

# WHEEL OF DHARMA

Official Publication of the Buddhist Churches of America

1710 Octavia Street, San Francisco, CA 94109

VOLUME 37 • ISSUE 5

MAY 2015

## To the People of Nepal

The following "Buddhist prayer" written by Rev. David Ryo Matsumoto (Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley, California) was offered at a gathering of Buddhist monks, nuns, ministers and scholars at the Harvard Divinity School on April 25, 2015.

Placing our palms together, we reflect upon the horrible tragedy brought by the earthquakes in Nepal.

May we open our hearts and minds to the death and suffering of so many beings—fellow humans, animals and other forms of life.

May we open our eyes to seek to understand the extent of their plight.

May we open our ears to hear their cries of fear and pain.

May we open our hands to offer our actions, in whatever way they may be of help.

We once again call upon all of the enlightened ones throughout the ten directions to guide us in our responses now and in the days to come.

We invoke the Name and virtues of the Tathagata Amitabha, receiving once again the boundless wisdom and compassion of the Buddha of infinite light and life.

We ask that our hearts and minds, our hands and lives may be able to manifest that wisdom and compassion in care, support and service to those suffering and in pain in Nepal, wishing

That their suffering will come to an end; That their lives, families, homes and communities may be safe and well;

And that the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha will bring peace and freedom to all beings.

Namo Amida Butsu

### May 21: GOTAN-E: Shinran Shonin's Birthday

This service celebrates the birth of Shin Buddhism's founder in 1173 C.E. Gotan-e means "coming-down-birthday-gathering." Another name for this occasion is Fujimatsuri (wisteria festival). The double wisteria crest is the emblem of Nishi Hongwanji, our mother temple in Kyoto, Japan.

Shinran's life and teachings represent one of the most significant developments in the history of Buddhism. Before then only the privileged and priests received spiritual instruction. Shinran Shonin taught that even the poor rice farmer is embraced by the Buddha's infinite light and compassion, and the truth of the Dharma and shinjin awakening are accessible to everyone, without discrimination.

Excerpt used with permission, Shin Buddhist Service Book, Buddhist Education Center, Orange County Buddhist Church. Available at the BCA Bookstore.



Please visit the BCA website: [www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org](http://www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org) or check with your temple on how to donate. Namo Amida Butsu

On April 25, 2015, the country of Nepal was struck by a 7.8 earthquake. This disaster has left in its wake a tragedy beyond our comprehension. The enormous loss of life, the damage to the country's infrastructure, and the effect on the livelihoods of the people of Nepal as well as many of its neighboring countries, is tremendous. Our hearts and thoughts go out to all those who are suffering as a result of this tragedy.

The Kathmandu Hongwanji, headed by Rev. Sonam Wangdi Bhutia, has always been involved in helping their community. In the wake of this disastrous earthquake their priority continues to be helping the community, in spite of the damage to their temple building. They are asking us to help support their efforts. I want to ask you to respond to their call for help.

As we respond to the call from Nepal, we must remember that tragedies and natural disasters happen constantly, all over the world. Let us remember that we are part of the world community and be willing to help at all times and in all situations. I ask that your temple or church be mindful of people everywhere. I want to encourage you to support not only this effort, but to engage in social welfare efforts in your communities as well.

Gassho,  
Rev. Kodo Umezu, Bishop  
Buddhist Churches of America  
April 27, 2015

## Buddhist Christian/Christian Buddhist? The Importance of Interfaith Dialogue

By Rev. Jerry Hirano  
Salt Lake Buddhist Temple

Much of my spiritual life as a Buddhist has been defined and strengthened by the Christianity that has surrounded and even embraced me. The fact that I was born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, the world headquarters for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) is probably one of the foremost reasons that I developed a spiritual life at all. Having been surrounded by such a strong majority religion has forced me to think about and choose my own personal religious beliefs.

The United States of America has moved more and more towards a Christian identity. This is a far cry from the intention of the founding fathers; however, it is a reality that each of us must live with. The Pledge of Allegiance claims we are "one nation under God." Our currency has the statement "In God We Trust." These words were added in the 1950s. We have been experiencing a wave of Christian conservatism in our political landscape. Where do Buddhists born and raised or naturalized into the USA fit into this landscape?

My wife Dr. Carmela Javelana Hirano, who was raised in a devout Roman Catholic family with an older brother who was a Catholic priest and an older sister a Catholic nun, was

10,000 People. 80 Nations. 50 Faiths.



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honored to receive Tokudo ordination at Nishi Hongwanji in November of 2014. We have found that being board members of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable has strengthened and deepened our appreciation for our Buddhist identity. The Roundtable was initially formed to create a Chaplaincy program for the 2002 Winter Olympics. Since that time we have had regular monthly meetings hosted at various churches and temples throughout the Salt Lake Valley to learn about that community's religious beliefs and history.

I have a new favorite book called *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian*, by Paul F. Knitter. He was ordained in Rome as a Catholic priest in 1966. He left the priesthood in 1975 to marry a Buddhist woman. He taught Theology at Xavier University for thirty years; after retiring he taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. In 2008 he received his Buddhist name

Urgyen Menla (Lotus Healer) through Lama John Makranksy. In his book, Knitter states:

"Our religious self, like our cultural or social self, is at its core and in its conduct a *hybrid*. That means that our religious identity is not purebred; it's hybrid. It's not singular; it's plural. It takes shape through an ongoing process of standing in one place and stepping into other places, of forming a sense of self and then expanding or correcting that sense as we meet other selves. There is no such thing as a neatly defined, once-and-for-all identity. Buddhists, indeed, are right: there is no isolated, permanent self. We're constantly changing and we're changing through the hybridizing process of interacting with others who often are very different from us."

This hybridization is at the heart of interfaith dialogue. This is why taking part in this dialogue is extremely important for us Buddhists living in America. It is in our religious

diversity that we begin to know and understand our shared humanity. Culture is such a strong part of our identity in both personal and religious aspects that, to better understand who we are as Buddhists living in America, we must also see the world through the lens of other religions.

From October 15-19 of this year, the Parliament of World Religions will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Salt Lake Buddhist Temple is across the street from the site where the Parliament will be held. The Dalai Lama is one of the keynote speakers. Many Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) ministers will be taking part. I hope that members of BCA will join us.

Many people have asked me how Jodo Shinshu could become better known in the West, because compared to Tibetan and Zen Buddhism, many people have not even heard of Shin Buddhism or the *Nembutsu*. I feel the answer may lie in our participation in interfaith dialogue. Please join an interfaith group in your own community, and I hope your temple will support your minister in attending and participating in this exciting and stimulating Parliament of World Religions.

Register at: [www.parliamentofreligions.org](http://www.parliamentofreligions.org). Save \$25 when you register by June 30, 2015.



By Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop

I recently received a card from my brother, Rev. Chido Umezu, in Fukuoka, Japan. It is an invitation to the wedding ceremony for the future resident minister of Saikoji, my family temple. My brother doesn't have any children so he

decided to ask his wife's nephew, Rev. Eisho Iwao, to take over the temple. This will be his wedding. My brother's plan is that his nephew gets married first, then the newlywed couple will be adopted into the Umezu family to eventually take over the temple.

Unlike Japan, here in the United States the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) Office of the Bishop is responsible for assigning resident ministers to churches and temples. In this process, my office works closely with temple leaders to find the right person to serve as their minister.

The BCA has set as its priority to nurture our religious leaders that serve in this country. It was for this reason that the BCA founded the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) right after World War II. Our past leaders and members had the sincere desire to hear the profound teachings of our religious tradition and share them with others. Their vision is reflected in our BCA Mission Statement: To promote the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, as well as to propagate the Jodo Shinshu Teachings.

Nurturing ministers takes ef-

fort. It requires us to respect the position. It requires cultivation of the Dharma fields. It requires patience and understanding from all of us. It requires our commitment and support. Thanks to the initiative of former Bishop Koshin Ogui, we now have almost 150 minister's assistants. Some of them are taking classes at the IBS and have also expressed the desire to become BCA ministers. Even if they do not become ministers, they can still help us with our mission of sharing the teaching.

