



WHEEL OF DHARMA

Official Publication of the Buddhist Churches of America

BCA Launches Relief Efforts to Aid Maui

Hawaii Kyodan Reports Lahaina Temple Among Structures Destroyed

By Jon Kawamoto
Wheel of Dharma Editor

The Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) and its Social Welfare Committee have launched Maui relief efforts in full support of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH) in response to the deadly wildfires that decimated the town of Lahaina.

How to Help

Donations to the BCA can be made online through: <https://bca.kindful.com/>, or by check payable to: **BCA Endowment Foundation (Please note on memo line: Maui Relief)**. Mail checks to: **BCA Endowment Foundation, 2140 Durant Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704.**

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The BCA and HHMH are affiliated organizations and are

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The charred remains of vehicles and other items along Lahaina's waterfront are shown after a devastating wildfire on Aug. 8 destroyed much of the town in Maui, Hawaii. (Courtesy of Rafu Shimpo/Hawaii Gov. Josh Green's office)



Crowds Return to BCA Obon Festivals

This year's BCA Obon festivals were marked by record crowds, a run on Japanese and Hawaiian foods, and a joyous time to dance to familiar Bon Odori songs and pay homage to departed loved ones. The San Jose Betsuin's Obon had more than 2,600 dancers for its two-day festival on July 9-10 — a new record — and several thousands more attended the weekend event. Top left, 1,000 ceramic oil lamps are lit outdoors at Senshin Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles in memory of beloved family members and others. Top right, Jerry Iseda is shown among the dancers at the Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple's Obon. Above, the crowd fills San Jose's Japantown on July 9. Below right, San Jose Betsuin Resident Ministers Rev. Etsuko Mikame and Rinban Rev. Gerald Sakamoto pose at the Obon festival. (Courtesy of JK Yamamoto/Rafu Shimpo, Ron Gee, and Scott Nakajima)



A Light in the Darkness

Kona's Rev. Blayne Higa Gives His Reflections on the Maui Wildfires



Rev. Blayne Higa

Editor's note: Rev. Blayne Higa is Resident Minister of the Kona Hongwanji Buddhist Temple in Kealahou on the Big Island of Hawaii and is a graduate of the Institute of Buddhist Studies. Rev. Higa wrote the following article on Aug. 17, a week after the devastating wildfires in Maui, Hawaii. The Wheel of Dharma is reprinting the article with the permission of Rev. Higa. For more information, go to: www.blaynehiga.com

By Rev. Blayne Higa
Kona Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

It has been one week since wildfires raged across Maui causing unimaginable death and destruction. My heart breaks for the Sangha of Lahaina Hongwanji and for everyone who has been affected by this disaster. The loss of life,

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Bishop Is Confirmed



BCA Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada is shown with wife Gail Harada after his official confirmation by the Hongwanji-ha in Kyoto, Japan. For the story and more photos, see Page 5. (Courtesy of Rev. Michael Endo)

BISHOP'S MESSAGE

Less Me, More We



By Rev. Marvin Harada
Bishop of the BCA

I recently returned from a week in Japan to receive confirmation from our Gomonshu of our Hongwanji for becoming Bishop. This ceremony was postponed for three years because of the pandemic. But since the Hawaii Kyodan recently elected a new Bishop, Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani, we were both invited to receive our confirmation together.

The ceremony was very meaningful and there were lots of dinners and meetings with various Hongwanji and Ryukoku University dignitaries during our stay. We met with Dr. Takashi Irisawa, the president of Ryukoku University, and were given a tour of some of their facilities.

I was very impressed with some of the signage on campus. I am not sure if it is the theme for the university, but

throughout the campus, there were various short phrases, one of which was, "Less me, more we." I thought this was a beautiful, very Buddhist phrase. So simple, but so well put. "Less me, more we."

Our modern-day life is perhaps the opposite. It is a life of "More me, less we." Self-enhancement, self-promotion, self-gratification. If you go to a bookstore, the "self-help books abound." Self, self, self. More me, less we. Yet this slogan or phrase at Ryukoku University said, "Less me, more we."

The unawakened, unenlightened self thinks that the way to happiness is to get what you want, to get everything your way. But Buddhism teaches us that this is a delusion, a wrong view of life. First of all, Buddhism teaches us that we will never achieve ultimate happiness this way because the ego self is never satisfied, never gratified completely. We will always seek more, no matter what it is, whether it is money, cars, homes, positions, or status. That is why the path of "More me, less we," is destined to fail. It is destined to a life of unhappiness, even suffering and anguish.

However, the opposite, "Less me, more we," leads to



Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada and Bishop Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii are shown after they were officially confirmed in a July 28 special ceremony conducted by Gomonshu Kojun Ohtani. (Courtesy of Rev. Michael Endo)

a life of fulfillment, an inner, lasting sense of happiness, and even a sense of gratitude. A grateful person doesn't need more of this or more of that. A grateful person not only feels gratitude for what they have, but feels undeserving of it as well. For such a person, even life itself is a gift.

The "more we" doesn't just

mean people. A sense of "more we" means all of life that surrounds us. It encompasses the plants and animals, the earth and the air, the planets and the stars.

Rev. Gyomay Kubose once wrote a short haiku poem about a simple flower that

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That Other Shore and This Shore

There was a man who couldn't stand the life he lived as a member of the machine society. One day, he attacked and broke some machines. After the attack, he was arrested by a machine. In that world, trials are also conducted by machines. There were no prisons in that world.

For his punishment, the

man was taken in a spaceship to a planet far from Earth. After he got to the planet, he received a silver ball and some dry food. There was a button on the surface of the silver ball that released water by pressing it. This ball was the only device on the planet that provided water.

When the man was thirsty, he would press the button and he would get water. The dry food items given to him looked so small. But he realized that if he put water on it, it became the size of a single serving. He was given 100 dry food items.

press the button on the silver ball to get water. If that limit was exceeded, the silver ball would explode and blow up the surroundings. No one knew how long that would be. The number of times he could press the button could depend on the se-

verity of crime he committed. But the man didn't know how many times he could press the button before the ball would explode. Therefore, he tried to drink as little water as possible. But he also needed water to prepare his food as well. Every time the man wanted water, he pressed the button in fear of death, which exhausted him.

This story tells us our happiness depends on how we view life. We all have this "button." When the days go smoothly, we forget about our worries. And because humans want to live forever, they think the "button" is broken. But the truth is that life is fleeting and will eventually end. Those who live with the Nembutsu know that we are walking on the path to the Pure Land.

Knowing this brightens our lives.

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Suddenly, he realized something. No one knows when their lives will end, even on Earth. Pushing that button to provide the water and food he needed is not much different from our daily lives. We make

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Correction

In the September issue, the Town Hall story about Rev. Gary Jaskula incorrectly identified New York Buddhist Church's former Resident Minister Rev. Earl Ikeda.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Credit to BCA Staff, Committees for Swift Action on Maui Relief



By Terri Omori
BCA President

Congratulations are in order to our Bishop, Rev. Marvin Harada. On July 28, Rev. Harada was officially confirmed as the BCA Bishop by the Hongwanji-ha in a special ceremony conducted by Monshu Kojun Ohtani.

Rev. Harada began his term as the Bishop to the Buddhist Churches of America in April 2020. However, due to the pandemic, the confirmation ceremony was postponed. Together with Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani, the newly elected Bishop of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, the confirmation ceremony was held at Nishi

Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan. Congratulations to both!

On Aug. 9, many of us began to hear of the devastating Maui wildfires, which began a day earlier. We watched in disbelief as we saw images of the town of Lahaina turned to ash. We were saddened to hear of the destruction to the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission temple. We felt feelings and sympathy — and a need for compassionate action.

I commend our BCA and Wheel of Dharma staff, members of the Communications and Social Welfare committees, and the staff of the Endowment Foundation for their prompt actions in developing a process to support the efforts of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief Fund.

Through many emails, all came together to develop a plan of action and share the information with our BCA family. I thank our BCA ministers and temple leaders for carrying out the plan by communicating the ways to donate with their Sangha and to the members for their generous heart of support.

I also appreciate the com-



The aftermath of the destructive wildfires that tore through the town of Lahaina on the island of Maui, Hawaii, is shown in this Aug. 12 aerial photo, with the sprawling, landmark banyan tree at top center. The 150-year-old banyan tree has reportedly survived the wildfires. (Courtesy of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources)

munications received from the HHMH leaders. During an extraordinarily stressful time, they answered our emails as the BCA sent its concerns and support. The HHMH Committee on Social Concerns, along with its Office of the Bishop, are making decisions to assist the needs of temple families displaced by the

fires and supporting the greater community. Collectively, all efforts are making a difference in the lives of many.

