI JO BUTSU DO
MYO SHO CHO JIP-PO
KU KYO MI SHO MON
SEI FU JO SHO GAKU

When I attain Buddhahood,
My Name will be heard throughout the ten directions;
Should there be any place where it is not heard,
May I not attain perfect enlightenment.

(*The Three Pure Land Sutras, Volume II: The Larger Sutra*, p. 30)

The Name of Amida Buddha is heard at all times and all places in our lives, whenever we say the words "Namo Amida Butsu." To hear the Name of Amida Buddha is to live with awareness of boundless compassion at work in every moment of our lives. In the Nembutsu, we find the strength and clarity of mind to face whatever life brings us with calm and appreciation. Sometimes happy. Namo Amida Butsu. Sometimes sad. Namo Amida Butsu. I welcome my life just as it is. Namo Amida Butsu.

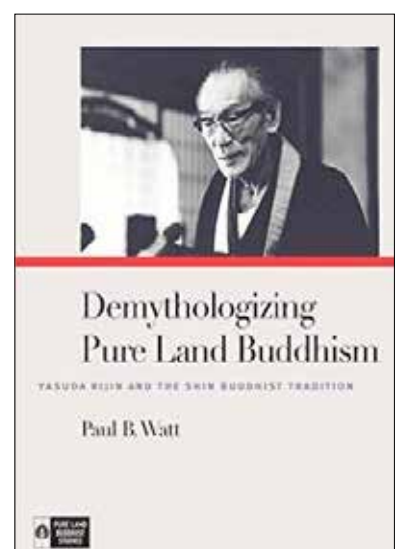
BCA Bookstore News by Gayle Noguchi

Now available: ***Demythologizing Pure Land Buddhism: Yasuda Rijin and the Shin Buddhist Tradition*** by Paul B. Watt, Pure Land Buddhist Studies series published jointly by the Institute of Buddhist Studies at the Graduate Theological Union and University of Hawaii Press. Hardback, \$52.00.

Demythologizing Pure Land Buddhism provides an introduction to the thought and selected writings of Yasuda Rijin (1900-1982), one of the most important interpreters of Shin Buddhism of twentieth-century Japan. A student of such notable teachers as Kaneko Daie and Soga Ryojin, Yasuda's ideas were viewed at the time as heretical, maintaining that the popular understanding of Shin teachings was actually a misunderstanding. Yasuda sought to articulate the powerful and compelling notion that, contrary to being something distant and other-worldly, Amida and the Pure Land are vibrant, dynamic realities to be lived and experienced in the present. Yasuda asserted that through the experience of the entrusting mind one realizes that one's life is an expression of Tathagata Amida, that in actuality one's own life is a manifestation of the Absolute.

Part I of *Demythologizing Pure Land Buddhism* begins with a preface by Dr. Richard K. Payne, series editor, a brief history of the development of Jodo Shinshu within the context of Mahayana, and a brief background of Yasuda's life, the major influences that informed his thinking (particularly Yogacara), and a summary of the major themes in his writings. Part II consists of annotated translations of Yasuda's lectures and writings from 1930 to 1972.

To order, go to www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org and click on the BCA Bookstore link or contact gnoguchi@bcabq.org / 510-809-1435. Open Wednesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Like us on Facebook.





Generous Golfers Drive Donations in Dinuba

Two flocks of fun folk took to the fairways of the Ridge Creek Golf Course for the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) National Council Golf Tournament, and donated their winnings to the Institute of Buddhist Studies' (IBS) Ministerial Scholarship Fund. Bishop Kodo Umezu, President of the IBS, received the donations. The tournament took place on March 1, 2016.

Barton Ashida, Frank Fujikawa, Gerald Nakayama, and Stan Mukai won the first place prize (above left). Sue Yamasaki, Dave Yamasaki, Glenn Nakaguchi, and Bob Shintaku won the second place prize. (above right). All in all, the golf tournament was a grand slam and added large divots of joy to all of our hearts.

The IBS is grateful to everyone involved in the golf tournament for helping IBS ministerial students. The Ministerial Scholarship Fund alleviates the financial burden on aspirants who want to become BCA ministers. If you haven't donated to the IBS yet, we'll allow a mulligan this time. Please visit www.shin-ibs.edu/donate or call (510) 809-1444 for more information on how to improve your donation game.

Thank You to the Friends of IBS Donors

The IBS Annual Giving Program for the Ministerial Scholarship program has now entered its third year of fund raising.

