

WHEEL OF DHARMA

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ISSUE 1

Winter Pacific Seminar Keynote Speaker: Prof. Tomoyasu Naito, Kangaku



Prof. Tomoyasu Naito, Kangaku (the highest academic rank within the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha), and Professor Emeritus of Shinshu Studies at Ryukoku University in Kyoto, Japan, will be the keynote speaker for the 2015 Winter Pacific Seminar. Presented by the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) and the BCA Center for Buddhist Education (CBE), this event will take place at the Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple, 1427 S. Main Street, Seattle, Washington, on Saturday, March 7, 2015 from 9 am – 4 pm. Prof. Naito will present the keynote message, “Life of Awakening: True Teaching” in Japanese with English translation provided by Rev. Mutsumi Wondra of the Orange County Buddhist Church. Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara, CBE Co-director and Coordinator of the Hongwanji Jodo Shinshu Correspondence Course, will make

additional presentations in English.

Registration for the seminar is \$30, which includes lunch. To register, send name of registrant, address, and email or phone number with a check made payable to “Seattle Betsuin.” Please write in check memo “Winter Pacific Seminar” and mail to the Seattle Betsuin at the address above, Attn: Winter Pacific Seminar. Email: office@seattlebetsuin.com or phone: (206) 329-0800. Registration deadline is February 23. Online registration will be available in February. Visit www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org

Born in Osaka Prefecture in 1945, Prof. Naito is a graduate of Ryukoku University and the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Shugakuin. He is a member of the Hongwanji Kangaku Committee of Special Advisors to the Gomonshu, and Resident Minister of Kakujoji Temple in Fukui, Japan. He has published several books in Japanese and is widely recognized for his orthodox interpretations of Hongwanji doctrine.

The Pacific Seminar - 21st Century program seeks to carry on the tradition of a lifelong pursuit of the dharma, begun in the 1950s at the Berkeley Buddhist

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New Year's Greeting from Gomonshu Kojun Ohtani

As we mark the beginning of a new year, I extend to you my greetings.

Last year, since having succeeded the Jodo Shinshu tradition in June, I have taken on the posts as the resident *jusboku* minister of Hongwanji-ha and the Monshu of Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha. Living among today's society in which the conditions are quickly changing, I shall help share the Jodo Shinshu teaching with as many people as possible, so that it will become a principle religious foundation for daily living. To do so, I humbly ask for your support.

The Jodo Shinshu teaching was expounded by Shinran Shonin. Since then, the teaching has been transmitted for well over 790 years, reaching us here today in this present day and age. This is because regardless of time and location, the Nembutsu teaching has always been able to serve any persons as a spiritual guidance to their life. Buddhism detaches from self-absorption and encourages living a life based on the Dharma.

However, due to our own limitations being unable to put this into practice, we are faced with sadness and suffering.

Shinran Shonin has taught us that it has been predetermined that we will be led to the Pure Land and attain Buddhahood through the working of Amida Buddha. With the working of Amida Buddha's infinite wisdom and compassion, we are enabled to realize one's true self through the Truth.

In closing, let us live a life reciting the Nembutsu as we receive the Dharma.

January 1, 2015

OHTANI Kojun
Monshu
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

(Translation provided by the Hongwanji International Department)



By Rev. Kodo Umezu
BCA Bishop

Hard is it to be born into human life. Now we are living it. Difficult is it to bear the Teachings of the Blessed One. Now we hear it. If we do not realize the Truth in this life, when will it be realized? Let us reverently take refuge in the Three Treasures of the Truth.

We greet each other by saying “Happy New Year” when a new year arrives. Have you ever thought about the deep meaning of what we are saying? What is *real* happiness for us?

So many things are happening in this world today, including in my personal life. What we are experiencing now is nothing new. There are and

have been personal disputes, social disorders, wars, and so on for as long as people have existed in this world.

Because of my personal experiences as Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America, I have been thinking a lot about a saying by Prince Shotoku (574-622), who is one of the most important figures in Japanese history and in the history of Buddhism. Shinran Shonin was so influenced by Prince Shotoku that he expressed his joy and gratitude to him in his poems called *Wasan*. As a matter of fact, the original *Ondokusan* had two verses; the second verse was in praise of Prince Shotoku.