When each and every one of us takes refuge in the Three Treas-

ures, we do not need to worry about the future. These Three Treasures are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (people committed to the Dharma). I explained Sangha because "Sangha" originally meant "ordained monks." If the position of resident minister is respected, the temple will grow and the community will receive the benefit.

I am glad to hear that my home temple will keep going with a new resident minister. I am sure he will be the right person to help create wonderful conditions so that the members can hear the teaching for years to come.



By Rev. Carol Myokei Himaka  
Southern Alameda County  
Buddhist Church

Lately, I've come to really appreciate the value of failure in our lives. That may seem a contradictory statement or attitude in this world where achievement or success is what we are all taught to aspire to. For the most part, we focus on "goals" and achieving those goals as a means of measuring our "success" in life. But failure is a valuable counterbalance to what we deem to be "success." If we only achieve successes in our lives we may start to believe that we know what we are doing.

When I think of Shakyamuni Buddha and Shinran Shonin I can't help but reflect on how their failures led them to their ultimate success. Their "failures" provided invaluable influence in steering their lives toward their ultimate deep spiritual realizations.

For instance, Prince Siddhartha in his search for how to live life in the face of old age, illness, and death, started by leaving his home and questioning the wise philosophers and meditation masters who lived in the forest. This was

a traditional path, but usually followed only by men after they had fulfilled their social obligations. The prince, by leaving home early, did not fulfill his traditional social obligations fully, although he did provide an heir to his father's kingdom.

After practicing with several of the most famous teachers he discovered that, while they achieved fantastic states of meditation, those states still did not answer the prince's questions, and they were not permanent. Siddhartha then tried the ancient traditions of the ascetics, who sought to achieve mastery over the wants and needs of the body through perfecting a mental discipline capable of overcoming those impulses. He was successful—but he was so successful that, even though he attracted a group of other ascetics who chose to follow him, he almost killed himself with the vehemence of his practice.

*Undergoing such ascetic practices, he accomplished that which is difficult to accomplish; however, he was still unable to attain that Dharma that transcends this world. He was unable to achieve divine wisdom. The prince, realizing now that these practices would not lead him to release, that they would not extinguish suffering, and that they would not cause him to attain pure wisdom, decided to seek the path anew.*

(*Buddha-Dharma*, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai translation, p. 15)

It can be said that the change of direction in Prince Siddhartha's search resulted from his failure to find answers in philosophical medi-

tation or ascetic practice.

It is known that Shinran Shonin practiced as a monk in a monastery on Mt. Hiei. After not achieving enlightenment through 20 years of practice, he tried a 100-day practice at the Rokkakudo Shrine in Kyoto. Apparently, this practice required that he stay awake for 100 days, probably circumambulating the central statue of Kwannon Bodhisattva within. There are multiple versions of what occurred, all of which involve Shinran's dream when he fell asleep on the ninety-fifth day. It can be said that technically he failed to complete this practice; however, Shinran's failure at this vigil gave him tremendous insight into how to proceed in solving his spiritual problem.

Eshinni writes in one of her letters,

*[Shinran] left Mt. [Hiei] to seclude himself for a hundred days in the Rokkakudo temple. There he prayed concerning his next life, and at dawn on the ninety-fifth day he received in a revelation a message composed by Shotoku Taishi. Immediately at dawn he left the place and, seeking a karmic link that would lead him to salvation in the next life, he went and met the master Honen....*

(*Jodo Shinshu, Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan*, James Dobbins, p. 23-24)

A more detailed account recorded in "Record of Shinran's Dreams" states:

*The Great World-Saving Bodhisattva [Kannon] of the Rokkakudo was revealed in the form of a monk of upright appearance. Dressed in simple white clerical robes and seated on a giant white lotus, he made this*

*pronouncement to Shinran:*

*"If the believer, because of the fruition of karma, is driven by sexual desire,*

*Then I shall take on the body of a beautiful woman to be ravished by him.*

*Throughout his entire life I shall adorn him well,*

*And at death I shall lead him to birth in Pure Land."*

*The World-Saving Bodhisattva recited this message and then made the following pronouncement: "This message is my Vow. Expound it to all living beings." Based on this pronouncement, I [Shinran] realized that I should tell this to millions of sentient beings, and I then awoke from my dream.*

(*Jodo Shinshu, Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan*, James Dobbins, p. 24)

As a result of this revelatory dream, Shinran left Rokkakudo and sought out Honen Shonen. So the result of his failure to complete the 100-day practice can be said to have opened for Shinran a different way.

We have all heard about the dangers of the ego-mind. Our own designs or machinations prevent us from taking refuge completely in what is offered openly through *Nembutsu*. However, we may not realize the depth of our own ego-attachments and designs until we experience failure. Failure is not really a negative in our lives. It actually provides an opportunity that can lead us from our limited worldview towards the absolute truth found in *Namo Amida Butsu*. How else can we become aware of that which we do not know?

## The Value of Failure

## Wheel of Dharma

(USPS 017-700)

Official Publication of the  
Buddhist Churches of America

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Wheel of Dharma (USPS 017-700) is published monthly by Buddhist Churches of America, 1710 Octavia St., San Francisco, CA 94109-4341. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WHEEL OF DHARMA, 1710 Octavia St., San Francisco, CA 94109-4341. Subscription free to BCA temple members; \$12.00 annual subscription for nonmembers.

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## Oxnard Buddhist Temple

The introduction of Buddhism to Oxnard dates back to the turn of the twentieth century. It slowly emerged after the Japanese immigrants began to establish their families in the Oxnard plains.

In conjunction with the movement to provide a Japanese language school, Sunday school services were conducted in a home. Later Sunday school was held at the language school that eventually became part of the Oxnard Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, which was built in 1929.

In December 1964, the present site was purchased, upon which the temple building, minister's residence, and classroom were built. The Oxnard Buddhist Temple serves the neighboring cities of Ventura, Point Hueneme, Camarillo, Newbury Park, and Thousand Oaks.

Today, the affiliate organizations include the Buddhist Women's Association, Dharma School, Junior Young Buddhist Association (Jr. YBA), and Sangha Teens. These groups assist and participate in the annual Obon festival, as well as other temple and district activities.

## Job Announcement Accounting Specialist

The Buddhist Churches of America National Headquarters is looking for a part-time Accounting Specialist with a background in payroll and benefits accounting. Please inquire for job description and wage information at [accounting@bcahq.org](mailto:accounting@bcahq.org). The job location will be primarily in San Francisco, CA.

## Corrections

On page 1 of the February issue there was a misspelling of "Kisaragi-ki" (Memorial Service for Lady Kujo). The Friends of IBS Ministerial Scholarship Fund donor list on page 6 of the April 2015 Wheel of Dharma had three names misspelled. The corrected spellings are: Mrs. Namy Folick, Mr. Hiroji Kariya, and Mr. Richard and Mrs. Kay Schellhase. We apologize for these errors.



By Dr. Kent Matsuda  
BCA President  
Enmanji Buddhist Temple

## President's Message

### A Future for the BCA

hear Sensei Jeff Wilson talk about the Dharma. They held workshops and partied into the night after the formal sessions were over. Their interest in the Dharma would inspire anyone.

On March 26, I attended the Religions for Peace USA Council of Presidents' Meeting in New York City. This was a meeting of religious leaders from over fifty different faiths. The morning session dealt with the deaths of African-American men who were in police custody. The Black Lives Matter movement and President Obama's participation in the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama were also discussed. The

afternoon session dealt with mass incarceration, solitary confinement, and the criminal justice system.

In speaking with religious leaders of other faiths, I learned that many of them had difficulty bringing young adults into their churches. The BCA is fortunate that we have an active Youth Advocacy Committee that helps to arrange events for our young adults.