The IBS would like to thank the Friends of IBS who continue to support our ministerial students who aspire to serve as ministers in the Buddhist Churches of America temples and churches.

Supporters who have donated in 2016 include:

Ms. Barbara Dinkelspiel
Reverend John and Mrs. Koko Doami
Mr. Richard and Mrs. Emilie Endo
Ms. Shelley Hatakeyama
Mrs. Nancy Hirota
Ms. Joyce Iwasaki
Mrs. Rosie M. Kakiuchi
Dr. Victor Kato
Reverend Ronald Kobata
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Ms. Lou Minamoto
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Mr. Harold and Mrs. June Sano
Mr. Koichi Sayano
Mr. Digger and Mrs. Agnes Sasaki
Ms. Patricia T. Takeda
West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple
Reverend Haruo and Mrs. Shigeko Yamaoka
Organizations:
San Jose Buddhist Women's Association

Thank you for loyally joining us in supporting ministerial training and Buddhist education.

Currently, we have a total of 13 ministerial students studying at IBS. There is one student in the Masters of Divinity program, 4 students in the MBS program, and 8 students in the Kyoshi Certificate program.

In 2015, with the generous support of our Friends of IBS, we were able to raise \$87,770.00. Our annual goal is \$100,000.00 per year.

We ask for your support in achieving our annual goal to support the education of our ministerial students.

Please give us a call at (510) 809-1444 or e-mail at donate@bcabq.org for more information. Also, your local temple may have information on how to support the Institute of Buddhist Studies.



**Thank you for your gifts to the
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**Donations received to date:
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A Simple Way to Share the Dharma

The Dana program -- Offerings in Gratitude, provides members and supporters with a simple, clear way to spread the Dharma and give to the BCA and temples.

The Dana Program isn't a one-time fundraiser -- it is a continuous method for donors to contribute every year to support all the activities of the BCA. Please see the Dana Program brochure for details.

Donors now have a simple option for providing ongoing support for all of the BCA (along with temple partnerships). This enables the BCA to plan and budget more effectively so that everyone can enjoy the Dharma. Thank you for your continuing generosity.

Gassho/With palms together

Rev. Hirano

Continued from Front Page

is less than cell phones, Internet, and cable bills. We have close to 14,000 BCA members, and if they donated \$1,000 a year to BCA, that's \$14 million a year for us to work with! If it was only half to BCA headquarters and half to the local temples, that's \$7 million each. With the Farmer's spirit of *dana**, we would not have the financial problems we have now. We balk and complain about BCA receiving less than \$150 a year—about \$10 a month per member. Ten dollars is less than what I've spent at Starbucks for coffee during this conference.

It is my wish that when we talk about our agrarian past, of our Japanese American legacy, that we do not forget to talk about the values of generosity, hard work, and willingness to take a risk. We all still go gambling at the casinos to this day, don't we? Why aren't we taking a risk at investing in our own temples called BCA? The Issei and Nisei had to risk their comfort for the future of their families. The Issei were willing to sacrifice for the sake of their grandchildren, this generosity and selfless giving, "*dana*," was at the heart of this sacrifice. A stark contrast to "**What do I get for my money?**"

In addition, when we talk about non-Japanese coming into our temples, and we act as though they are invaders encroaching onto our territory. I want you to take an honest look at your own families. If you are Japanese American, how many of you have non-Japanese relatives? Do you treat them like strangers and invaders? The same strangers and invaders are not only your future family members; they are also our Dharma family members.

To the non-Japanese, I ask, "Are you sacrificing for the benefit of all with *dana*?" You are the first generation, the new Issei pioneer farmers

coming to the temples. I'm sure it was difficult coming and adjusting to this new Buddhist landscape, like the Japanese Issei adjusting to a new country. You are now sowing "seeds" for future generations. Are you willing and able to love and sacrifice for it?

My hope, my aspiration, is that we share our hopes and dreams about our future together. (Nobody really knows, except my wife, that I'm a romantic at heart...I may look grumpy on the outside, but don't be deceived; I'm a grumpy romantic on the inside.) I have this dream for our BCA. That dream is for all of us to try and be farmers of BCA. Let's once again grow our Sanghas, make material sacrifices that will have benefits for our future generations, and let go of the selfish clinging to what we have had.

All things are constantly changing: this is a basic Buddhist teaching. However, this also means all things are possible. Our Buddhist Churches of America is evidence of this incredible teaching. We have met and surpassed the dreams of the Issei and Nisei farmers. We hit the jackpot. Now what do we do? I would like each of you here this morning to honestly ask yourselves, "What will be my legacy; what will my generation sow?" Please join me in *gassho*.