Prince Shotoku was a bright individual and helped the central government as Regent. He is credited with promulgating a Seventeen-article constitution based on Buddhist ideals. I would like to quote a section of the tenth article below.

“Let us control ourselves and not be resentful when others disagree with us, for all men have hearts and each heart has its own leanings. The right of others is our wrong, and our right

is their wrong. We are not unquestionably sages, nor are they unquestionably fools. Both of us are simply ordinary men.”

Shinran Shonin referred to ordinary people as foolish beings, or *bonbu*.

There is something similar to this quote in Shinran Shonin's sayings. It is in *Tannisho* written by his disciple, Yuien. Let me share the section.

“I know nothing at all of good or evil. For if I could know thoroughly, as Amida Tathagata knows, that an act was good, then I would know good. If I could know thoroughly, as the Tathagata knows, that an act was evil, then I would know evil. But with a foolish being full of blind passions, in this fleeting world—this burning house—all matters without exception are empty and false, totally without truth and sincerity. The nembutsu alone is true and real.” (*Collected Works of Shinran, p. 679*)

In our world, everyone is trying to do something “good.” In other words, everyone is right. However, what is

Continued on Page 6

Happy New Year!

Step by Step
Awaken Shin Buddhism in your
Everyday Life—Spread the
Circle of Nembutsu

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Share the Joy of the Jodo Shinshu Teachings
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January 1: New Year's Day – Shusho-e

Shin Buddhism views New Year's Day as a time to reflect and, with renewed dedication, to endeavor to live a life of gratitude and joy. New Year's Day service originated in Japan during the Nara period (710-794 CE) This service is held during the morning on January 1. – Excerpt used by permission, *Shin Buddhist Service Book*, Buddhist Education Center, Orange County Buddhist Church

January 16: Shinran Shonin Go-Shoki Hoon-ko

Hoon-ko is the main service in our tradition and is the origin of our religious organization. The term “Hoon-ko” means “a service or a gathering to express appreciation” and is used by many other Buddhist orders in Japan. Therefore, the Hoon-ko that we observe is formally called “Shinran Shonin Go-shoki Hoon-ko” to specify that the service is a gathering to express our appreciation for Shinran Shonin on his memorial day...

“While growing up in Japan, during my grammar school years, my temple in Fukuoka observed Hoon-ko for an entire week, from January 2 to January 9...Our Hoon-ko was one of the biggest events in my village. It required every villager to come out and help put on the services...”

Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop
Excerpt from “My Appreciation for Shinran Shonin,” *Wheel of Dharma*, January 2014



Hoon-ko: Shinran Shonin's Annual Memorial Service



By Rev. Henry Adams,
San Mateo Buddhist Temple

In the Jodo Shinshu School of Buddhism, it is customary to hold an annual Ho'onko 報恩講 (pronounced HOE-OWN-KOH) Memorial Service in remembrance of Shinran Shonin (1173-1262), the Japanese Buddhist priest who we look to as the founder of our tradition. At the Nishi Hongwanji Temple in Kyoto, Japan, the Hoonko observance is held each year from January 9th to 16th, culminating

in an all-night Dharma marathon of talks by ministers from all over Japan. The tradition of annual Ho'onko services was initiated by Shinran's great-grandson Kakunyo during the 33rd Year Memorial Service for Shinran. In temples of the Jodo Shinshu tradition, Ho'onko is considered to be the most important Buddhist service of the year.

If we conducted a survey of our Sangha members asking everyone which of our annual Buddhist services is most important, we wouldn't be surprised to hear many responses along the lines of Hanamatsuri (Sakyamuni Buddha's Birthday) or Obon (the grateful remembrance of departed loved ones that we hold every summer). Of all the Buddhist services we observe throughout the year, why is Shinran's Memorial Service traditionally given the most emphasis?