At the Council of Presidents' Meeting, I met a youth minister for the United Church of Christ. She and part of her church participated in the march in Selma. She commented that she wished that members of her church could engage in Buddhist practices like meditation

and self-reflection. When they participated in the march, they had little time after the event to talk about how being in Selma affected them. I hope to be able to connect that youth minister with one of our temples near her home office.

As we look to the future of our BCA, I hope that we can continue to engage our young adults in our Sanghas. Although we may not always see them in our temples, we know that they come together to share the Dharma in various locations. In their own way, they are becoming our future leaders. I hope that we can continue to connect with members of other religious faiths and build bonds that

strengthen both communities.

While I was in New York, I had a chance to visit the New York Buddhist Church. They were preparing for a fundraiser and members were busy cooking. Although their kitchen is small and the local laws prevent them from holding large events, they are trying to increase their Sangha and make an impact in their residential neighborhood. The members informed me that they are looking to replace their *usu* (mortar for pounding rice) for making New Year's *mochi*. In particular, they need an *usu* that is about sixteen inches tall and made of ironwood. If anyone can help them, please let me know.

I had the opportunity to attend two very different events. Both could indicate what the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) might look like in the future.

On March 14, I attended the TechnoBuddha Conference at the Jodo Shinshu Center. There, 71 young adults came together to

## Self-Power or Other Power: The Most Difficult Decision



Rev. Nobuo Miyaji  
Gardena Buddhist Church

Almost all of the teachings of the Buddha, as you know, are categorized as Self-Power teachings. Only the Pure Land sects emphasize the teaching of Other Power. That is why many Buddhists mistakenly say that Jodo Shinshu Buddhism is not the true teaching of Shakyamuni.

I have been friends with a Buddhist monk since I came to this country. This friend is a very important Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist monk. We have had many discussions about the issue of who is a true Buddhist. He has never agreed that Jodo Shinshu Buddhists are true Buddhists because, as ministers, we marry, eat beef, and also drink alcohol. These are

not suitable behaviors for a Buddhist monk. To Theravada Buddhists or any of the Sacred Path Buddhists, we are not Buddhists. To them, BCA ministers should be considered lay members. I understand their opinion, but I also understand that they do not take into consideration the teaching of Other Power (*Tariki*) and have not experienced the joy of salvation by *Tariki*.

Shinran Shonin spent twenty years as a Tendai Buddhist monk on Mt. Hiei. He dedicated himself to the teaching of Self-Power, but could not find enlightenment through this path. He decided to give it up and leave Mt. Hiei. Shinran Shonin had to face the limitations of Self-Power. This also meant that he could not depend on the general teachings of the Buddha. That was not a small realization for Shinran Shonin because for him, without the teaching of the Buddha, it meant that he could not live any more as a human being. We fail to understand the weight of his decision because we have a tendency to think that Shinran Shonin simply chose between Self-Power and Other

Power. This perspective is totally wrong. To abandon the teaching of the Buddha meant that he had to give up everything. There was no choice for him. Fortunately, he was able to meet Honen Shonin who was teaching the path of Other Power.

This is why I wanted to discuss the issue of choosing between Self-Power and Other Power. For Shinran Shonin, choosing Other Power was the choice of no choice. For him the only choice available was the way of Buddhism. When he had lost everything, the only thing left was the teaching of Other Power, the Nembutsu teaching; that is to say, Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.

Usually we say that you can choose Self-Power if you think you can do it, and if you think that you cannot, then you choose Other Power. Actually the issue is not so simple. Shinran Shonin did not have the luxury to choose between them. He could only continue to go forward on the path of Other Power. If he had not met with Honen Shonin, his only choice would have been death. The same kind of circumstance exists for

us. The only path open to us is that Other Power because our minds are evil (*bonno*, 煩惱).

During the time Shinran Shonin was on Mt. Hiei and the more he saw of the truth of his mind as an evil mind, the more he was disappointed in himself. The harder he practiced, the more clearly he could see himself not being able to wipe out his darkness. For those who cannot destroy the darkness in their minds, Amida Buddha appears. Unlike sacred and pure monks, Shinran Shonin had to choose the way of Other Power and not Self-Power. He later discovered that many famous and revered monks—the Seven Masters of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism—had chosen the path of Other Power and had worked to reveal this path to him. That was when he was able to reach the conclusion that the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha is the teaching of Other Power. That is the Nembutsu teaching.

We, as Jodo Shinshu Buddhists, should know these facts and be proud of Shinran's selection of Other Power.

*Namo Amida Butsu*

## YAC 10 Reunion “The Nembutsu is what we feel when the words thank you is not enough”

By Kristin Lam  
Stockton Buddhist Church



A great deal of change comes with five months' time. When I arrived at the beautiful grounds of Mountain View Buddhist Temple for the YAC 10 Reunion held on January 16-19, I hoped that the bond between us YAC (Youth Advocacy Committee) buddies remained as strong as it was during those final meaningful retreat days last July.

Saturday began with a Japanese breakfast (that was to-die-for) followed by morning service and Dharma session on chanting Shoshinge and Wasans. Trying to match the pitch throughout the two hours was difficult, but chanting with everyone was deeply calming as always. In the afternoon we headed to San Jose's Japantown for lunch and visited the Japanese American Museum of San Jose. It was refreshing to see familiar places I associate with family that I have in the San Jose area – now from a different perspective. A power nap later it was time for service, more delicious food, and then another service. Our motions were natural yet mindful as we eased into the practiced routine. Subsequently we rehearsed for Mountain View's Sunday service with Reverend Mukojima and our Buddhist version of “Rather Be” by Clean Bandit and having our own teen discussion.

Sunday service went smoothly and I was amazed by how the welcoming Sangha filled the Hondo. Reverend Mukojima also shared a poignant Dharma talk on impermanence with the help of an adorable panda puppet. To top it off, we joined the high school Dharma class for the day's awesome lesson on suffering in *Star Wars*. Later as we basked in the afternoon sunshine Rev. Bob led the thought-provoking interpretation of Jodo Shinshu terms discussion. Laughing together about some funny anecdote, I felt waves of contentment wash over me. At that moment there was truly no place I'd rather be.

During evening service, we found ourselves ardently stumbling through Shoshinge & the Wasans. With Kristine Yada's fearless leadership we became the first group to do so voluntarily. Keith Sawada next did some interesting personality tests with us... and the first goodbyes came way too soon. Not knowing when we'd be together again, we talked until we drifted off to sleep. These conversations were the vulnerably intimate kind, well worth the next day's exhaustion.

When morning came we knew it wasn't a final parting. Several of us talk to each other regularly and there will be group video calls in the future. Our YAC experience will undoubtedly connect us for the rest of our lives.

On behalf of YAC 10, I would like to express our sincere gratitude once more. The reunion was amazing thanks to the efforts of Reverend Mukojima, the Mountain View Sangha, Susan Bottari, Charlene Grinolds, Keith Sawada,

Continued on Page 6

## Monterey Peninsula Buddhist Temple Kieshiki Ceremony



Left photo: Taking the Vow in Monterey - On April 12, 2015, Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop, assisted by Rev. Jay Shinseki, resident minister of the Monterey Peninsula Buddhist Temple, officiated the Kieshiki (Affirmation) Ceremony for 25 members. Right photo: Minister's Assistant Certified - Bishop Umezu certified Nicholas Honjo San Juan as a Minister's Assistant at the Monterey Peninsula Buddhist Temple at the April 12th service.





## BCA Education News & Highlights - Live a Real Life!

### TechnoBuddha 2015 Continues the Momentum

By Calvin Tamano and Drew Thorne



From March 13-15 the 8th Annual TechnoBuddha Conference: “The Good, The Bad, and the Bachi: The Expectation of Karma,” took place at the Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC) in Berkeley, California with a record number of 71 participants.

Dr. Jeff Wilson of Renison University College of Canada gave a captivating keynote address, drawing analogies to the dharma from “Star Wars.” With self-effacing humor not commonly heard in modern discussions, he inspired lively discourse throughout the weekend. First-timer Lauren Shiraishi said, “He was very informative; and his relatable approach and sense of humor made his talk really memorable.”