The Buddha replied, "I sow faith as the seeds. My discipline is the rain. My wisdom is my yoke and plough. My modesty is the plough-head. The mind is the rope. Mindfulness is the ploughshare and the goad. I am restrained in deeds, words and food. I do my weeding with truthfulness. The bliss I get is my freedom from suffering. With perseverance I bear my yoke until I come to nirvana. Thus, I have done my ploughing. It brings the fruit of immortality. By ploughing like this, one escapes all suffering."

I believe the seeds, and the fruit of this farming, is *Namo Amida Butsu*.

* *selfless giving*

First Meeting

Continued from Front Page

the sharing of the teachings of Japanese Buddhism with more Americans.

Participating representatives were: Rev. Gengo Akiba and Rev. Ikki Nanbara of Soto-shu; Rev. Eisei Ikenaga and Rev. Tetsudo Takasaki of Nichiren-shu; Rev. Noriaki Ito and Rev. Ryoko Osa of Otani-ha; Rev. Junkun Imamura of Shingon-shu; and Rev. Kodo Umezu and Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara of Hongwanji (BCA). Rev. Kodo Tanaka of Jodo-shu was unable to attend.

Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism) was

founded in 1965 by Japanese industrialist and patron of Buddhism, the late Rev. Dr. Yehan Numata. BDK America is the American affiliate which has a long history of supporting and implementing Buddhist programs, activities, education, and research here in the USA. The Buddhist Churches of America has also been a major recipient of support from the Numata family and BDK through the years. This first of its kind meeting is another example of the innovative ideas and support BDK provides to Buddhism in America.

¹Source: Pew Research Center, "Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths" at www.pewforum.org/2012/07/19/asian-americans-a-mosaic-of-faiths-overview/

Remembrance

Continued from Page 3

One other thing we shared was a priest's robe, some 40 years ago! It was a sweltering summer day in Kyoto back in the mid-1970s. I went on a one-day study tour for ministerial students to Mt. Hiei, sponsored by the Hongwanji. However, I did not have a robe as required, since I had not yet been ordained. John kindly loaned me his, thus allowing me to participate. The tour was more physically demanding than imagined. The

dust, sweat, and a couple of falls on the dusty trail made a mess of the borrowed robe. When I finally got back home, John welcomed me with that infectious laughter. And, importantly for me, he was not at all upset about the condition of his robe, saying something to the effect that what I had gotten on the robe was the "holy dust" from the sacred mountain!

Thank you, John, for sharing so much with me and others. Your continual spiritual presence is clearly felt here and now, and we shall meet more vividly in the Realm of the Boundless Light and Life!

今年のお話

「いつをもつて聞くとどこかを慶び、
獲るところを嘆ずるなり」と

シアトル仏教会 開教使 関谷 沙羅



昨年、京都の本願寺にて僧侶の養成機関の一つである勤式指導所を修了し、

9月から開教使としてBCAに着任しました。東京で生まれ、駐在員の家族としてアメリカで中高等学校と通じて帰国し、東京で企業に勤めていた私は、色々な方から「どうして仏道に？」と問われます。皆さんへ上手な答え方がまだハッキリとはわからないでいます。ご縁というものは不思議なもので、私達の予想や思いを超えて機能しています。

東京での会社員時代に、ビジネスマンの教養として種々の講演を聞いていたのですが、その中で印象の強いものがあります。その一つが丸の内で行われた、曹洞宗の南直哉師の講演でした。その頃の私は仏教の勉強を本格的に始め、楽しくて愉しくて、仏道に向けてまっしぐらでしたので、師のように生まれた家がお寺でなく僧侶になられた方は私にとって直接的な大先輩に思えました。これから仏道に進むにあたり参考になることを聞かせていただけるに違いないと、出掛けました。

そこで南師が仰ったのは、こういうことでした。「本当に大事なことは一人では決まらない。」

論僧とも称され、主体性をもって道を突き進んで来られたのだらうと思えていた師からの話は意外でした。私は釈尊のお言葉の書かれた本を読んだ上で、この道を自分で推し進めることができるかと思っていたからです。誰に反対され

ても一人でも、仏道に進むんだ！と勇んでいた私には、少しショックでした。「後ろから押されたり、横から引っ張られたり。縁がそうならないと、ならない」と仰るのです。

しかし、その後、私なりの仏道を走ったり転んだりしながらヨタヨタと歩み続けた私は、後になって何度もこの言葉を思い出しました。ああ、師は正しかったのだ。あれは当時の私の思いがりだった、と思ひ知らされたのでした。