In previous messages, I have mentioned how grateful I am to be a part of the BCA. I'm thankful for the opportunities to network with ministers and members at the temple, district,

BCA, and beyond BCA levels.

Even during trying times, my heart is filled with gratitude and the words from "Our Pledge" by Monshu Kojun Ohtani come to mind: "Not putting myself first I will share in the joy and sadness of others just like the compassionate Buddha" ... Namo Amida Butsu.

Butsu Butsu: Eastern District Holds Special Willow Grove Obon

Observance Honors Legacy of Japanese Americans; Graves Include Young College Students, First JA Baby to Die in US

By Rev. Brian Kensho Nagata
Buddhist Church of Oakland

On July 22, the BCA Eastern District's New York, Seabrook and Ekoji temples held its annual Obon gathering at the Willow Grove Japanese cemetery in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

While most BCA temples celebrate Obon within the temple grounds and at local cemeteries, the Willow Grove Obon service is a very special observance honoring the legacy of all Americans of Japanese ancestry and BCA members.

At the close of Japan's feudal era, as the end of the samurai and shogun era was slowly evolving, forward looking officials realized that Japan would have to turn to the West if it wanted to become an active participant in the 19th century modern world. Young samurai were sent to America to study the ways of the West. Even our Nishi Hongwanji mother temple dispatched ministers to study the conditions of contemporary religion in Europe and America before it began sending ministers to Hawaii and America.

In 1860, the first Japanese government mission to the United States sailed from Japan to San Francisco on the Kanrin Maru, captained by famous Japanese military strategist Katsu Kaishu. Those on board included translator John Manjiro and Yukichi Fukuzawa, who would later go on to found Keio



Ekoji Buddhist Temple Minister's Assistant Rev. Erick Ishii speaks during the Eastern District's special Willow Grove Obon in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Rev. Cheryl Ikemiya, a Minister's Assistant from the New York Buddhist Church is on the left in the above left photo. At above right, the gravesite of Baby Takagi is shown. Baby Takagi, who passed away in 1877, is probably the first Japanese American female to die in the United States. (Courtesy of Rev. Brian Nagata)



University in Tokyo.

During this maiden voyage to America, three of the ship's crew died on their way to San Francisco. Gennosuke and Tomizo from Hiroshima and Minekichi from Nagasaki were the first Japanese to be buried in America and are resting today in San Francisco's Japanese Cemetery in Colma, exactly across from the BCA Memorial.

A few years later, one of the first places where young Japanese samurai were sent to study was at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Rutgers was founded by Dutch Reformed Church missionaries and because the Dutch were one of the few foreign countries which maintained communication and trade with Japan during the feudal era, Dutch officials

encouraged young Japanese men to come to America to study at Rutgers.

These young men, many of whom were still teenagers, made the long journey to the East Coast and studied English and western subjects and dreamed of helping to create a new Japan.

Taro Kusakabe of Fukui was one of the first young Japanese men to go abroad to study. He held passport No. 4 issued by the Foreign Affairs Nagasaki office. Kusakabe had studied English under a Dutch minister, who had settled in Nagasaki and Saga, and he enrolled in Rutgers. Kusakabe was diligent and studied mathematics, but he succumbed to tuberculosis just a few weeks before graduation. He was posthumously awarded his degree and was the first Japanese

to be elected to the academic excellence Phi Beta Kappa society. He passed away on April 13, 1870, at the age of 26.

Kijiro Hasegawa was from Himeji City in Hyogo and he passed away in 1871, at the young age of 23. A memorial in his memory is held in Himeji City even today.

Kosuke Matsukata of Kagoshima came from a distinguished lineage of pioneers who helped to build a new Japan. His second cousin Haru, would later become the wife of U.S. Ambassador (and Japan scholar) Edwin O. Reischauer. Kosuke was a member of the Iwakura Mission, which traveled around the world to seek recognition for the new Japanese government and research conditions of the modern world. After circumventing

the world with this embassy mission, Matsukata received permission to enroll in Rutgers, but contracted an illness and he passed away in 1872 at the age of 22.

Jinzaburo Obata was from Kokura in Fukuoka and first came to America as a tutor and companion to Lord Masayuki Okuhira of the Nakatsu clan. Obata later enrolled in Brooklyn College in New York City and suffered a nervous breakdown and passed away in 1873. Because no other Japanese were buried in any American cemeteries on the East Coast, Obata was buried in the Willow Grove cemetery with the other students.

Otojiro Irie of Yamaguchi Prefecture enrolled in Rutgers in 1872 along with Kiyonari Yoshida who would later become a member of the Privy Council, the official advisory council to the Emperor of Japan. Irie would pass away on March 20, 1874, at the age of 22 after only two years of studying at Rutgers.

Unfortunately, many Japanese students became ill from malnutrition and lack of proper medical attention. These students also had no immunity to many American diseases. Shinjiro Kawasaki, also from Kagoshima, was sent to study at Eastman Business College in Poughkeepsie, New York, but caught measles and succumbed to tuberculosis when he was

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Butsu Butsu

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only 21 years of age.

Tatsuzo Sakatani from Okayama did not follow the same student route as the others. He was employed at an engineering firm in New York City. However, he passed away in 1886 at the age of 26. Sakatani was from a prominent family and his younger brother Yoshiro would go on to serve as a mayor of Tokyo and later as Japanese finance minister.

And finally, we remember Baby Takagi, the daughter of Saburo and Suma Takagi. Saburo was serving at the Japanese Consulate office in New York City when his baby daughter died on Sept. 5, 1877, shortly after birth.

Baby Takagi is probably the first Japanese American female to die in America. Saburo later served as the first Japanese Consul General in San Francisco. Before his government service in America, Saburo had studied in the United States and was an attendant to Koshika Kaishu, the son of Kaishu Katsu.

Each of these young pioneers were from prominent Japanese families who played major roles in transforming Japan from a closed nation to the point where our Issei pioneers were able to immigrate to Hawaii and the mainland United States.

For 150 years, the graves of these brave young men and baby Takagi have rested peacefully in Willow Grove cemetery. For many years, Rev. and Mrs. Hozen Seki from the New York Buddhist Church would make annual Obon visits to the graves.

In 1985, 115 years after the



Members from Ekoji, New York, and Seabrook temples, along with members from the Princeton Japanese Association, pose for a photo with Rev. Brian Nagata, center, at the Willow Grove Obon service. (Courtesy of Rev. Brian Nagata)

passing of Taro Kusakabe, former Bishop Rev. Kenryu Tsuji — who with Rev. Dr. Yehan Numata helped to found the Ekoji Buddhist Temple in Fairfax Station, Virginia — started to conduct the annual Willow Grove Obon service.

As the final Obon observance in the BCA Eastern District, members from the New York, Seabrook and Ekoji temples gather with members of the Princeton Japanese Association to clean the gravestones and conduct an annual Obon service.

In addition to myself, the participants at the Willow Grove Obon were:

Keiko Anderson, Mariko Banas, Mike Banas, Richie Barase, David Brady, Ruth Funai, Noriko Kane-Goldsmith, Marc Grobman, Rev. Cheryl Ikemiya, Rev. Erick Ishii, Samantha Jacobus, Susan Jacques, Keiko James, Gertrude Kihara, Molly Kuramoto, Keiko Ohtaka, Nancy Okada, Hoshina

Seki, and Keiko Shiozaki.

Standing in front of these gravestones, I wonder what were the dreams, the visions and hopes of these young pioneers?

After 250 years of feudalism, Japan was on the verge of bursting into the world and these young men were determined to take the lead in building a new Japan.

Every American of Japanese ancestry, every BCA member owes so much to the vision and dreams of these seven pioneers who gave their lives for us. Do you think these pioneers could have ever envisioned a day when the Nembutsu would be heard from coast to coast in this vast nation?

Countless are those who we remember each Obon. All BCA temples and members deeply appreciate the Eastern District temples for gathering each year to honor the memory and legacy of these pioneers.

Temple Videos, Photos Sought for Music Video Project

By Miko Shudo
Oxnard Buddhist Temple

Bonbu Stories is a group of Asian American artists and musicians from various parts of California, consisting of Sydney Shiroyama, Miharu Okamura, Miko Shudo, Vicky Zhang, and Kendall Tani.

Earlier this year, the BCA Music Committee commissioned Bonbu Stories to write and choreograph an original song and dance for BCA's 125th Anniversary in 2024. This is a huge honor for each group member as the BCA is an extension of our family in multiple ways.

To celebrate this commemorative event, Bonbu Stories invites BCA temples to be a part of our "Lantern Song" music video.

"Lantern Song" is about honoring the memories of our ancestors through music, dance, and community. It has imagery of looking up at the lanterns at Obon, seeing our ancestors' names right above us as we dance in their memory with friends and family.