Many fresh approaches were introduced, including “Toban Games” to encourage longer interactions between new acquaintances and friendly competition between groups and an Instagram-based competition that also helped to expand TechnoBuddha’s social media presence. The diverse array of workshops ranged from general and moderate levels of Buddhist discussion, to yoga and meditation workshops, and even life coaching advice.

Evening events focused on socializing in a more relaxed atmosphere. Through activities like playing board games or walking together for a late night snack, the TechnoBuddha Sangha strengthened their bonds, bringing the teachings of the day into the context of everyday life. Attendees, new and returning, all seemed to enjoy the event. First-time participant Kelsey Ozawa commented, “I had a great experience at my first TechnoBuddha, especially getting to know so many new people.”

Of course, none of this would be possible without the collaborative efforts of the Jodo Shinshu community and the support of the Center for Buddhist Education. Special thanks to Judy Kono and Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara for their inspiration and guidance. We are eternally grateful for their support.

Next year’s event is probably going to be the best one ever. Hope to see you there! *In Gassho*

### NCM Dharma Talk: “Hearing Amida’s Call”

By Vonn Magnin, Arizona Buddhist Temple

On February 28, 2015, Sensei Vonn Magnin gave a Dharma message at the BCA National Council Meeting in San Diego, CA. This is a slightly edited version for Wheel of Dharma readers.



There was a time for each of you when you knew nothing of Amida’s Vow and did not say the Name of Amida Buddha, but now, guided by the compassionate means of Sakyamuni and Amida, you have begun to hear the Vow.

— Shinran Shonin, *Lamp of the Latter Ages*

The above passage is very special to me, for you see, Buddhism was not my first religion. I can’t remember exactly when I first encountered that passage, but I know it was sometime during the first year or two that I had started attending the Arizona Buddhist Temple. When I came across it, I was flooded by memories and feelings I had had in my life before I realized the Buddha was calling me. My path to becoming Buddhist was a long one, but I’ll do my best to share it with you.

Both my sister and I were raised as Roman Catholics. This is a Christian denomination whose roots date back to the Roman Empire and is probably the oldest surviving form of Christianity. As kids, we would go to church every Sunday and on other days for religious education. My family was fairly devout. I also took the extra step of becoming an altar boy when I was seven. I would assist our priest during church services and rituals. I was very involved and continued serving for nine years, which was considerably longer than most of my peers.

I really don’t have a good definition of what it means to be a spiritual person, but as a kid I felt that I was. I was also very inquisitive. I’m sure my parents and teachers would say that I sometimes drove them nuts with my questions. One of my favorite questions to ask was simply, “why?” “Why did that happen?” “Why is this person good and that one bad?” “Even though my non-Christian friend hasn’t been baptized, why is he going to hell?”

I remember asking that last question when I was about eight years old. I had a friend whose parents were from China. He was my best friend then and we are still friends now. I wasn’t sure which religion his family was but I knew they weren’t Christian. It was incomprehensible to me that my friend, who played with me, shared with me and laughed with me was somehow not good. This conflicted with everything that I had been taught. When I asked “why?” my religious education teacher couldn’t give me an answer that made sense. Over time, I realized that a lot of my religiously-based “why” questions were hard for people to answer. It didn’t matter if they were my parents, teachers or priests.

Despite their inability to answer my questions, I continued to go to church and stay involved well into my young adult years. There wasn’t a defining moment when I decided to stop going... I gradually drifted away on my own because I think the mixed messages that Christianity gave me no longer held any relevance in my life.

Other things happened in my life where I could not find any reasonable religious answers: I was severely bullied throughout my childhood, I went to war, I went through a divorce, and I experienced the tragic loss of my fifteen-year-old nephew. I think it’s easy to find religious answers when life is good, but they can be lacking when life is tough. It was the tough times that made me search. I needed to find a way to make sense during the difficult times in my life as well as appreciate the special moments when things were beautiful. In my mind I was already starting to realize that good and bad and everything in between weren’t separate things but were actually part of life itself. I wanted to find a way to live my life the best I could.

I don’t know exactly when it happened, but I can say that Buddhism had intrigued me for a long time. When I was younger I barely knew anything about it beyond what was portrayed on TV. Does anyone remember the 1970s show “Kung Fu”? I enjoyed watching it as a kid and beyond the Shaolin fighting stuff, I appreciated the peacefulness that the monks and masters demonstrated and the sense of social responsibility that the character of Kwai Chang Caine had.

Several years ago, being the inquisitive person I am, I began reading books such as the *The Art of Happiness* by the Dalai Lama and... yes... even *The Dharma of Star Wars*. These brief glimpses into the Dharma whetted my appetite, but most of them emphasized practice and spiritual discipline. As I came to find out... easier said than done! After a couple of years of this, and prompted to find a sense of peace after the death of our nephew, my wife and I decided to look for a place where our family could become part of a community of Buddhists.

What we didn’t know was that the community had been close to us for many years. Every February, Phoenix hosts its “Matsuri: A Festival of Japan.” I had been going since I was a teenager and when I married my wife Karen, we started taking our boys to it each year to enjoy *taiko* drums and Japanese food. We always ate the same thing every year: pork yakisoba. It was such a treat, you could say that each year we were pretty *religious* about eating it. It so happens that the food booth that made and sold this culinary delight was run by the Arizona Buddhist Temple. When we went in 2007, I noticed a man with a shaved head wearing *samue* [traditional Japanese clothing] out in the crowd, happily encouraging people to visit the booth and handing out brochures for the Temple. This man was Rev. Ryuuta Furumoto. My wife and I took a brochure and made a commitment to visit the very next week.

Although we started attending regularly, it took a while to feel comfortable. The environment was new, we didn’t know anyone, we would trip up when trying to chant. It was very hard to recite *Namo Amida Butsu* because that’s not what it sounded like people were saying. Eventually some members took us under their wings. Our youngest son got involved in Dharma School. We were slowly becoming a part of the kind of community we had been looking for.

As we attended, there was something that really stood out. I first noticed it from Rev. Furumoto, and it has been the same with many other ministers, teachers and Dharma friends I have known over the years. When I would ask my normal “why” questions, the answers I received started more often than not with some variation of “I don’t know exactly” or “maybe” or “perhaps.” Their answers made a big impression on me. They demonstrated honesty, humility and most importantly, humanity. They showed me that we were all imperfect and trying to do the best we can in this one life we have.

And along the way, I have come to learn of Amida Buddha’s Vow and of the greatness of Shinran Shonin. The Vow is so precious to me and Shinran’s encouragement to live our humanly foolish lives the best we can and say the *Nembutsu* in gratitude has touched me so deeply that it is difficult for me to adequately explain, except to say: “Hard is it to born into human life, now I am living it. Difficult is it to hear the Dharma of the Buddha, now I hear it.”

As someone who has converted to Buddhism I cannot possibly express my gratitude for my life and hearing the Buddha’s Call enough. That is why when several years ago I first read the passage I quoted at the beginning of this message that my eyes were wet with tears of both joy and gratitude.

I wish to express my appreciation to not only my Temple, but also to the BCA, the Center for Buddhist Education, and the many ministers and Sangha members whom I have had the pleasure of knowing and for nurturing me along my way. I am still just beginning and I have a lot to learn. Thank you for all that you do.