一人では決まらない。親鸞聖人が仰っている。「どんなことでも自分の思い通りになるのなら、浄土に往生するために千人の人を殺せとわたしがいったときには、すぐに殺すことができるはずだ。けれども、思い通りに殺すことのできる縁がないから、一人も殺さないだけなのである。」(歎異抄・現代語版78頁)

私は私の仏道の中で足繁く通い、大好きだった禅の世界を離れることをハッキリと決めようとしたこともなく、なぜそうだったのか不思議にさえ思える日もあります。ただ、仏道を歩もうとする日々の中で、様々な事象が起こり、世間の流れがあり、行を進められない日々もあり、その時々にも必死にもがいて、少しの決断をして、状況に流れて、気付けばそこにいたのです。

親鸞聖人も時代と共に生きられたことでしょ。比叡山での修行があり、流罪による法然聖人との別れがあり、この法難により「しかれば、すでに僧にあらず俗にあらず」(註釈版聖典471頁)と仰るお立場に立たれた。しかしその流れていくような時代の中で、確かな慶びに遇われ、揺るがぬ無碍の二道を歩まれた。

私が後に学んだ京都の中央仏教学院の教育寮では、毎日の就寝前の勤行で、親鸞聖人の書かれた『教行信証』の総序の御文を拝読していました。

「穢(え)を捨て浄を欣(ねが)ひ、行に迷(まど)ひ信に惑(まど)ひ、心昏(くら)く識(さと)り寡(すくな)く、悪重(あく)障(さわり)多(おほ)きもの、」(同131頁)と、声に出して一節読むごとに、深く、より深く自身に突き刺さりました。これは「ことに如来(釈尊)の発遣(はつせん)を仰(た)げ、かならず最勝(さいしょう)の直道(ちくどう)に帰(かへ)りて、もつばらこの行に奉(つか)へ、ただこの信を崇(あが)めよ。」と続きます。

時代の中にありて道に迷う私に、「この道」を歩めよと常に喚んでくださっているお念仏の道があったのです。「難思の弘誓は難度海を度する大船、無礙の光明は無明の闇を破する恵日なり。」(同131頁) 親鸞聖人は明らかに示してくださっていたのです。

私は様々なご縁を通して辿り着かせていただいた、永らく喚んでくださっていた声にようやく気付かせていただけた私のよろこびを、「慶ばしいかな」(同132頁)と仰った親鸞聖人のお心を繰り返して口に出して頂く中に、何度も味わわせていただきました。

「ことに如来の恩徳の深きことを知んぬ。こをもつて聞くところを慶び、獲るところを嘆ずるなり」と。(同132頁) 聞かせていただいたところをよろこび、得させていただいたところをたたえるのである(現代語版7頁と、親鸞聖人は『教行信証』を著して示してくださいました。

ただ聞くところを慶び、

獲るところを嘆ずるばかりとなつた私の仏道において、昨年は本願寺派の儀礼・法式、つまりは私たちに於ける讃嘆の作法を、本願寺の勤式指導所において教えていただきました。儀礼はこの聞くところを慶び、獲るところを嘆ずる私たちの心を表します。気付けば、お念仏を申し讃嘆させていただけような身に育てていただいております。もったいないことでもあります。

ついては、このよろこびを親鸞聖人と共にしようという皆様と、この場所において、今この時代に、共にお念仏申し讃嘆していきたいと念ずるばかりです。

南無阿弥陀仏

今月の一枚

(写真左下)

サリナス仏教会のダルマスクールの生徒たちが花まつりのために境内を清掃した。

Salinas Dharma School students help Rev. Orai Fujikawa to clean the temple in preparation for Hanamatsuri.



昨年末から、米国仏教団は今までの維持会員制度をベースにして、新しく「ダーナプログラム」を始めました。この新しいプログラムは、できるだけ多くの人たちに直接教団運営に参加していただく画期的なシステムです。今までは、各仏教会がそれぞれのサイズに応じて教団の運営費を負担していましたが、教団の発展を願う人たちに直接声をかけて、毎年ご寄付をしていただくことになったのです。このプログラムで集められた寄付金は、教団の運営にあてられ、各種の教育事業などを援助することになります。また、このシステムを利用して、寄付金の半分を希望する仏教会に寄付することもできます。四月二十五日現在で、すでに九万八千七百ドルのご寄付をいただいています。詳しいことは仏教会の理事長ならびに開教使までお問い合わせください。