As with all Buddhist traditions, the teachings of the Jodo Shinshu school are based on the truth that

Sakyamuni Buddha awakened to when he realized enlightenment sitting under the Bodhi Tree at the age of 35. Our sacred scriptures, the *sutras*, tell us that Sakyamuni spent the next 45 years teaching the Dharma until his *parinirvana* at the age of 80. During those 45 years of teaching, he provided 84,000 Dharma Gates, all of which are teachings that lead to true awakening and liberation from suffering. The standard collection of the Buddha's sermons in Chinese translation fills an entire shelf with large volumes in fine print.

It would be very difficult for a simple person like me to read the entire Buddhist canon of sutras and master their meaning. Even Shinran, who had extensive knowledge of the Buddhist sutras from 20 years of study as a monk on Mount Hiei and years of guidance under his wise teacher Honen, concluded that he could not realize perfect awakening through the power of

his own study and practice.

Through his encounter with Honen, Shinran realized that all of the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha's enlightenment is contained in the words "NA MO A MI DA BUTSU 南無阿弥陀仏." In his "Hymn of True Entrusting Heart and the Nembutsu" (*Shoshin Nembutsuge*), Shinran expresses the meaning of these six Chinese characters as "I take refuge in the Tathagata of Immeasurable Life! / I entrust myself to the Buddha of Inconceivable Light!" Following in the tradition of Honen, Shinran taught that anyone who entrusts their life to the compassion of the Buddha and expresses their joy and gratitude in the words "Namo Amida Butsu" will unfailingly realize Birth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. To be born in the Pure Land is to realize a life of perfect awakening and a life that is free from the suffering of greed, anger, and ignorance.

The recitation of the name of Amida Buddha in the words "Namo Amida Butsu" is called the nembutsu, and expresses the joyful awareness that sustains the life of a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist. Shinran clarified the nembutsu teaching as a path that all of us can follow to experience the truth of the Buddha's awakening in our own lives, regardless of our intellectual abilities or circumstances in life.

Without Sakyamuni Buddha's teachings the true Dharma would not exist in this world for me to encounter. Without Shinran Shonin as a guide, I would not be able to find my way to realize the truth of the Buddha's teaching in my own life. For me, Ho'onko is the most significant service of the year because it is the opportunity to express my gratitude for Shinran's teachings and reflect on the guidance they provide for my life.

In gassho.

Plans and Resolutions

By Rev. Diana Thompson,
Tri-State/Denver
Buddhist Temple

*The doors of the year open,
like the doors of language,
onto the unknown.*
— Octavio Paz

Hello everyone, and Happy New Year! The above quote is taken from a poem entitled "January First" and, though not directly Buddhist, it has always struck me as something that speaks to the truth of impermanence. As Buddhists we are taught to view the world around us as ever changing. While we may understand this intellectually, it can be a difficult thing to accept when faced with huge changes, i.e., the "big three": sickness, old age, and death. However, New Years is a time when most people (not just Buddhists) take time to review the past and prepare to make changes or adjustments for the future. If the previous year was difficult, we try to make it better. If the previous year was successful, we try to figure out what we were doing right and at least try to stay the

course. It is a positive time of year when we see that change can be positive and full of possibilities. Whatever sufferings we have endured in the past year can be somehow dimmed or even erased through our resolutions and we look forward to whatever is to come. I enjoy this overall attitude of hope during New Years. Everything does indeed seem shiny and new and though the door of the New Year is a familiar one, I am always interested to see what lies behind it because the truth is that despite our best efforts and planning, no one really knows what will happen when we cross that threshold.

I myself never make New Year's resolutions. I like to think that this decision has nothing to do with an over-inflated sense of my general awesomeness, and yet to some degree, that is exactly what it is. I have convinced myself that I can foretell the future and therefore assume that having a plan is a fool's errand because nothing will happen the way it is supposed to anyway. "What a downer!" you are no doubt thinking and yes, even as I

write these words I see how nihilistic this particular line of thinking is. On the one hand, it has saved me some modicum of disappointment (if one has no expectations, things can't turn out "right" or "wrong") but on the flip-side of that, sometimes failure to plan can lead to stagnation.