*Namo Amida Butsu*

## EMBRACED BY THE HEART OF AMIDA BUDDHA

The LGBTQ Community & Shin Buddhism

Sat. June 27, 2015 9:30 am – 3:30 pm  
New York Buddhist Church 331-332 Riverside Dr., NYC  
Register online at: [buddhistchurchesofamerica.org](http://buddhistchurchesofamerica.org)  
Deadline: 6/20

**Guest Speakers:**

**Dr. Jeff Wilson**  
Author, *Buddhism of the Heart and Mindful America*

**Rev. Kurt Rye**  
Resident Minister, Ekoki Buddhist Temple, Fairfax Station, VA

**Presenters & Moderators:**

- Rev. Earl Ikeda
- Rev. Kiyo Kuwahara
- Elaine Donlin
- Sam Fugitt
- Norio Umezumi Hall
- Gary Jaskula
- Hoshina Seki
- Amy Umezumi

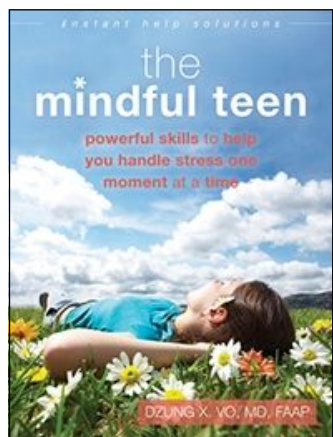
Presented by the BCA Center for Buddhist Education (CBE)  
Hosted by the New York Buddhist Church

**Register online by June 20. Visit: [www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org](http://www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org)**

### BCA Bookstore News

by Gayle Noguchi

Now available: *The Mindful Teen: powerful skills to help you handle stress one moment at a time* by Dzung X. Vo, MD, FAAP paperback \$16.95.



This unique guide introduces teens to mindfulness as a tool for dealing with a wide range of stressful situations – whether it’s taking a test at school, dealing with parents, or one’s own perfectionistic standards. Dr. Vo is a pediatrician specializing in adolescent medicine and *The Mindful Teen* is based on the MARS-A (Mindful Awareness and Resilience Skills for Adolescents) course he developed from his years of clinical experience with teens, as well as his own mindfulness practice. The book offers an explanation of mindfulness, “Try This!” exercises to practice and develop mindfulness skills, and “Teen Voices” sharing their experiences with the program. *The Mindful Teen* is a valuable summer read for any teen who wants to reduce stress in his/her life.

Also available: *The Seeker – The Life of Shinran Shonin, Part III*, published by the Shinshu Center of America, paperback \$12.00. This highly anticipated Part III completes the manga series which vividly depicts the life of Shinran Shonin.

To order, go to [www.bcabookstore.com](http://www.bcabookstore.com) or [gnoguchi@bcahq.org](mailto:gnoguchi@bcahq.org) / 510-809-1435. The BCA Bookstore is open Wednesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Like us on Facebook.



### BCA Education News & Highlights - Live a Real Life!

## Historic WEHOPE Dharmathons Launched on the Web Search on YouTube.com for “WEHOPE Dharmathon”

Hailing from throughout the mainland US, Hawaii, Canada and South America, over 40 ministers and lay dharma leaders from two major Jodo Shinshu Buddhist schools, Higashi Honganji and Nishi Hongwanji, convened for the West and East Hongwanji Overseas Propagation Exchange (WEHOPE) Conference at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley. It was the first international gathering of its kind.

During this historic conference, the WEHOPE Dharmathon was broadcast live on YouTube on the evenings of April 15 and 16. Each Dharmathon featured nine dharma talks, 18 in all, including three talks in Japanese. Enjoy them on YouTube.com! Search for “WEHOPE Dharmathon” to hear the messages.

For more information, visit [www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org](http://www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org) or email: [cbe@bcahq.org](mailto:cbe@bcahq.org) or phone: 510.809.1460.



Welcome messages were presented by Bishop Kodo Umezū (left), Buddhist Churches of America (Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha), and Bishop Noriaki Ito (second from left), Higashi Honganji North America District (Shinshu Otani-ha). Master of Ceremonies for Day One was Rev. David Fujimoto of Puna Hongwanji Mission, and MC for Day Two was Rev. Mauricio Gligonetto (right) of Nambu Honganji Brasil Betsuin.



Messages in Japanese were presented by (from left to right) Rev. Miki Nakura (New York Sangha), Rev. Ryuta Furumoto (Senshin Buddhist Temple), and Rev. Nobuko Miyoshi (West Covina Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple). Rev. Shinji Kawagoe (right, of Papaikou Hongwanji Mission) gave a talk in English.



(From left to right): Rev. Patti Nakai (Buddhist Temple of Chicago), Rev. Katsuya Kusunoki (Buddhist Church of Lodi), Rev. Marcos Sawada (Hilo Higashi Honganji), and Rev. Kosho Yagi (Aiea Hongwanji Mission).



(From left to right): Rev. Ryoko Osa (Higashi Honganji North America District Office), Rev. Ronald Kobata (Buddhist Church of San Francisco), Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa (Higashi Honganji North America District Office), and Rev. Diana Thompson (Tri-State/Denver Buddhist Temple).



(From left to right): Rev. Peter Hata (Los Angeles Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple Betsuin), Rev. Cristina Sato (Templo Honpa Hongwanji de Brasilia), Rev. Ken Yamada (Berkeley Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple), and Rev. Jerry Hirano (Salt Lake Buddhist Temple).

## 2015 Young Buddhist International Cultural Study Exchange (YBICSE) July 15 – 23, 2015 Applications Due May 15, 2015

Applications are being accepted for the Hongwanji sponsored Young Buddhist International Cultural Study Exchange (YBICSE), which will be held from July 15-23, 2015. The Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) group is limited to 15 students and will depart for Japan on July 14 from San Francisco International Airport.

YBICSE provides an opportunity for youth representatives from around the world to explore the historical and cultural heritage of our Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha tradition. Members from the Hawaii, Canada, and South America overseas districts will gather at our mother temple, Hongwanji, in Kyoto and participate in joint activities with Japan Young Buddhists Association (YBA) members.

Participation is open to interested individuals, age 16-25, who are currently active in their local YBA, Jr. YBA, Dharma School, and Youth Advocacy Committee (YAC)/Young Leaders Today (YLT), etc. The cost per person is \$1,200.00 (includes airfare, ground transportation, lodging, and most meals). Delegates will be selected through a screening process. Application includes a personal history, a resume of temple participation, a short essay titled, “What I Have Gained/Learned Through My Activities as a BCA Buddhist Youth,” and a Letter of Recommendation from the Resident Minister. Applications must be received at the BCA Headquarters by **MAY 15, 2015**. Applications are available at the BCA Headquarters: 1710 Octavia Street, San Francisco, CA, 94109. For further information including all application requirements, please contact Michael Endo in the Bishop’s Office at (415) 776-5600, ext. 211, or via e-mail at [mendo@bcahq.org](mailto:mendo@bcahq.org).

### Special Feature

This text was presented at the 17th Annual European Shin Buddhist Conference in Southampton, UK in September, 2014.

## JODO SHINSHU: THE SUPREME TEACHING FOR THE PRESENT AGE (Part 5 of 6)

by Rev. John Paraskevopoulos

(vi) Practice

In reaching out and making a connection with us, the Buddha needs to descend from the realm of Suchness and communicate in a way that we can recognize and understand. What better way to announce one’s presence than through revealing one’s name? Amida Buddha, as the compassionate form of formless reality declares itself to be Infinite Light and Eternal Life; this we learn through the enlightenment experience of Shakyamuni and the Pure Land tradition which has subsequently confirmed the veracity and efficacy of this most direct of methods.

In the experience of shinjin, saying the Name is both the call of Amida Buddha and our response in recognition of this call—in fact, this is really a single event. Nothing else is required. What else, indeed, is possible for ordinary people? When you are lost at sea, and you have the good fortune to encounter a lighthouse, all you can do is follow it as the great beacon guides you to the safety of the shore. What makes this deceptively simple practice so effective is that its consummation is rooted in the Buddha’s power which, nevertheless, still requires our acquiescence; we need to admit its light into our hearts if it is to transform us into people of shinjin and, ultimately, into Buddhas.

This great salvific drama is embodied in our hearing, and saying, the Name. The self-conscious practice of meditation or virtue can add nothing to Amida’s working but neither should conventional Buddhist practices be disparaged. All kinds of beneficial activity can emerge, quite naturally, from a life of shinjin but these are its spontaneous expressions, not its conditions. This is practice in its purest form. Initially, it may be difficult, or even painful, given the necessary adjustment required to correct our vanity and self-esteem, but the truth is we cannot truly free ourselves; only that which is “true and real”—from which we are never separated—can do this and bring us back to itself. What is incumbent on us, therefore, is to allow this to happen without our resistance—a faithful yielding to an irresistible force of loving light that will deliver us from this “burning house” as the Buddha described our world.