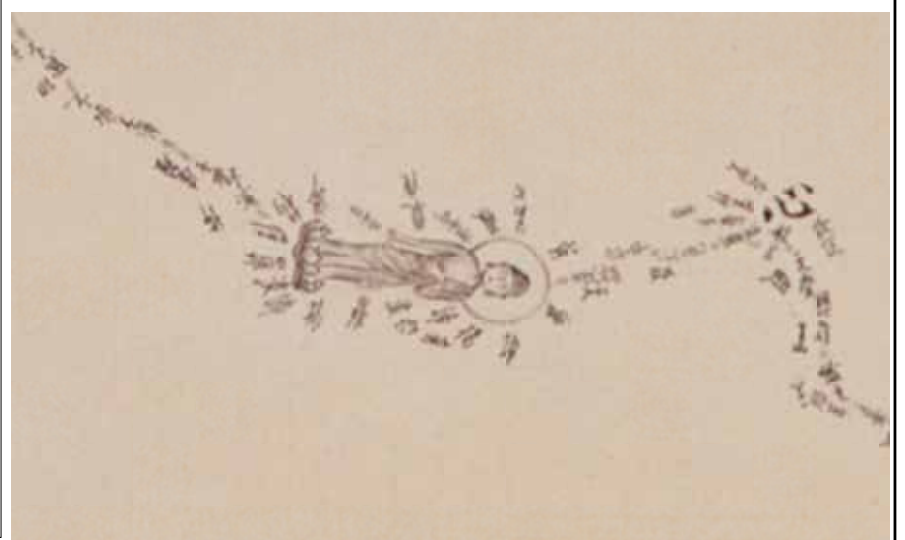
ダーナプログラムの報告

Do Ants Have Buddha-Nature?

1月に浄土真宗センターにて行われた岩崎常夫氏の写経画の絵画展で参加者の方々を微笑ませた一枚(写真右)。この絵は、虫眼鏡で見ると、一匹が二字ほどの「般若心経」の言葉で成り立っている蟻が、わたくしたちの見慣れたような隊列を組んで、仏様や護符をせつせと運んでいる姿を描いたものです。新井ポーラ先生は、禅の考案の「犬にも仏性は有るか？」に掛けて、「蟻に仏性は有るか？有り！」ということを表しているのだと説明してくださいました。岩崎氏は、蟻が実際にどのように物を運ぶのかわかるために、庭に食べ物を撒いてじっと観察なさったのだそうです。仏と共に、岩崎氏の温かいまなざしが感じられる作品です。(IBS職員、稲石さやか)

岩崎氏の作品は6月24、25、26日に浄土真宗センターで開催される、「仏教アートとブックフェア」で再び展示される。新井ポーラ博士の講演も予定されている。フェアの詳細は浄土真宗センターまで。

A close-up of a section from Iwasaki painting



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日本仏教代表者の集い

Japanese Buddhist Sects Meeting at JSC, Feb 22-23, 2016.



仏教伝道協会の主催で、米国に拠点を持つ日本仏教宗派の代表者会議が行われた。会議は2月22日、23日に浄土真宗センターで開催され、

東本願寺、曹洞宗、日蓮宗、高野山真言宗の代表者に加え、BCAから梅津総長、桑原開教使が参加した。宗派の代表者がそれぞれ開教の現状と課題を報告、米国の仏教学者から意見を聞くなどし、今後の仏教伝道へのはすみをつけた。

春の聞法セミナー

の開催

4月9日(土)に浄土真宗センターで恒例の「春の聞法セミナー」が行われ、センター近郊に在住する日本語聞法者が集った。今回はフローリン仏教会の菅原祐軌開教使と我孫子洋名誉開教使が講師として招かれた。午前中は菅原師が「聞法して遅慮することなかれ」の講題で話し、漢字の成り立ちを用いて浄土真宗の味わいを伝えた。午後からは我孫子師が「ルンビニ食へ歩き」の題で自身のインド仏跡参拝の経験話を話した。参加者は、「菅原先生の講義では

ガーデナ仏教会でアニメイベント開催



Gardena sponsors a fun anime workshop

漢字からたくさん学ばせていただきました。『迷』という漢字に、「」が4つつく」と「迷」という字になると、お話し、また我孫子先生の『あなたがやらなくても世界は回る』のお言葉もとても印象に残りました。」と聞法を楽しんだ。センタースタッフによる昼食のエヒ天そばとおにぎりも大好評で、和やかな聞法の集いとなった。法話の様子はYouTubeで見ることができ、リンクは
菅原師: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GB0AUFaKpWM>
安孫子師: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xf4iYBH55Jk>