Plans help us to move forward and I have come to realize that accepting change is less a matter of blind acceptance than it is a matter of adapting. My job requires a lot of planning, but it also requires a lot of adaptation. No matter how well thought out and meticulously planned a service or lecture is, there is the potential for something to happen that requires adaptation. For instance, we often get school groups on field trips at the temple during the week. I have a regular spiel prepared but with so many different kids of different age groups, I cannot prepare for every question that could come up, particularly from the middle school kids who are singularly adept at throwing curve-balls. I know to expect anything, but if I did not plan ahead at all it



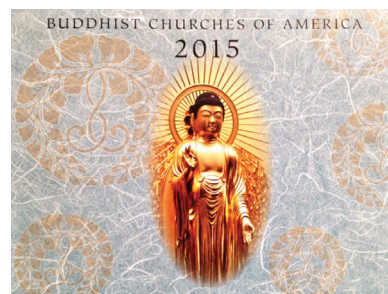
would be much worse. All of us would be sitting in silence and no one would be happy.

And so as the doors of this year open, step boldly into the unknown. We know that we are small foolish beings, but this simply means that we have the potential for great learning. Knowing that we know nothing makes us more willing to gain knowledge. So even if you make a New Year's resolution and drop it after a few weeks (or days; some are more dedicated than others), know that you have not failed but have learned something new about yourself and accept with gratitude the unexpected.

Namu Amida Butsu

Enjoy the 2015 BCA Calendar

Now available through your local temples or the BCA Bookstore. This year's calendar once again offers you a glimpse at the altars and Gohonzon (central image of Amida in statue, scroll, or Myogo form) of our churches and temples and a selection of calligraphy of Shinran Shonin's Wasan by BCA ministers and lay people. It also includes a convenient listing of BCA temples with contact information at the back!



Buddhist Church of Oakland
825 Jackson Street
Oakland, CA 94607
Tel: (510) 832-5988
www.buddhistchurchofoakland.org

Buddhist Church of Oakland

At the turn of the 20th century, some early Japanese immigrants who had settled in Oakland, just across the water from San Francisco, voiced a desire to hear and receive the Dharma. Their spiritual needs were provided by the services of Rev. Tetsuei Mizuki and Rev. Kakuryo Nishijima who would visit Oakland once a month from San Francisco. The enthusiasm generated from this group of young Issei first generation Japanese eventually led to the founding of the Buddhist Church of Oakland in 1901. Property at the corner of Sixth and Jackson Streets in Oakland was acquired and the current two story church was built and dedicated in 1927. George Gentoku Shimamoto, a then recent graduate of UC Berkeley, was given the opportunity to design and build the church as one of his first projects. With the construction of the 880 Nimitz Freeway in 1950, the church had to be relocated. Cut in half, the church was moved in two sections and put back together at its current location at Ninth and Jackson Streets. Today, the Buddhist Church of Oakland enjoys a rich 113 year history of sharing the Nembutsu teaching with people from all walks of life.

BCA theme
for 2015
"Live a Real Life"



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

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By Dr. Kent Matsuda
BCA President
Enmanji Buddhist Temple

President's Message

Happy Year of the Sheep/Ram!

On behalf of the Buddhist Churches of America's Executive Committee and the National Board, I would like to express my sincere wishes for a wonderful 2015 to all BCA temples, ministers, retired ministers, headquarters staff, members, and friends.

During this coming year, I hope to be able to demonstrate to you that the BCA is working hard on being a meaningful resource for temples, ministers, and members. To that end, we have made significant changes to the structure of our upcoming National Council Meeting that will be held in San Diego. This is an ongoing process and one that welcomes your comments and suggestions.

Together, I hope that we can all come to appreciate the True Teachings that have been provided by those who came before us. In gratitude for your support and comments, I would like to wish each of you a Happy Year of the Sheep/Ram.

Winter MAP Closes CBE Programs for 2014



The final Minister's Assistant Program (MAP) of 2014 was held from December 11-13. Fourteen minister's assistants from six Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) districts braved severe winds and rain to attend, coming from as far away as the East Coast.

Pictured front row from left to right are Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) Co-director, Rev. Marvin Harada; Dorothy Richeda (Salt Lake), Sensei Anne Spencer (Idaho-Oregon), Erick Ishii (Ekoji), Sensei Paul Vielle (Spokane), and Sensei Akemi Ishida (New York).