Please see the link on the flyer on this page for more information and kindly submit your videos and photos by Sept. 15. We'd be grateful if you join us in celebrating the 125th anniversary of BCA through our "Lantern Song" project.

The information on the flyer can also be accessed on the BCA Music Committee webpage: <https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/music>

OPEN CALL FOR OBON FOOTAGE!

Bonbu Stories is writing and choreographing a song for the Buddhist Churches of America's 125th anniversary!

We'd love to include your footage in our music video!

info and submissions here:
<https://tinyurl.com/BCABonbuMusicVid>

BCA Music Committee

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MUSIC

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know "Time for Dharma School" was one of the first gathas composed by Donna Sasaki along with "Golden Chain" and "We Are One"?

Sasaki desired a gatha that would welcome students to Dharma School each fall. The collaborative gatha video, which was recorded by vocalist Ellie Mizushima with flutist Annette Inouye and pianist Kemi Nakabayshi, has been added to the BCA Music YouTube playlist and is featured this month on the BCA Music webpage <https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/music>

BCA Buddhist Churches of America
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Heard by Us

Dharma as received by students under the guidance of Rev. Dr. Nobuo Haneda

What is the starting point of Buddhism? Nobuo Haneda returns to this question again and again. Within a tradition of interpreting Shinran Shonin (1173-1263) that began with Manshi Kiyozawa (1863-1903), Haneda's Dharma talks are sessions of "studying out loud." The spirit of studentship permeates Haneda's written and spoken words. He shares the gift of self-examination with those willing to listen to the uncompromising call to "Come to Wisdom!" found in the teaching of the nembutsu: *Namu Amida Butsu*. In this anthology, ten classmates who have benefited greatly from Dr. Haneda's studies express their gratitude.

BCA Bishop Rev. Harada Is Officially Confirmed by Gomonsu

Rev. Marvin Harada of the Buddhist Churches of America was officially confirmed as Bishop of the BCA on July 28.

The Shinju Shiki Ceremony was conducted by His Eminence Monshu Kojun Ohtani of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha. The solemn ceremony was held in the historic Shiro Shoin (White Chambers) of the Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan.

Bishop Harada joined newly elected Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, who also took part in the ceremony.

Bishop Harada's ceremony was scheduled in 2020 at the time of his election as Bishop of the BCA, but was postponed because of the pandemic.

Congratulations to Bishop Harada and Bishop Umitani. We look forward to working together in sharing the Nembutsu teaching with all people in our respective districts and throughout the world.

The BCA and Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH) bishops pose with others after they were officially confirmed on July 28 at the Hongwanji-ha in Kyoto, Japan. Shown, from left, are: Rev. Hideaki Saito, supervisor of the Hongwanji-ha's international department; Rev. Michael Endo of the BCA Office of the Bishop; HHMH Bishop Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani; BCA Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada; Gail Harada; and Rev. Rie Fujisawa, section manager for the international department. (Courtesy of Rev. Michael Endo)



During the trip to Japan for the official confirmation ceremony, BCA Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada, Gail Harada and Rev. Michael Endo of the BCA Office of the Bishop were able to spend time with various dignitaries. Shown in the above left photo, from left, are Rev. Harada, Gail Harada and Rev. Endo with former BCA Bishop Rev. Koshin Ogui and Mrs. Mayumi Ogui; above middle, the Haradas meet with Rev. Akio Miyaji and Mrs. Tamiko Miyaji. At above right, Akiko Rogers from Senshin Buddhist Temple is shown with Rev. Endo. Rogers is a BCA ministerial student studying at Chuo-Bukkyo Gakuin. (Courtesy of Rev. Marvin Harada)



Bishop's Message

Continued from Page 2

he noticed growing along the side of the road while walking. Only a person of "less me, more we" would notice such things. A person of "more me, less we" always feels, "Why is there so much traffic? What's the matter with these crazy drivers these days?" They would rarely notice the wild flowers growing

along the road, or the beauty of the stars at night.

Doesn't the world today need more of such a teaching, "Less me, more we?" What happens when a whole nation lives with a sense of the opposite, "More me, less we?" Doesn't it lead to wars and conflicts, strife and suffering, for all people? We don't realize that a life of "More me, less we," leads to not only the suffering of others, but to ourselves. This is why

Buddhism calls it "delusion," or "ignorance."

I had a wonderful trip to Japan, despite the heat and humidity. But this simple slogan was one precious thing that I brought back from Japan, more than the Japanese delicacies and sweets that I purchased. It is a wonderful Buddhist teaching that is easy to remember and to think about in our daily life. I hope that it leads to a life of "less me, more we," in myself.

Rev. Imada

Continued from Page 2

many small choices every day.

When we go to work, there is a possibility of getting into a traffic accident on the way. Even if we chose a route that avoided heavy traffic, there is still a chance that we could get hit by a falling rock. If we didn't eat anything, we could starve to death. But even if we ate everything, there is also a possibility of getting food poisoning. There are so many small choices in our daily lives and each choice has the potential to end our lives.

The silver ball represents a very simplistic version of the

choices we make and their consequences. This man is not the only one who spends his days facing death.

All humans are in the same situation. We never know when our lives will end. After realizing this truth, the man was no longer afraid to press the button. That was the moment he accepted the impermanence of his life. Finally, one day after this acceptance, he decided to go ahead and take a shower. He kept pressing the button over and over to get enough water to take his shower.

This story tells us our happiness depends on how we view life. We all have this "button." When the days go smoothly, we forget about our worries. And

because humans want to live forever, they think the "button" is broken. But the truth is that life is fleeting and will eventually end.


Those who live with the Nembutsu know that we are walking on the path to the Pure Land. Knowing this brightens our lives. Shinran Shonin understood that instead of thinking about "How we can get to the Pure Land," "Amida Buddha is always thinking about how to bring us to the Pure Land." I feel that Shinran Shonin also envisioned the Pure Land when he saw the sun setting in the west, so I would like to recite the Nembutsu in this Ohigan season. Namo Amida Butsu.



SAVE THE DATE
October 4-6, 2024
47th FBWA Conference
San Jose Doubletree Hotel

ICHI GO ICHI E
Each Precious Moment, A Precious Treasure

 Hosted by Coast District
Buddhist Women's League



SAVE THE DATE: OCTOBER 28, 2023
11:00 am to 1 pm

The Living The Dharma Committee of CBE will present on Zoom:

Part 3 - the final session in our series on
The Benefits of a Life of Gratitude:
Benefits of Shin Buddhism

BCA Calendar to Return in 2024

The BCA calendar will be making a return in 2024 and will highlight the 125th anniversary of the founding of the BCA.

A separate letter and order form for the calendar will be sent to all BCA temple ministers and presidents.

The BCA Calendar Committee is collecting photos from the temples and affiliated organizations, showing activities and events over the BCA's history.

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BCA Social Welfare Committee and You: Together, We Can Make a Difference in Lives Around the World



By **Darlene Bagshaw**
BCA Secretary

Dana is a Buddhist word with a universal feel. Have you been the recipient of a kind act?

On more than one occasion, I have been the fortunate recipient of a random act of Dana by a random person. A person far ahead of me in line at Starbucks decided to pay it forward and pay the tab for the next six cars in line. By the time I reached the window, this kind person was nowhere to be found, having continued their journey. A gift given by a stranger with no expectation of even a “thank you,” just a random act of kindness to make my day and wallet a little bit better.

Once you experience this kindness, your perspective of where you find or give Dana completely changes. Returning the gesture to others feels wonderful. No judgment, no strings, just giving to help bring a smile to someone’s day.

Even at temple, there is a constant stream of this type of simple Dana. Osiasen, envelopes, time dedicated to a temple effort or even that beautiful smile to a friend or newcomer. We all do this without a thought or expectation.

These acts of Dana are just the seeds that flourish when nurtured with compassion. Our Stockton Dharma School students and teachers took an idea seed from the Midwest Buddhist Temple Dharma School to create an event for the benefit of the local humane society shelter. Many sentient beings are abandoned with no one to love or take care of them. These animals end up in our animal shelters.

The Stockton Dharma School collected used towels, blankets and rugs for the Delta Humane Society and were elated to collect \$1,000. Through the BCA Social Welfare Committee Temple Matching Grant program, we were able to provide the shel-

ter with an additional \$1,000. The generosity of our Sangha members afforded these animals a shelter and time to be matched with their forever home.

Our BCA Social Welfare Committee is made up of our BCA Directors-at-large led by Celeste Sterrett and advised by Rev. Gregory Gibbs and Rev. Yuki Sugahara. This committee works diligently to ensure your donations support causes with the greatest need.

Honestly, I have to admit, I used to throw away my Social Welfare Committee donation request, thinking that I already pay dues and thus had donated. But, this ask is directly for the Social Welfare Committee, which receives no funding from the BCA budget. None of our temple dues assessment supports this effort.