4月9日(土)にガーデナ仏教会で「Anime-Zou」と題したアニメファン向けのイベントが開催された。第一回目となったイベントには約100名が参加、アニメの登場人物などに扮する「Cosplay (コスプレ)」を楽しんだ。ハリウッドの映画界で活躍する梅津総長の息女エイミーさんと、ロサンゼルス別院の門徒でイラストレーターの小田川ライアンさんによる「漫画の書き方」の講義は人気を集めた。日本のアニメ忍たま乱太郎のコスプレで参加した庵原ジョン開教使は、「若い人たちにお寺に親しむをもっともらおうとイベントを企画しました。タイトルのア

ニメゾウは、花まつりで誕生仏をのせる白い象のエレファントのゾウと、アニメだゾウという強調を表す助詞をかけてみました。みんな協力してくれて、花まつりが盛り上がりました。」とイベントの成功を喜んだ。

写真左上
庵原師と仏教会メンバー。パネルのデザインは梅津エイミーさんによるもの。
写真下
梅津エイミーさんと小田川ライアンさんによるアニメ講習



Amy Umezu, who works in the animation field, assists with this fun activity.

総長メッセージ

米国仏教団総長 梅津廣道

この記事を書いている間も九州の熊本、阿蘇、大分では大きな揺れが続いています。被災された方々の不安な心情を思うと心が痛みます。私の故郷は大分と福岡の県境にあり、小さな揺れですが、続いているという連絡がありました。米国仏教団では、災害義援金を募集して、本願寺を通じて支援をするということがすでに案内されています。皆様の協力をお願いいたします。

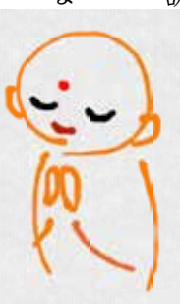
ところで、地震のニュースを見ていると、ほとんどの人が、家にいると危ないので安全な場所に避難し、何日もそこでの生活を余儀なくされています。「天災は忘れたころにやってくる」という諺があります。私たちも常にその心構えをしておかねばなりません。いざという時、どういった行動をするのか、避難場所はどこなのか、非常食は用意されているのかなど、身の回りをチェックすることが必要でしょう。そういう自分も、これからそれをしなければと思っているところです。

このように、自分の命にかかわることだと私たちはすぐに行動を起こしますが、心の場合にはなかなかそう簡単にはいかないようです。よほどのことがない限り、人生に疑問を持つことはありません。仏教では『平生業成(へいせいごうじょう)』という言葉を使います。平生、すなわち常日

熊本地震被災者のための災害義援金

米国仏教団では4月に日本で起こった熊本地震で被害にあわれた方の支援のための寄付を募っている。義援金は京都の本願寺に送り、本願寺が信頼のおける支援団体へ届ける予定。寄付をお考えの方は、各お寺の開教使にお問い合わせください。

5月は降誕会の法要が営まれます。お寺にお参りして聴聞しましょう。



降誕会は親鸞聖人のお誕生をお祝いする法要です。親鸞聖人は1173年、5月21日にお生まれになりました。

頃から聴聞を続けて、生死の一大事を解決して、人生にどんなことが起こってもそれを引き受けていける力をいただくことが大事だということです。

それは本当の拠り所を持つことであり、心の避難所を見つけておくこともあります。心の避難所のことを、お経の中では「涅槃」とも「島」とも「洲」とも言い表されています。また「畢竟依(ひつきょうえい)究極の拠り所」ともいいます。ところで、この「洲」という漢字をよく見てください。川の中に点々があつて、そこは、水に浸かっている島のようなところだということが、漢字にあらわされています。そこにいると安全で流されることがないのです。

私たちは、あてにならないものをあてにして生きています。これがあれば大丈夫、絶対心配ないと思ったりします。しかし、すべてのものが移り変わり、最後には消えてしまいます。ちょうど、激しい流れの中で浮き沈みしながらも、小さな木片にすがって流されていっているようです。一刻も早く安全な洲を見つけて、流されない人生を送らねばなりません。このように、本當にあてになるものは何かというのを聞かせていただくことが、人生の一大事である、私たちの大先輩たちが教えてくださっています。

私たちも一緒に、心と体の避難所を確かめ合ひましょう。また、最後になりましたが、被災者の方々が一日も早く、もとの生活に戻るよう念じております。