(vii) Wisdom

While we have given considerable emphasis to the compassionate dimension of the Shin teachings, it is important that we do not lose sight of their “wisdom” aspect. After all, our tradition’s focus on the Buddha’s Light is very much about wisdom and its role in endowing us with the illumination of the Dharma. It is what allows us to see things as they really are and as they will always be. In this sense, we must not regard the teachings as simply confined to the quasi-historical time-scale that we find in the sutras. The Mahayana often resorts to mythic expressions in its sacred literature as if to suggest the numinous, ineffable and timeless aspects of the Dharma.

Many people today struggle to accept the descriptions they find in these texts as literally true—something not altogether surprising given the modernist mindset. Nevertheless, we must remain open to the profound truths to which such symbolic language points so that it may start working on us.<sup>1</sup>

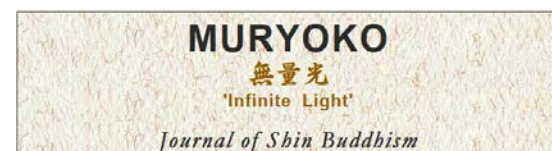
Imposing manufactured or confected meanings, based on our flawed calculations, will render the teachings meaningless. This underlines the need to find a good and reliable spiritual friend or guide in the Dharma.

As eternal and infinite, the Buddha’s Light is true reality that abides ceaselessly. It works to transform our hearts and minds without thwarting our reason or emotions; rather, it provides an enriching resource for both. The Dharma gives the most penetrating insights that we are capable of grasping with a vision of life that is holistic and connected. It satisfies the intellect and nourishes the spirit, offering genuine fulfillment of our innermost aspirations.

<sup>1</sup>“Symbolism is often misunderstood by modern people. A person of faith may have a completely literal understanding of the Pure Land, Amida and Dharmakara; yet this understanding, at an intuitive and affective level, may have a depth that means that these ‘symbols’—though taken literally—are in fact operative within that person. The Mahayana is rich in symbolism but one could argue that it is an inspired (in the proper sense of this word) symbolism and, as such, issues forth from the Void itself. We moderns are too sophisticated to take these symbols literally but because we lack the facility, or receptivity, for deep hearing (*monpo*), any penetration into (and the corresponding ability to interpret) these symbols is facile, calculating and misguided. Such interpretations are a hindrance and create a ‘block’ that prevents Shin’s symbols from forming a sacred, and saving, coherence within the practitioner’s being. Without this, *monpo* is not possible as Amida’s call must compete not only with the background noise of our everyday chaos but also the mental strain of trying to fit something as vast and deep as the Pure Land tradition, into such a small and shallow mental pigeon hole.” Chris Morgan, *pers. comm.* I am indebted to Mr. Morgan for his advice and many helpful insights in the preparation of this paper.

To be continued next month

Rev. John Paraskevopoulos is an ordained Shin Buddhist priest based in Australia and author of *Call of the Infinite: The Way of Shin Buddhism*. He holds a first-class honors degree in Philosophy from the University of Melbourne, Australia and is editor of the online *Muryoko: Journal of Shin Buddhism*.



The full text of this article is available online at [www.nembutsu.info](http://www.nembutsu.info).

**Sign up for CBE E-News! Additional events and more resources online. Go to the CBE section of the BCA website: [www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org](http://www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org)**



# BCA Altar Finds New Home in Saitama

By Christopher and Jill Tange  
with Rev. Brian Nagata

In October of 2014, Florence, Staci, and Lesli Hamamoto along with Jill and I participated in the Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) Shinran Shonin Study Tour to Japan led by Bishop Kodo Umezu and Rev. Brian Nagata. Prior to the start of the official study tour Brian took us out to Saitama to visit Rev. Joko Yoshii, Mizuho, William and Clifford at their beautiful temple in Kawaguchi City.

Zengyoji temple is an attractive, modern, two-story structure with the *Hondo* on the first floor and the family's residence on the second floor. Upon entering the *Hondo* we were all amazed at how wonderful the altar looked. I asked Jill, "Was this in the Bowles Buddhist Church?"

When it was decided to close down the Bowles Buddhist Church, located in Central California, the altar was offered to Rev.

Yoshii as he embarked on his mission to open the first Jodo Shinshu Temple in Kawaguchi City, about an hour's train ride from Tokyo. The altar was dismantled by Wakabayashi Butsugu Company and taken back to Kyoto, where it was cleaned and polished and then installed in its new home in the Zengyoji Temple.

Zengyoji seats about 50 people, many in chairs, and the Bowles altar fits perfectly into the altar space. Rev. Yoshii had been a little worried when they picked up the altar, but it was a perfect fit. Zengyoji was designed at no charge by an architect who was originally from Hiroshima but moved to Kawaguchi City and became a member of the temple. The design reminded me of the Clovis Church that Henry Kubow and Kevin Fukuda built. Today, Rev. Yoshii's temple has about 200 members and they are replicating many programs conducted in our BCA temples in an effort to

attract even more members.

As we entered the *Hondo* of Zengyoji, we had Jill *osboko* (offer incense) first, as a representative of the members of the Bowles Buddhist Church. We are certain that the *Issei* and *Nisei* members who have returned to the Pure Land must be happy to see their altar receive a "second life" as a symbol of the Buddha's Infinite Wisdom and Compassion for fellow *Nembutsu* followers in the Kawaguchi City area.

After presenting the Yoshii family with our Central Cal *omiyage* (gifts), Rev. Yoshii and family recalled the wonderful memories they had of serving at the Fresno Betsuin and they asked us upon returning to express their gratitude for the many kindnesses they received back then.

When you visit Japan, and if you have a free day when in Tokyo, please make time to visit the Yoshii family and their beautiful temple. We were really



Visiting Rev. Yoshii and Family in Saitama: The altar from the Bowles Buddhist Church has a "second life" at Zengyoji Temple, the first Jodo Shinshu temple in Kawaguchi City, Japan. Seated (left to right): Florence Hamamoto, Mizuho Yoshii, Rev. Joko Yoshii, and Christopher Tange. Standing (l. to r.): Lesli Hamamoto, Staci Hamamoto, and Jill Tange.

honored and happy to have the opportunity to see Yoshii sensei's temple and the wonderful work he and Mizuho are doing to share the Dharma with new followers in the greater Tokyo area.

## Upcoming Events at the Jodo Shinshu Center

**May 2: IBS presents "Buddhist Chaplaincy: An Overview."** 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Learn more about the path to becoming a Buddhist chaplain at this informational symposium. Speakers are Rev. Dr. Daijaku Kinst, Institute of Buddhist Studies; Rev. Eric Nefstead, MDiv, Coordinator of Clinical Pastoral Education and Staff Chaplain, Dignity Health, Sequoia Hospital, Redwood City; and Jennifer Lemmus, Sati Center for Buddhist Studies. *Read more at the IBS website: shin-ibs.edu*

**May 15: 2015 IBS Graduation Ceremony** - The commencement ceremony for students of the Institute of Buddhist Studies takes place from 2:45-3:30 pm, followed by a reception from 3:30-4:30 pm at the Jodo Shinshu Center. The commencement speaker is Dr. Paula K. R. Arai, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Asian Studies, and Women & Gender Studies, Louisiana State University. *Visit shin-ibs.edu*

**May 21: Gotan-E – A Celebration of Shinran's Birthday: An Evening of Chanting, Dharma & Music** is presented by the BCA Center for Buddhist Education, 6 – 8:30 pm. Experience special chanting liturgy by Rev. Katsuya Kusunoki, resident minister of Lodi Buddhist Church; a Dharma talk (Rev. Yushi Mukojima, resident minister Mountain View Buddhist Temple); and a special biwa (Japanese lute) music presentation by Mrs. Molly Miyako Kimura. Reception sponsored by the Ryukoku University Alumni Association – Northern California. *Visit: www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org* Free & Open to the Public

## YAC

Continued from Page 3

Reverend Bob, Reverend Patti, and countless others. We'd also like to thank everyone at the Sacramento Betsuin and the YAC committee for putting on the YAC retreat annually. Thanks to the many who encouraged us to apply for YAC as well. Lastly, thank you to YAC 10 for the memories made and the memories to come. Because the *Nembutsu* is what we feel when the words thank you are not enough, Namu Amida Butsu

The BCA YAC Summer Retreat will take place on July 6-12, 2015. This program for youth (15-18 years old) is sponsored by the Youth Advocacy Committee (YAC) and hosted by the Sacramento Betsuin. For application information, please contact: Rev. Patti Oshita, [pshita@comcast.net](mailto:pshita@comcast.net).