With direct donations, the BCA Social Welfare Committee seeks out and supports those who have been deprived of life’s basic needs. Food, shelter, health care, mental health support, and natural disaster relief are just a few of the types of support we are able to offer. Your simple monetary donation is transformed into Dana with global implications.

Temple Matching Grants allow our Dharma schools, Buddhist Women’s Associations and other temple efforts to double funds raised up to \$3,000. Much-needed funds have been granted to our overflowing homeless shelters

Honestly, I have to admit, I used to throw away my Social Welfare Committee donation request, thinking that I already pay dues and thus had donated. But, this ask is directly for the Social Welfare Committee, which receives no funding from the BCA budget. Please join me in supporting the wonderful efforts of our BCA Social Welfare Committee. The committee’s ask letter will arrive next month and whether your donation is small or large, it is an act of Dana that will be felt all around the world.

and food pantries. Along with Committee Direct Grants of \$20,000 each to UNICEF and Global Giving, both the Las Vegas Buddhist Sangha and the Buddhist Church of Sacramento significantly contributed to efforts sending aid to war-torn Ukraine.

Temple Direct Grants can make a significant impact on a temple’s local community. These grants are provided at the request of a temple directly to a deserving nonprofit. Homelessness is an immense



Mountain View Buddhist Temple Dharma School teacher Carol Yonemura, above left, poses with Dharma School students. The students held a baked goods and nenju sale on Hanamatsuri to raise funds for Safeway and CVS gift cards for Half Moon Bay farmworkers affected by the tragic shooting at the mushroom farm and the California floods in the winter. The fundraiser received a Temple Matching Grant from the BCA’s Social Welfare Committee. (Courtesy of MVBT Dharma School teacher Debra Inenaga)



San Luis Obispo Buddhist Church members Tom and Greer Nishikawa are shown at the San Luis Obispo Food Bank with donated items for the food bank’s children’s summer breakfast program, which received a Temple General Grant from the BCA Social Welfare Committee. (Courtesy of Tom and Greer Nishikawa)

plight facing every city in America. Those who are fortunate enough to have a place to call home may not be able to place a decent meal on the table without the support of the local food bank. The Buddhist Temple of Salinas introduced the committee to Monterey County efforts to turn excess restaurant supplies into hot meals for those who otherwise would not eat.

Committee Direct Grants allow the committee to quickly respond to disasters around our

world. Your donations have helped a Bangladesh orphanage with repairs: a roof that doesn’t leak, windows that are not broken, and enough beds for each child. We were able to support innocent citizens who have been traumatized by war through support of UNICEF, World Central Kitchen and Direct Relief.

Most recently, the Social Welfare Committee has responded to the thousands left homeless by the wildfires on Maui. Whether it be a wild-

fire, tornado or hurricane, you are there selflessly giving to simply help someone in need.

Learning about those who are suffering weighs heavy on the heart as we hear about it on the daily news. I didn’t think I could make a difference.

How could I donate enough to have an impact? But I can make a difference through my donation to and efforts with the Social Welfare Committee. Please know there are wonderful people on this committee who take our monetary Dana and wisely address those deprived of life’s basic needs, those daily needs most of us take for granted.

The possibilities are limitless where we can practice Dana. But remember, practicing Dana is not a singular subject. It connects everything we have learned from our teachers: interdependence, gratitude, impermanence, realization and application of the Four Noble Truths which means realization and practice of the Eightfold Noble Path.

If we truly implement this in our daily lives, we are not just practicing Dana but all of the other six Paramita as well. We take one more step to truly being a practicing Jodo Shinshu Buddhist. It makes us humble, caring and compassionate, just like we recite in “Our Pledge,” — “just like the compassionate Buddha.”

Please join me in supporting the wonderful efforts of our BCA Social Welfare Committee. The committee’s ask letter will arrive next month and whether your donation is small or large, it is an act of Dana that will be felt all around the world.



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Skylar Lam of Florin Wins BCA Youth Lyric Writing Contest

Lam Donates Prize Money to Maui Relief; ‘Storms and Peace’ Pays Homage to Hawaii

By Darlene Bagshaw
BCA Secretary

In June, the BCA Music Committee, in conjunction with the Federation of Dharma Schools Teachers’ League, sponsored a lyric writing contest for BCA youth under the age of 18.

Several inspiring lyrics were submitted from aspiring Buddhist youth. The winner of this contest is Skylar Lam (he/they) of the Buddhist Church of Florin with “Storms and Peace.”

Kemi Nakabayashi and Donna Sasaki of the BCA Music Committee have arranged for Frances Wong, musician and community worker, to compose the song to bring Skylar’s lyrics to life.

Here are the words to “Storms and Peace”:

*In the swirling of the storm
Recite the Nembutsu
And become
My lantern in the darkness*

*Walking on the middle path
Recite the Nembutsu
And guide me
As I travel on this road*

*Stumbling along blindly
Recite the Nembutsu
And help me
Through every difficulty*

*During times of peace
and rest
Recite the Nembutsu
And show me
The joy of being alive*

This amazing lyricist is a 14-year-old entering McClatchy High School in Sacramento this fall. Skylar is inspired by music as he/they loves to write stories and poetry. Like many writers and lyricists, creativity can come at any moment. With this song, Skylar’s moment of inspiration occurred at 3 a.m.

Skylar, along with parents Henry Lam and Nadine



Skylar Lam, 14, of the Buddhist Church of Florin, is the winner of the BCA youth lyric writing contest for his lyrics “Storms and Peace.” Lam decided to donate the prize money to Maui relief. (Courtesy of Nadine Nouchi)

Nouchi, spends every year on the island of Maui, Hawaii. Nouchi’s family is rooted in the Kihei area of Maui as well as Oahu.

During the wildfires that devastated Lahaina, the family was in Kihei, vigilant of the fires engulfing various areas of Maui.

Upon learning of the extensive and heartbreaking

destruction of Lahaina, Skylar had a discussion with Nouchi about donating the monetary prize from the lyric contest to the Maui Wildfire Disaster Fund set up by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

Going one step further, Skylar contacted the BCA Music Committee to see if Wong could create the music with an island vibe, perhaps even in-

corporating the ukulele. This was done to honor those who lost loved ones, homes and history in the wildfire.

The enigmatic losses on Maui generated an entirely new significance to the words of “Storms and Peace,” with Skylar’s lyrics, “the swirling of the storm ... walking the middle path ... through every difficulty ... recite the Nembutsu.”

Skylar and parents felt the donation and dedication of the song is “pono” — the Hawaiian word meaning “to do what is universally right” — in light of the unfolding island tragedy.

Skylar has shown all of us the meaning of a life of gratitude. Through our interconnectedness, the impermanence of life and Amida’s compassion that grasps and never abandons us, Skylar and Skylar’s family have shown us a path to expressing our gratitude to all beings who have touched our lives. Thank you to Skylar and family for your generosity and most heartfelt compassion for others.

Rev. Higa

Continued from Page 1

livelihood, and property has been immense and the journey to recovery and healing will be long and difficult.

The first seven days marks the beginning of the 49-day period of mourning after the death of a loved one in Buddhist tradition. This time is traditionally marked by a series of services held every seven days culminating on the 49th. These 49 days are a spiritual journey of awakening to the reality of loss, but also to the realization that our loved ones have become one with timeless reality. In this most sacred journey, we come to realize we are not alone because we grieve together and are embraced by Amida Buddha’s wisdom and compassion.

In “Our Pledge,” Gomonsu Kojun Ohtani encourages us as fellow Nembutsu travelers to “... share a life of joy and sorrow with others. Just like the Buddha, whose caring heart always embraces us.” This is a time for us to embody Amida Buddha’s compassion by caring for our Sangha and all who are in distress. This is the living Nembutsu that is grounded in our everyday lives. I encourage everyone to support relief efforts on Maui in whatever way you can.

Shakyamuni Buddha teaches that “On the long journey of human life, faith is the best of companions; it is the best refreshment on the journey; and it is the greatest possession.” However, faith in Buddhism is not blind, but rather is a profound confidence in what we have learned and experienced. Living with faith as a constant companion, we are able to



The Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, center, and the temple Nokotsudo is at the right in the above left photo before the Maui wildfires in August. Above right is a photo taken by Clinton Fukushima, among the first responders to the Lahaina fire, which shows that the Nokotsudo is the only building still standing. Damage to the Nokotsudo has yet to be determined. (Photos courtesy of Alan Kubota/Landscapes Hawaii, Hoshina Seki, and John Mullins)

appreciate all our struggles and joys equally along this remarkable and unpredictable journey we call life.

Amida Butsu is a promise from Amida Buddha to embrace and never abandon. Namo Amida Butsu holds us in both our joys

Marvin Harada’s book “Discovering Buddhism in Everyday Life.” In it, he shares a lesson from his teacher, Rev.

big load on your shoulders, a big responsibility or task, and now you have the power to stand up on your own two feet and move forward in life. That to me is what Namuamidabutsu means.”

Rev. Harada goes on to say: “If we find the teachings of Buddhism and Jodo Shinshu to be of value to us in our lives, if we find that the Nembutsu has illuminated our hearts and minds, then we must do what we can to allow it to be shared and carried on by others. That is the power to stand up and to move forward. It is a power that comes from beyond our own ego self. It is a power that makes the load on our shoulders lighter than what it really is. It is a power that not only allows us to stand up on our own two feet, but somehow it feels as if it is pushing us up from behind.”

I reflect on this story often and it helps me to face the challenges of life with greater acceptance and perseverance.

The Nembutsu path goes beyond hope and fear. It is a

In “Our Pledge,” Gomonsu Kojun Ohtani encourages us as fellow Nembutsu travelers to “... share a life of joy and sorrow with others. Just like the Buddha, whose caring heart always embraces us.” This is a time for us to embody Amida Buddha’s compassion by caring for our Sangha and all who are in distress I encourage everyone to support relief efforts on Maui in whatever way you can.

In the Shin Buddhist tradition, we say the Nembutsu or name of Amida Buddha in gratitude for this profound awakening to true and real life. We come to realize that Namo Amida Butsu is not a mindless phrase, but a grand affirmation of life in which we discover that each moment of our lives contains infinite significance and meaning. It is with this deep appreciation we gain new strength and courage to live each moment of our lives with awe and wonder.

The Buddha’s teaching helps us to understand and to manage life with greater kindness, compassion, and equanimity. Namo

and our sorrows and transforms our ignorance into wisdom, our greed into generosity, and our anger into love. The Nembutsu can help us meet life’s challenges with greater confidence and peace of mind.

Namo Amida Butsu is boundless love and compassion, which is ever-present in our lives. We are always embraced and sustained by its light. The Nembutsu is our comfort when we are sad and is our strength when we need courage, it is truly the foundation of our lives.

One of my favorite stories about the power of Nembutsu comes from Bishop Rev.

Yukei Ashikaga, who in turn, learned it from his teacher Yasuda Sensei, who once said, “Many people think that the Nembutsu, Namuamidabutsu, means something like this — that you take a big load off of your shoulders, like a big backpack, and you sit down and you let out a big sigh of relief. That’s what people think Namuamidabutsu means, that you relax and feel relieved, with a burden lifted from your shoulders.

“But I don’t think that is what Namuamidabutsu means. I think Namuamidabutsu means the opposite — that instead, you put a

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50+ Years in the Dance Circle: Adrienne Reiko Iwanaga of San Jose

Editor's note: "50+ Years in the Dance Circle" will pay tribute to the extraordinary dance instructors who taught Bon Odori at BCA temples for 50 or more years. This series continues with a tribute to Adrienne Reiko Iwanaga.

By Dr. Wynn Kiyama
Oregon Buddhist Temple

Adrienne Reiko Iwanaga studied with teachers from the Bando and Hanayagi Schools of Dance, choreographed numerous dances, and fostered artistic collaborations and a spirit of cooperation at the largest Obon festival in North America.

Joe Yoshiharu Akahoshi and Grace Fumi Noyoshi-Tatsuda were married in 1937 and their first child, Adrienne Reiko Akahoshi, was born in 1938 in San Jose, California. In 1942, the Akahoshi family was incarcerated at the Amache (Granada) concentration camp in Colorado. While there, the young Reiko studied Japanese classical dance with Miharu Bando (Kanya Sanjo V).

After the war, the family moved to Denver and Reiko continued her dance studies with Yukino Okubo Harada. Two years later, they returned to San Jose where Reiko attended school, took piano lessons, and studied dance with Jutei Hanayagi in the 1950s and Michiya

Hanayagi in the 1960s.

In 1954, Reiko attended a YBA dance and met Gordon Mutsumi "Muts" Iwanaga, son of Rev. Yoshio Iwanaga, the pioneering minister who introduced Bon Odori to countless Japanese American communities on the West Coast.

Reiko and Muts were married in 1963 and moved to the Japanese city of Misawa in Aomori Prefecture for three years. Reiko studied with Hanayagi teachers in Misawa and Tokyo, and received her professional dance name, Reimichi Hanayagi, in 1965. After returning from Japan, the couple attended graduate school at Columbia University in New York City and moved back to San Jose in 1971. Through these busy years, Reiko and Muts had four children — Maya, Ryan, Courtney, and Ashley.

Reiko was an assistant teacher on the yagura at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin between 1953 and 1997 with some breaks, and was mentored in the late 1980s by Dansen Hanayagi from Okayama, Japan. She became the lead Bon Odori instructor in 1998 and worked frequently with the San Jose Chidori Band, choreographing "Chidori Band Ondo," "Hyakunen Ondo," "Matsuri," and "San Jose Ondo."

With the approval of the Chidori Band, Reiko invited San Jose Taiko to perform PJ Hira-



Adrienne Reiko Iwanaga retired this year as the lead Bon Odori instructor at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin's Obon festival, the largest in terms of dancers in North America. (Courtesy of Adrienne Reiko Iwanaga)

bayashi's "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" as a Bon Odori at the Obon Festival in 2004. She and San Jose Taiko collaborated on Matt Ogawa's

"San Jose Bayashi" in 2002, and a new arrangement of Yumi Hojo's gatha, "Obon, Obon, It's Festival Day," in 2009.

Reiko wanted everyone to feel comfortable dancing, so she choreographed using a limited number of intuitive movements and steps. The San Jose dance circle steadily grew, and by the early 2010s, the temple regularly counted over 2,000 dancers throughout the weekend, making it the largest Obon festival, in terms of number of dancers, in North America.

In addition to teaching, Reiko sat on the Board of Directors of various artistic and community organizations, served as the Executive Director of CATS (Contemporary Asian Theater Scene), founded a successful event planning company, and received numerous awards and commendations.

While Reiko will retire as lead Bon Odori instructor after this year's Obon festival, you'll still find her in the dance circle!

The "50+ Years" series will resume next spring. To view a full list of 50+ teachers, follow the link: www.bit.ly/fiftyplusears. If you have an additional dance instructor for the BCA Music Committee to consider, please email Wynn at wynnkiyama@gmail.com.

Wynn Kiyama teaches at Portland State University and is a member of the Oregon Buddhist Temple and the BCA Music Committee. He is currently working on a history of Bon Odori in the continental United States.

Why Is Buddhism Growing in America?

Editor's note: This is the fourth and final installment in a series of articles on the essay, "The Land of Many Dharmas: Buddhist Diversity in America," which appeared in the summer 2021 issue of "Tricycle: the Buddhist Review." It is being reprinted with the permission of Rev. Dr. Kenneth Tanaka.

By Rev. Dr. Kenneth K. Tanaka
Professor Emeritus
Musashino University, Tokyo

We might understand the rapid growth of American Buddhism by borrowing the concept of supply and demand from economics.

"Demand" refers to those factors that "pulled" or "welcomed" Buddhism. Several stand out: First, Americans value religion to a much greater degree than do people in most other developed countries. Religion tends to be seen as a "good thing," providing a spiritual and ethical foundation for living. This is especially apparent in the raising of children. Also, Americans tend to hold pastors, priests, rabbis, and other religious professionals in high regard. Religious leaders often serve as leaders in the general community beyond their particular churches, mosques, temples,



(Graphic courtesy of Peter Arcie)

or synagogues. The value we place on religion is so much a part of American society that we often take it for granted and scarcely notice it.

A second "demand" factor is societal openness. In the 1960s, American society's attitude began to shift toward greater openness toward religions other than Protestantism. For example, when John F. Kennedy campaigned for president in 1960, suspicion about his being Catholic was the cause of significant opposition. But in 2020, President Joe Biden's Catholicism was

FYI

"Jewels: An Introduction to American Buddhism for Youth, Scouts, and the Young at Heart (With a Bit of Humor)" by Rev. Dr. Kenneth Tanaka is available from BDK America for free download at <https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/jewels-introduction-buddhism-youth-scouts-and-young-heart>. Also, free print copies are available for temples and institutions upon request at: webmaster@bdkamerica.org or 925-388-0067.

most often seen as a strength because it signaled that he is a person of sincere religious conviction, regardless of sect.

Changes in immigration laws in 1965 further fostered religious diversity, and thus openness, because of the arrival of more people from non-Western countries, including Buddhist immigrants

from Asia.