## Introducing Our New Development Assistant

By Steve Terusaki  
Co-chair, Joint Development  
Committee of the BCAEF

The Buddhist Churches of America Endowment Foundation (BCAEF) is pleased to welcome its newest employee, Christopher Sujarit, as the Development Assistant for the Foundation. The Development Assistant position has been one of the priority initiatives in creating a fundraising infrastructure for the three-party BCA organizations (BCA, Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) and the Endowment Foundation). This paid position dedicated to fundraising will provide capacity and consistency in the donor process.

Chris is a 2009 graduate of the University of California, Berkeley with a BA in Economics. In the six years since his graduation, Chris has had a unique set of experiences that were very compelling as the Foundation interviewed several



Christopher Sujarit

candidates for the position. For a four-year period since 2010, Chris lived in Asia, first teaching English to elementary school children in Seoul, Korea; and finally spending two years working with the We Women Foundation in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The We Women Foundation is a non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to assisting Burmese women from marginalized communities with professional and educational opportunities for a life in Thailand. As its Communications Officer and Teaching of English

as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Teacher, Chris was instrumental in donor relations; content development for both written and social media-based communications; and generally "hands-on" for anything that was required to make the small NGO successful.

Among Chris' interests are event photography, event planning and community mobilization, and writing. He brings to BCA his knowledge of websites, blogs, and proficiency in the software to support those social media vehicles in addition to his proficiency in customer relationship management (CRM)/donor relations software. While a student at UC Berkeley, Chris had been a Program Development and Marketing Intern with Asian Pacific Islander (API) Legal Outreach in San Francisco working on donors for the Choy of Golf charity tournament and recruiting sponsors for the API Legal Outreach's Annual Report.

Chris commented about the new position, saying, "BCA members, organizations, and temples possess immense potential ready to emerge when working together. The Development Assistant role is an auspicious opportunity to apply best practices, up-to-date techniques, organization-wide coordination, member feedback, and new strategies to support BCA in honoring the Dharma. For this, I am grateful. After a one-month silent Vipassana retreat in Northern Thailand and excursions into Theravada practice, I carry with me the knowledge that Buddhism has a place in everyone's life, no matter who you are, and especially now. I appreciate the chance to connect with each of you in some way. Gassho BCA."

Chris can be reached at BCA Headquarters at (415) 776 5600 ext. 311 or by email at: [csujarit@bcahq.org](mailto:csujarit@bcahq.org)

Welcome on-board!

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*Please count me in as a Friend of the Institute of Buddhist Studies. I understand that these funds will be used directly to support the endeavors of our BCA ministers of tomorrow, who wish to study at the Institute of Buddhist Studies. Checks can be made payable to IBS, with the notation "Friends of IBS" on the memo line. Please note that your contributions to the Institute of Buddhist Studies are tax deductible.*

Name: (Rev., Dr., Mr., Mrs., Ms.) \_\_\_\_\_

This donation is from my organization \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

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IBS is a duly recognized charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.  
WoD2015

# 今月の法話

## 「FOLLOWING」

フローリン仏教会  
開教使 菅原 祐軌



「清浄光明ならびなし 遇斯光のゆゑなれば  
一切の業繫ものぞこりぬ 畢竟依を帰命せよ」

(現代語訳)

一切の煩惱をはなれた、清らかなさとりより放たれる弥陀如来の光明が、諸仏の光明にすぐれていることは、他に比べるものがない。この光明にお会いするゆゑ、迷いの世界に繋ぎとめる煩惱悪業は、すべてみな除かれてしまう。究極のよりどころである阿弥陀如来に帰命したてまつれ。

『浄土和讃』 (黒田覚忍著・聖典セミナー三帖  
和讃I 浄土和讃 p34)

「あなたにはよりどころがありますか? そのよりどころは確実なものですか?」  
そう聞かれてあなたは答えることができませんでしょうか。今一度考えてみてください。

数年前、開教使として赴任してから二年半経ったくらいに、フレスノ別院で行われたJR YBAカンファレンスのゲストスピーカーとして呼ばれた時のことです。カンファレンスの朝、フレスノ別院でカンファレンスが行われると信じてやまなかった私は、GPSに「フレスノ別

院」と入力してフレスノ別院へと向かいました。しかし、いざそこに着いてみると車が一台も停まっています。私はのんきに「セントラルの方々は少々ゆっくりなのだ。」と思っておりましたけれども、五分、十分と経っても誰も来ません。そこでこれは何か間違えたのではないかとようやく気づき、電話してみると、フレスノ別院ではなく「フレスノダルマセンター」でカンファレンスがあるということでした。その時既に朝の八時四十分! さでどうしたものかと焦っている時に、その当時フレスノ別院で働いておられたライ先生が、偶然にも別院にお供えのお花を取りに来られました。そこで「ライ先生に事情を説明すると、頼もしく「付いておいで!」と私の車をリードしてくださり、無事に(五分遅刻しましたが)ダルマセンターへとたどり着くことが出来ました。」

ここで私の失敗は、他の人に確認することなく自分の思うことが正しいと思い行動したことにあります。このような失敗は皆さんにもあるのではないのでしょうか? 本当は「よりどころ」とするには頼りなく、危なっかしい私であるにもかかわらず、私こそが正しいと思ひ込み、「私」を「よりどころ」としてはいけません。間違ったものを「よりどころ」とすれば結果も間違い、必ず迷うことになってしまいます。そのような頼りなく、危なっかしい私を「よりどころ」とするのはなく、他の声を聞くこと、外からの呼びかけに耳を傾けていくことが大切であります。

私はライ先生に付いて行くことでダルマセンターへと着くことが出来たわけですが、そこには「本当にライ先生は道を知っているのだろうか?」などという疑念はありませんでした。なぜならば、ライ先生はフレスノ別院の開教使でしたからダルマセンターへの道は知っておられるからです。「付いておいで!」という呼びかけに対して、私はただただ「ありがとうございます! 付いていきます!」と返事をすることのみでした。

中国の善導大師の『観経疏』の中には有名な

二河白道のお話があります。そのお話の中で釈迦さまは「この道を行きなさい」と勧められ、「この道を行きなさい」と阿彌陀さまは招いてくださって知られるとあります。私達はさとりへと至る道は知りません。なぜならばさとりへと至ったことはないからです。しかし、お悟りを開かれたお釈迦さまが「この道を行きなさい」と勧めくださって知られる道があります。そして、お浄土というお悟りの世界を建立された阿彌陀さまが「この道を行きなさい」と招いてくださって知られる道があります。お釈迦様も阿彌陀さまも、それがさとりの世界へとたどり着く道であるご存知であるからお勧めくださり、お招きくださって知られるわけです。ですから、さとりへと至ったことのない私が「本当かな? こうした方がよいのではないか?」などと疑っても意味の無いことです。先ほどの話で言うならば、道を知っているライ先生が「付いておいで!」とおっしゃっているのに、道を知らない私が「いや、違う道の方が確実だから私はこの道を行きます」と言うようなものです。それでは余計に迷うだけです。

さて、お釈迦さまが「この道を行きなさい」とお勧めくださり、「この道を行きなさい」と阿彌陀さまがお招きくださって知られる道、それが南無阿彌陀仏のお念仏の道であります。そしてこのお念仏の道を「真のよりどころ」としなさいと私たちにお勧めくださって知られるのが開山親鸞聖人です。