Within this atmosphere of openness, Buddhism has come to be seen less as a weird "Oriental" cult, as it was when I was growing up. In fact, as the number of people interested in spiritual matters increased, it was often thought, however naively, that "spiritual Asia" was superior to the "material-

istic West." Many such people were attracted to Buddhism because they found in it a response to the spiritual needs of an industrialized culture.

The third factor follows on this, and it has to do with change in the very nature of religion in America. Surveys have shown that Americans have in increasing numbers become more attracted to spirituality than to what is often called "organized religion," meaning religion as centered on membership in institutions such as synagogues, temples, and mosques. The phrase "spiritual but not religious" is often used to describe such people.

Turning to the supply side of Buddhism, we can identify certain qualities that have appealed to the spiritual and religious needs of Americans. In particular, Buddhism fits in with the trend of valuing a spirituality that stresses personal experience. That is, you could say, Buddhist teachings show us that we have been carrying around a precious jewel all along.

One such quality that Buddhism offers is its attitude toward the suffering we all deal with in facing life's difficulties. Buddhism sees difficulties such as sickness,

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300 Turn Out to Celebrate Cortez Buddhist Church's Centennial

By Jon Kawamoto
Wheel of Dharma Editor

A festive crowd of about 300 people turned out amid triple-digit temperatures on July 1 to celebrate the centennial of the Cortez Buddhist Church, a satellite BCA church in Turlock, California.

The centennial event was combined with the annual Obon festival.

“From the standpoint of one of the few residents left of the Cortez Nikkei community, I would have to say that our event was a testament to all who come together and recognize what community means — to put effort into a common goal regardless of the temperature or how far one had to travel,” said Daniel Kubo, a member of the Cortez Howakai who helped organize the centennial celebration and Obon. “It is with great gratitude for all the people who participated in the various aspects of this Obon Odori — “ichigo ichie,” (once in a lifetime) “okagesame” (thank you)!”

In 2019, the Cortez Buddhist Church celebrated the



Daniel Kubo, a member of the Cortez Howakai, holds a proclamation honoring the centennial of the Cortez Buddhist Church with Buddhist Church of Stockton Resident Minister Rev. Candice Shibata at the July 1 festivities. (Photos courtesy of Mark Shinenaga)

100-year anniversary of the founding of the Cortez Colony by Kyutaro Abiko on April 13. The event was held on the grounds of the Cortez Hall and Cortez Buddhist Church.

Professor Valerie Matsumoto of UCLA Asian American Studies Department delivered the main address and the attendants included descendants of Kyutaro Abiko as well as many former residents of Cortez. There were about 350 to 400 people who gathered that day.

In 2019, the centennial Obon Odori was held on July 6 and featured a live performance of “Ei Ja Nai Ka,” and attracted about 350 people.

The Cortez Buddhist Church holds monthly Dharma services, which are conducted by the Buddhist Church of Stockton's Resident Minister Rev. Candice Shibata.

Since the pandemic, most of the services are held via Zoom. Special services such as Hanamatsuri in April, New Year's Day, and Post Harvest



A crowd, shown above, dances at the Obon at the Cortez Buddhist Church. Above, lanterns mark the 100th anniversary of the Cortez church.

in November are now held in person.

Rev. Dr. Tanaka

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loss, disappointment, and death as a natural part of life and not something to try to deny. Suffering is something that needs to be understood, accepted, and turned into a springboard for living a fuller and more meaningful life.

Second, Buddhism seeks to speak to the unique experience of each individual. (After all,

no two jewels are the same.) Because of this, it can be a valuable path to self-understanding. Many Americans like to feel that they are free to question religious teachings and to make up their own minds about them, and Buddhism not only allows for this but even encourages it.

This is the reason for the popularity of the Kalama Sutta, in which the

Buddha says:

Don't go by reports, by leg-

ends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, This contemplative is our teacher. When you know for yourselves that, "These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when adopted and carried out, lead to welfare and to happiness" — then you should enter and remain in them.

— *Anguttara Nikaya 3.66, trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu*

Probably the No. 1 reason for the growth of American Buddhism is found in the popularity of meditation. This third aspect offered by Buddhism includes practices that many find easy to learn, mentally therapeutic, and spiritually empowering and liberating. Sitting meditation as taught in the Zen, Theravada, and Tibetan schools has been especially attractive to converts.

The American sociologist of religion Wade Clark Roof describes spirituality as “personal experience tailored to the individual's own quests.” Spirituality, he writes, is associated with five key terms: connectedness, unity, peace, harmony, and centeredness. Buddhism as presented in America attracts people looking to experience these qualities in their lives. In addressing the spiritual needs of so many, Buddhism has become a demographically diverse and multifaceted part of the American religious landscape. To me, this is very exciting.

Like the jewels in Indra's net, each community, each lineage shines a light on the rest, each helping and being helped by the others to glow brighter.

Maui Aid

Continued from Page 1

a part of Jodo Shinshu Buddhist organizations based at the Hongwanji-ha in Kyoto, Japan.

“We watched with great sadness and horror the loss of life and destruction of homes and communities in Maui because of the devastating wildfires,” said BCA Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada. “Our thoughts go to all there who have lost loved ones, homes, businesses, temples and churches, and their community.

“In the face of such devastation, we will all do what we can do, whether it is to contribute to the disaster relief, or to share our support, or for those in Maui, to help them begin to rebuild, one step at a time, doing what they can do.”

The wildfires in Maui, which struck on Aug. 8, have led to at least 115 deaths as of Aug. 28, making it the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century. Nearly 400 people are still reported missing.

The winds from Hurricane Dora that fueled the wildfires destroyed or damaged nearly 3,000 structures in West Maui, including the HHMH's Lahaina Hongwanji Mission.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has estimated the destruction from the Maui wildfires will cost about \$6 billion.

According to a letter dated Aug. 10 from the HHMH, Lahaina Hongwanji Mission's temple, classroom building, and minister's residence “were completely destroyed in the horrific fires that devastated historic Lahaina town. Many temple members were forced to evacuate, and many homes were burnt to the ground.”

The Lahaina Hongwanji Mission's Nokotsudo building was still standing after the wildfires, but it's too early to tell if there was any damage to the building, according to HHMH President Warren Tamamoto.

The HHMA listed the following ways that people can donate: online at www.hongwanjihawaii.com by clicking on the “Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief” button under the “Donate” tab; a GoFundMe account at the following link: <https://gofund.me/ff77a520>.

Check and cash donations can be sent to the HHMH. Make the check payable to HHMH and in the memo line designate “Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief” to ensure proper credit.

The address is: Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, 1727 Pali Highway, Honolulu, HI 96813.

The American Buddhist Study Center in New York has set up a GoFund me page for the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission Temple at: <https://gofund.me/bf668ff1>



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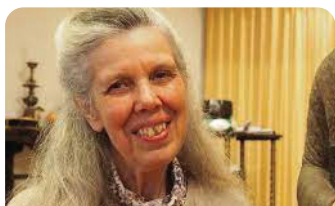
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Yoshiko Miwa Celebrates 109th Birthday at GBC

Gardena Member Was in the Guadalupe Children's Center in the Early 1900s Established by Rev. and Mrs. Matsuura

By Gary Kohatsu
Rafu Shimpo

The day began like any other day. The spry Nisei grandmother piled into the family car and the group drove from her Torrance home to the Gardena Buddhist Church for a morning of socializing and activities. But this was no ordinary day.

Yoshiko Miwa celebrated her 109th birthday on Feb. 28 at the GBC.

Miwa tried to downplay the occasion. She smiled politely, acknowledged all the well-wishers in the church's social hall and accepted leis of red ruffles, and candies and ribbons.

"Yoshi," as she is affectionately known to loved ones, waved off the media that wanted to snap her photo: "Please, no pictures," she said kindly.

A family member apologized with a chuckle.

"My mom has always been a private and quiet individual," said GBC President and youngest son, Alan Miwa, 71, of Torrance. "She doesn't like to be the center of attention. This probably has a lot to do with her Japanese heritage."

Yoshi Miwa, the matriarch of a family that includes three sons, 10 grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, and a great-great-grandchild was not getting off so easily at this celebration.

She sat in front of her Rummikub game tiles as GBC Resident Minister Rev. John Iwohara and his predecessor, BCA Minister Emeritus Rev. Nobuo Miyaji, honored Miwa.

The Gardena Police Department, led by Chief Michael Saffell and Capt. Vince Osorio, showered Miwa with a bundle of department gifts, including a small police teddy bear and a certificate of recognition.

Field Deputy Ara An, from Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly Mitchell's 2nd District office, presented her with a scroll of amazing achievement. The scroll featured artwork of vibrant cherry blossoms and was signed by the county's five supervisors.

Former Gardena City Councilman and GBC member Ron Ikejiri arranged for



Gardena Buddhist Church President Alan Miwa is shown with his mother, Yoshiko Miwa, in the above photo. Miwa celebrated her 109th birthday at the GBC earlier this year. (Courtesy of Gary Kohatsu/Rafu Shimpo)

Miwa's county recognition.