では、「よりどころ」とするということはどういうことだろうか? 私なりに味あわせていただきますと、お勧め、お招きをそのまま頂くとどうでしょうか? お勧め、お招きをそのまま頂くと「南無阿彌陀仏 この道を行きなさい」この道を来なさい」と如来さま方がおっしゃるのに対して、「南無阿彌陀仏 はい、この道を行かせていただきます!」と受け取っていただくことです。お勧め、お招きにおまかせしていただくことが「よりどころ」とするということなのです。

大黒柱の無い家、もろい家はどんなに外が豪華でもすぐに崩れてしまいます。しかし、どんなに古くても大黒柱のしっかりしている家は崩れません。同じように、「よりどころ」の確実な人生はどんなに着飾ってみてもフラフラふらふらと迷いの世界を彷徨い続けることに終始して空しく過ぎていってしまいます。しかし、しっかりとした「よりどころ」のある人生というのはいま「今」という時をしっかりと歩んでいくことの出来るものとなります。

さて、私達は本当にしっかりとした「よりどころ」を持っているのでしょうか? いつも私たちが相談しているのは自分の心ではないでしょうか? 最初に申しましたように自分の心ほど頼りないものはありません。私たちはどうしても他人には厳しいけれど、自分には甘い所があります。そのような自分を頼りにしても迷うばかりです。しかし、その迷っている私に向かって、「南無阿彌陀仏 この道を行きなさい」この道を行きなさい」と如来さま方は呼び続けてくださっておられます。その呼び声を「よりどころ」として、一日一日を生かさせていただく。それが念仏者の姿ではないでしょうか。

五月は親鸞聖人のご誕生をお祝いする「降誕会」の月です。この降誕会を機縁として今一度、私たちの「真のよりどころ」となるお念仏のみ教えを聞かせていただきます。

合掌

## YouTubeにて公開中

一面の記事にあるWEHOPEで行われたダルマソンと、春の聞法セミナーの様子がYouTubeで見ることが出来ます。ダルマソンは、2015 WEHOPE Dharmatho Seminarのタイトルで検索するといつでも視聴、聞法できるようになっています。ご法話を録画、編集等をする機器の購入のために、河野行道メモリアル基金がドネーションをしてくださった。



## 今月の一校

南カリフォルニアシニアYBAのセミナー@ガーデナ仏教会。  
テーマは「Love is an Open Door」で、キリスト教の教義など他宗教について学んだ。



Sothern California Sr. YBA members having their study session at Gardena Buddhist Temple.

4月25日に発生したネパールの地震で被害にあわれた皆様にご心よりのお見舞いを申し上げます。

BCA本部に入った情報により、カトマンズ本願寺のソナムプティヤ先生は無事のことです。

被災者の方々への寄付を募る案内を届ける予定にしていますので、ご協力をお願いいたします。



# 法輪

2015年5月号

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二〇一五年度教化標語  
「まことの人生を  
歩もう」

あの記事をもう一度!  
法輪のバックナンバー  
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<http://buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/about-us/wheel-of-dharma>

## 西と東の合同研修会

### WEHOPE

4月14日(火)から17日(金)の4日間、北米、カナダ、ハワイ、南米の浄土真宗本願寺派(西本願寺)海外開教区有志による研修会が開催され、28名が浄土真宗センターに集った。3回目となる今回は真宗大谷派(東本願寺)の開教使も多数参加。東・西本願寺の開教使による研修会であるため従来の名称「HOPE (International Honwanji Overseas Propagation Exchange 本願寺国際伝道研鑽会)」を「WEHOPE (West and East Honwanji Overseas Propagation Exchange 西東本願寺国際伝道研鑽会)」と改めた。研修会では両派の参加者がそれぞれのお勤めをし、作法や節のの違いに触れた。更に教義や制度などの相違点についても学びあった。15日、16日には18名の開教使がそれぞれ約8分の法話をする「ダルマソン」が行



国際伝道研鑽会)を「WEHOPE (West and East Honwanji Overseas Propagation Exchange 西東本願寺国際伝道研鑽会)」と改めた。研修会では両派の参加者がそれぞれのお勤めをし、作法や節の違いに触れた。更に教義や制度などの相違点についても学びあった。15日、16日には18名の開教使がそれぞれ約8分の法話をする「ダルマソン」が行



われ参加者や聴聞に訪れた者が耳をすました。参加者は「いろいろな開教区の先生がお念仏のお話をされているのを聞いて、親鸞聖人のみ教えは、宗派や国籍人種、性別を超えて世界中で受け入れられているのだな、と思いましたが。」と感激していました。

研修会には梅津総長、カナダ開教区の青木総長、真宗大谷派の開教監督伊東師など、各開教区をリードする僧侶も集い海外伝道への想いをあらたにした。

## 総長コラム

米国仏教団総長 梅津廣道

日本の兄から結婚式の招待状を受け取りました。結婚するのは、近い将来兄が住職をしている福岡の田舎の寺を継ぐことになる人です。彼は兄嫁の甥にあたる人です。結婚したあと、ゆくゆくは夫婦で寺に入り、住職として活躍してくださいることになっています。

ご存知のように、アメリカでは日本とは事情が大きく異なっています。各地の仏教団に駐在する開教使は、総長室が任命することになっています。そして、その開教使の養成も教団が行っているのです。そのために、戦争が終わった後、当時のリーダー達は仏教大学院をまず設立したので

## 春の聞法セミナー

4月4日(土)に毎年恒例の春の日本語聞法会が浄土真宗センターで開催された。今回のご講師にはサンマテオ仏教会のアダムス・ヘンリー開教使と真宗大谷派前北米・ハワイ開教監督の今井亮徳師が招かれた。

アダムス師は「在家の法門、お念仏と家庭生活」の講題で話し、浄土真宗の特徴である在家仏教の観点から家庭での念仏やお仏壇を中心とした生活の重要性を説いた。今井師は「御縁」について話し、自身が海外で僧侶となったいきさつや、北米、ハワイでの多くのご門徒さんとの出会いのありがたさを伝えた。毎回お参りされている参加者は「日本語で法話が聞ける浄土真宗センターでの聞法セミナーをいつも楽しみにしています。いろいろな先生方のお話が聞けるのがありがたいです。それに、毎回違うメニューの



す。アメリカ生まれの人が僧侶になって、仏教、とくに親鸞聖人の教えを英語で伝えて欲しいという願いから、そのような専門学校が設立されたのです。

日本でもアメリカでも僧侶になろうとする人を育成するには、関係者の協力と理解が必要です。お金も時間もかかるし、忍耐も必要になってきます。大切なことは私たちの願いです。そして、小杭総長の時代に特に入れたのが、各地の開教使をお手伝いするアシスタントのプログラムです。現在では百五十名のアシスタントが活躍しています。その中でより深く学びたいという人たちは仏教大学院のクラスを受講しています。その中の何名かは将来開教使として活躍されるでしょうし、もしたとえ開教使にならなくても、いろいろな方面で伝道に従事して下さることだと思います。



美味しいランチも用意して下さって、最高です。また秋にも来たいです。」と耳と舌で聞法の集いを楽しんだ。

教団の任務は、仏法僧の三宝を敬いそれを広く伝え、また浄土真宗を弘める、というようになっていきます。この中にある仏法僧を三つの宝とすることは、仏教の基本であります。仏と法を敬うことと同様に、僧を敬うということは大切な徳目となっています。僧というのは、一生を法に捧げるといふことを決意し、実行している人たちです。開教使も僧の一員です。

お寺を護持し、法を聞き、そのお手伝いをして下さる開教使を大切にすることは、仏教会が未永く発展する基礎です。どうか、皆さまもそのことを理解していただきたいと思ひます。

日本の私が育ったお寺も、住職を大切にしてください。寺です。このたび、よい後継者を得て、これからも「コミュニティ」とともに発展していくことだと確信しています。