"(Longtime) Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, 2nd District, and Mrs. Miwa's family were very close to each other, particularly because Kenny Hahn in the 1950s and 1960s recognized and supported the Gardena Valley Japanese Gardeners Association," he said.

Ikejiri has known Miwa for more than half a decade, through her association with his mother.

"Mrs. Miwa and my mother enjoyed flower arrangement, ikebana," he said. "Unfortunately, my mother died when she was 53 years old and when Mrs. Miwa was 106, I chatted with her and told her, 'You lived twice as long as my mother,'" Ikejiri said. "Mrs. Miwa said, 'Oh, I really miss your mom. We had such a good time, especially doing flower arrangement together.'"

Ikejiri, who serves on the 2nd Supervisorial District Oversight Board, said he is now reaching out to Miwa's favorite sports team.

"I am working on getting the Los Angeles Dodgers to recognize their most oldest fan," Ikejiri said.

Yoshiko Tanaka was born



on Feb. 28, 1914, in Guadalupe, California. She was the fifth of seven children. Her father, Umekichi Tanaka, was a vegetable farmer and the first president of the Guadalupe Buddhist Church. Her mother, Masu Ohama, was a picture bride from Japan.

Tragedy struck the Tanaka family during the Spanish flu epidemic, which lasted from 1918 to 1920. Masu Tanaka gave birth prematurely to a boy, and both she and the infant son died on Jan. 26, 1919, from complications of the flu, according to the Santa Maria Times.

Yoshi was only 4 when her mother died. Her father was unable to take care of his children and placed four daughters in the care of Rev. Issei Matsuura and his wife, Mrs. Shinobu Matsuura. The

federal Justice Department internment camp in Bismarck, North Dakota, which housed U.S. citizens of Japanese and German descent.

On May 6, 1942, Yoshi and her siblings were "picked up, given a family number and taken to the Santa Fe Railway Station," Alan Miwa said. "They were then transported by train to Parker, Arizona. From there, they were taken by bus to (an internment camp in) Poston, Arizona — Block 13, Building 12, Apt D."

Her father would later rejoin his family in Poston during World War II.

Toward the latter part of World War II, Henry Miwa served as an interpreter with the U.S. Office of Strategic Services.

Yoshi, her family, and relatives were released from camp in September 1945. Many settled in Hawthorne, California, where the weather was favorable and the opportunities abundant, Alan Miwa said.

Facing post-WWII racism, and unable to find work, the Miwas pooled their resources with family members and a friend to start the Prairie Nursery. The business flourished, and the Miwas sold the nursery in 1963.

At age 45, Yoshi enrolled in the California Vocational Nursing School in Los Angeles. After receiving her vocational nursing license, she got a job at the Veterans Administration Hospital in West Los Angeles.

She left the VA in 1968 and took a position at Memorial Hospital of Gardena, from which she retired in 1984.

Besides her vast work history and education accomplishments, Yoshi has a resume of personal achievements, including still driving at age 100; speaking three languages (English, Spanish and Japanese); taking daily four-mile walks early in her retirement; and after taking furniture refinishing and reupholstery classes, she refinished a cabinet and reupholstered four vinyl chairs and an overstuffed chair, according to Alan Miwa.

This article includes information from a previous Wheel of Dharma article, "Guadalupe's Onaijin Embodies Storied Past," that appeared in the August 2021 issue.

Rev. Higa

Continued from Page 7

spiritual journey of stepping into the unknown, just as we are, continually moving forward with clear-eyed optimism and resolve. It is a path where no experience is ever wasted because life is the ultimate teacher which opens our heart to the complex truths of the human experience and the

reality of Amida's compassionate embrace.

My wise seminary instructor, Rev. Dr. Seigen Yamaoka, once said, "To come out of darkness, we must open our eyes to the light." In times of tragedy when there are no words, there is still the Nembutsu. Namu Amida Butsu is truly a light for us in dark places when all other lights go out. This is Amida's embrace which comforts and

heals. His simple yet profound words remind me that we can cultivate realistic hope in times of difficulty and how we can meet our challenges with determination and grace.

This is the inconceivable working of Amida Buddha's Vow manifesting in our lives. In the "Shōshinge" ("Hymn of True Entrusting"), Shinran Shōnin writes, "But though the light of the sun is veiled by clouds and mists, beneath

the clouds and mists there is brightness, not dark." Here, Shinran reminds us that there is light even in our darkest moments and that we have the ability to persevere because we are embraced and sustained by Amida's compassion.

This radical shift in perspective is the promise of the Dharma as it offers us hope for transformation and change. When we open our hearts to Amida's working,

we can be led out of darkness and into light. As we have seen in the aftermath of the wildfires, the outpouring of aloha for the people of Maui and the simple acts of human kindness reminds us there is indeed light in the darkness of tragedy.

May we always take comfort in Amida's compassionate embrace and be guided by the Dharma in these challenging times. Namu Amida Butsu.

今月の法話

「笑いもん」

洗心仏教会 開教使 古本 竜太



Rev. Ryuta Furumoto

洗心仏教会には瓦ぶきの門があります。それはお寺の40周年の記念事業として約30年前に建てられたものです。2026年にお寺の75周年を迎えるので、そろそろ門をリファバービッシュして綺麗にしようという事になり、せっかくなので、西本願寺の唐門、浅草の雷門、沖繩の守礼門などのように何か名前をつけよう、というアイデアが出ました。

いろいろ考えた結果、「笑い門」という名前にしようとなったのですが、その理由の一つが、昨年、お寺に笑っている邪鬼の顔の彫刻が寄付されたことです。その笑っている邪鬼を門に取り付けよう、ということになったのです。

邪鬼とは仏教でいう悪霊、鬼、悪魔のことで、いろいろなお寺でその像を見ることが出来ます。邪鬼は妄念、悪疑心、仏法をそしめることの象徴ともされていて、これらは涅槃に至り、悟りを開くことを妨げるので、そういった望ましくない心や思考を制御する必要があります。奈良の東大寺の四天王像に踏みつけられている邪鬼像はそのことを象徴的に表している例です。

けれども、邪鬼像が寺院や仏法のサポーターとなっている例もあります。そういった像はお寺の建造物の実用的な装飾品として建物の梁の下や土台に置かれています。私たちの本山である京都の西本願寺でも、そのような邪鬼像を見ることが出来ます。御影堂の前に雨水を受ける石の桶があり、その桶を本体の小さな邪鬼の石像が支えています。それは阿弥陀様のご本願の心をいただいた邪鬼が回心してお寺のサポーターとなっている、というように解釈できます。

洗心寺の門の邪鬼は浄土真宗の教えを理解するためのサポーターの意味合いで取り付けられます。それは、私たち

が煩惱にまみれた凡夫で、仏教でいう愚か者なので、邪鬼に笑われている、笑い者(わらいもん)だと、思い起こさせてくれます。

凡夫または愚者とは貪欲や怒りなど自己への執着からくる煩惱(ぼんのう)を持つ人のことです。ほとんどの人は自分がこの世で最も可愛い、という我執があるため、煩惱をパーフェクトに持ち合わせています。親鸞聖人はそれを「煩惱具足の凡夫」と呼びます。

また聖人は「一念多念文意」の中で、「凡夫」というのは、わたしどもの身には無明煩惱が満ちみちており、欲望も多く、怒りや腹立ちやそねみやねたみの心ばかりが絶え間なく起り、まさに命が終ろうとするそのときまで、止まることもなく、消えることもなく、絶えることもないと、水火二河の譬えに示されている通りである。(現代語訳)と言われ、また、「凡夫」とは、すなわちわたしどものことである。わたしども凡夫は本願のはたらきを信じていることを根本としなさいというのである。(現代語訳)と書かれています。

私たちはなかなか自分が愚か者だと思えないのですが、邪鬼の笑い顔は、私が凡夫で、笑いもん、であることを思い出させてくれます。また、私たちが凡夫であるからこそ、阿弥陀如来が私たちが浄土に生まれ、涅槃に至るための本願を建ててくださったのだと思ひ起こさせ、私たちに感謝の念仏をと念えるよう促してくれまます。自分の愚かさを知り、反省することができるようになるのは、阿弥陀如来の本願のはたらきをいただいているということなのです。

洗心仏教会の「笑い門」は、自分の愚かさや笑われる人という意味の「笑い者(もん)」です。そういう笑い者こそが阿弥陀如来の本願の救いの目当てであると聞かせていただき、お念仏をにこやかにとなえるようになると思います。

南無阿弥陀仏



2023ノースウエスト甲子園

西北部教区の夏の恒例行事、僧侶と門信徒の混成チームによるソフトボール大会「ノースウエスト甲子園」がさわやかな青空の中、レントン市で8月12日に行われ、選手と応援団を合わせて約100名が集った。以下はシアトル別院院番 楠開教使によるレポート。

2017年に再開したノースウエスト甲子園(ソフトボール大会)も、今年で第5回大会を迎えることとなった。今年は、昨年優勝し、今年も若手の補強に力を入れたシアトル、入念なミーティングを連日行い覇権奪還を狙うタコマ、初参戦で、ヤサキ先生の姉妹を中心にチームを整え勢いに乗るホワイトリバーの3チームが参戦した。



North West Koshien

勝利した。第三戦は、シアトル対ホワイトリバー。一位通過を狙うホワイトリバーと負ければ敗退の決まるシアトルの戦いは、シアトルの猛打が爆発し、16対5で勝利した。リーグ戦の結果、3チームが1勝1敗のタイとなったため、順位は得失点差でつけられ、決勝戦は、シアトル対タコマという昨年と同じ顔合わせとなった。

ここでハプニングが発生した。シアトルの楠開教使のスパイクの底がはがれ決勝戦は、運動靴で試合に臨むことになった。試合前、タコマは、純白のユニホームを身にまとった小山忠雄開教使を中心にエンジンを組み気合を注入する。

決勝戦は、初回から点を取り合う打撃戦となった。4回表にタコマが一点を取り、7対7の同点に追いつくも、その裏シアトルが逆襲し、再び一点リード。そのまま勢いに乗り、点差を広げたいところであったが、楠開教使打席ですりりと滑りピッチャーごろ、スリーアウトチェンジ。シアトルの勢いが止まってしまふ。そこが勝負の分かれ目になったのだろうか、最終回、5回表、タコマは猛攻を見せ6点を取り、逆転に成功。その裏、シアトルはあえなく3者凡退でゲームセット。金色に輝く優勝トロフィーは、タコマの手に渡った。

タコマの優勝で幕を閉じた今大会であったが、振り返ってみるとリーグ戦は、3チームが1勝1敗で並ぶという混戦だった。三カ寺が覇権を争うこの大会は、まさに中国の三国志にも似た三つ巴の様相を呈している。タコマの終身名誉監督、湯川引退開教使は、「3つのお寺が集まって、楽しくできたからよかったですよ。」と総括してくださいました。この熱き戦いは、来年ホワイトリバーがホストとして開催されることが決定し、選手、応援団一同は次回大会での再会を誓い合った。合掌



North West Koshien

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総長メッセージ

Less me, More we

米国仏教団 総長 原田 マービン



Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada

7月末に京都の本願寺で行われた親授式に出席しました。これはご門主より北米開教区の総長に任命される式です。3年前にこの式を受式するために延期されていたのです。数ヶ月前、ハワイ開教区の総長に海谷聡之師が選出されたので、私と一緒に式を受けることになりました。

式はとても厳かで素晴らしいものでした。また、京都に滞在中は本願寺や龍谷大学の要人の方々の会食や会合にも出席しました。龍谷大学の学長にもお会いし、大学の施設を見学させていただきました。

私はキャンパス内のいくつかの看板にとても感銘を受けました。大学のスローガンなのでしょうか、キャンパスのあちろちらに様々な短いフレーズがあり、そのひとつが「Less me, more we」で、私はこれをとても仏教的で美しいフレーズだと思いました。「私を減らして、私たちを増やす。」とてもシンプルですが、仏教の教えがとてもよく言い表されています。

現代の私たちの生活はこの言葉とは正反対で、「More me, less we」です。「自分、自分、自分」と主張し、「自己強化、自己宣伝、自己満足」が良しとされ、「私たち」でなくて、もっと「私」に重きがおかれています。書店に行けば、「自己啓発本」にあふれています。しかし、龍谷大学には、「Less me, more we」と書かれています。

私たちの多くは

幸福への道は欲しいものを手に入れることで、すべてを自分の思い通りにすることだと考えています。しかし仏教は、その考えは妄想であり、間違った人生観であると教えています。なぜなら、エゴの自己は決して満足することがなく、完全に満たされることのないからです。お金であ



れ、車であれ、家であれ、地位であれ、私たちは常に私たちが今持っている物以上の物を求めます。だからこそ「More me, less we」という考え方は決して満足できず、苦しみや苦悩に満ちた人生になってしまうのです。

その反対の考えである「Less me, more we」は、充実感や内面的で永続的な幸福感をもたらす、さらには感謝の気持ちをもてるようになります。感謝する人には、あれもこれも必要ありません。感謝する人は、自分が持っているものに感謝し、時には自分はその持っているものではないと、謙虚にささるのです。そのような人にとつては、人生そのものがあるがたいギフトだとも思えるのです。

「Less me, more we」の「We」は、人間だけではなく、私たちを取り巻くすべての生命のことで、植物や動物、大地や空気、惑星や星々をも含んでいます。

日系アメリカ人の仏教指導者、久保瀬暁明師の俳句の中に、散歩中に道端に咲いていた素朴な花について詠んだものがありますが、このようなことに気づくことがで

きるのは、「Less me, more we」の人だけだろうと思えます。「More me, less we」の人は渋滞や他のドライバに腹をたてるのが多く、道路沿いに咲いている野の花や、夜の星の美しさに気づくことはほとんどないでしょう。

今の世界には、「Less me, more we」という考え方が必要だと思います。国民全体が、「More me, less we」という思いで生きていたらどうなるでしょう？それが戦争や紛争、争いや苦しみを引き起こしているのではないのでしょうか？私たちは、「More me, less we」の生き方が、他人の苦しみだけでなく、自分自身の苦しみにもつながることに気づいていません。ですから、仏教がそのような考えを「妄想」または「無智」と呼ぶのです。

日本はとても蒸し暑かったですが、有意義な旅となりました。日本のお菓子など美味しいお土産を持って帰りましたが、日々の生活の中で思い出しやすく、考えやすいこのシンプルなスローガンは、飛び抜けて素晴らしいお土産となりました。私自身、「Less me, more we」の生活をできるようにしていきたいと思っています。

ハワイ・マウイ島山火事に関する声明

ハワイ州マウイ島で発生した大規模な山火事により、人命が失われ、家屋や地域社会が破壊されていく様を見、私たちはたいへん悲しみました。私たちの思いは、愛する人、家、会社、寺院、教会、そしてコミュニティを失った現地のすべての人々と共にあります。この山火事での被害は皆にとつて大きな損失です。

私は仏教のジャーナリストとして、タカ物語のお話を思い出しました。ある時、大きな山火事があり、森の動物たちはみんな火事から逃げてい



Lahaina Hongwanji Photo taken by Alan Kubota

たのですが、一羽の小鳥だけは湖に飛び込み、翼を水に浸し、山火事の上空を飛んで小さな水滴を落として消火にあたつたのです。小鳥は何度も行ったり来たりして火を消そうとしていましたが、他の動物たちは小鳥に向かって「何をやってるんだ。そんなやり方で火が消せるわけがないじゃないか！」と叫びました。ところが、小鳥は他の動物たちに「火を止めることはできないかもしれない。でも、これが私にできるすべてなのです」と叫び返して消火を続けたというお話です。今回のマウイ島の山火事での壊滅的な被害に対して、災害救援への寄付や、励ましを分かち合うことなど、一歩ずつ、自分たちでできることをしながら再建の手助けをしていきましょう。

米国仏教団総長、原田マービン 合掌

マウイ島での山火事による災害の復興支援にBCAのソーシャルウェルフェアの基金と、各寺院や僧侶と門信徒からの寄付を合わせて、総額約10万ドルをハワイ開教団に送ることができました。火事で全焼したラハイナ本願寺の開教使とご家族のための募金も行なっていますので、寄付をされたい方は、皆様のお寺の開教使かBCA本部にご連絡ください。

人事

スポケン仏教会の開教使アシスタントをしていた、オペル・メリッサ師が2023年6月1日よりサンフランシスコ仏教会のフルタイム教師ミニスターとして駐在する。オレゴン仏教会の菅原祐軌開教使が2023年7月1日よりサクラメント別院に異動、輪番として駐在する。

ダイヤルザダルマで日本語法話

電話でいつでも法話を聞くことができる「ダイヤルザダルマ」が好評を得ている。(800) 817-7918に電話すると、原田総長の声で音声ガイドが始まる。英語の法話を聞きたい人は1を、日本語は2、スペイン語は3を押すと、それぞれの言語で約5分間の法話を聴聞できる。英語は原田総長のメッセージ、日本語は日本語スピーカーの開教使によるメッセージ、スペイン語は英語のメッセージをスペイン語に訳したものになっている。法話は毎週水曜日午後1時に更新される予定。