In the second row from left to right are Sensei Tadao Koyama (Florin), Michael Tang (Arizona), George Thow (Enmanji), John Hughes (Longmont), Mark VanDyke (Mountain View), James Pollard (Orange County), Rosalie May (Seattle), Sensei Gary Jaskula (New York), Sensei Kory Quon (Gardena), and Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara, CBE Co-director.

The MAP continues to grow and progress as another 13 BCA minister's assistants received Tokudo ordination last November, including Koyama sensei.

Coming in April: "WEHOPE" West & East Hongwanji Overseas Propagation Exchange

The BCA Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) will host the third gathering of international Jodo Shinshu ministers at the Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC) on April 14-17, 2015. This year's seminar is called the West and East Hongwanji Overseas Propagation Exchange (WEHOPE). This is a variation of the International Hongwanji Overseas Propagation Exchange (IHOPE) started in 2011. The name change represents the fact that there will also be Kaikyoshi ministers of the Shinshu Ohtani-ha (Higashi Honganji) as well as from the Jodo

Shinshu Hongwanji-ha (Nishi Hongwanji) attending.

This event will provide opportunities for currently assigned Kaikyoshi ministers, Kyoshi ministers, and ministers' assistants with Tokudo ordination from Hawaii, Canada, South America, Shinshu Ohtani-ha, and the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) to come together to study and exchange ideas about the future of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist movement.

The WEHOPE Planning Committee members are: Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara, BCA/CBE; Bishop Tatsuya Aoki,

Canada; Rev. Kojo Kaki-hara, BCA; Rev. Jay Shingo Okamoto and Rev. David Fujimoto, Hawaii; Rev. Koken Sugao and Rev. Genyu Katata, Brazil. The deadline is Feb. 13, 2015. Due to space limitations, priority for registration and JSC rooms is as follows: Kaikyoshi, Kyoshi and Tokudo ministers/minister's assistants, in that order. Early registration is advised.

For registration details, please contact Rev. Kaki-hara (email: kojo-suiko-zan@hotmail.com.jp) or Rev. Henry Adams (email: henry.t.adams@gmail.com).

Go-Shoki Ho On-Ko Service Shinran Shonin's Memorial Day Friday, January 16, 2015 1 p.m.

Jodo Shinshu Center - 2140 Durant Avenue, Berkeley, CA
All are welcome to commemorate this special occasion.

Expanded Dharma Events for All 2015 National Council Meeting's New Format At the Crowne Plaza Hotel & San Diego Buddhist Temple, San Diego

February 26 (Thurs. 1:00-4:30 p.m.)

"Buddhism & Counseling"

A Symposium for the BCA National Council Meeting will be sponsored by the Institute for Buddhist Education (IBS) and the BCA Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, San Diego. The featured speakers are: Dr. Daijaku Kinst, IBS Chaplaincy Program; Dr. David Pating, a Kaiser psychiatrist and BCSF minister's assistant; Dr. Carmella Javellana Hirano, psychiatrist and founder of SHIN (Sanctuary for Healing and Integration) in Salt Lake City, UT and SLBC minister's assistant; SHIN counseling staff members: Dr. Robert Weitzel and David Black; and Dr. David Hirohama, clinical psychologist and counselor, OCBC's Mindfulness Center. The symposium is open to any of the delegates and boosters to the National Council, and the interested public.

February 27 & 28 (Fri. & Sat. 2:00-4:30 p.m.)

"Dharmathon - Expand the Experience"

As part of the BCA National Council Meeting's new format, the IBS and CBE will present a series of dharma talks. Speakers TBA. Crown Plaza Hotel, San Diego. Open to National Council delegates, booster and the interested public.

Contact: CBE at cbe@bcahq.org

"Qualities & Strengths of Shin Buddhism"

By Rev. Kenji Akahoshi
Buddhist Temple of San Diego



Rev. Dr. Ken Tanaka presented an all-day workshop at the Buddhist Temple of San Diego on November 22, 2014, with 70 participants attending. His topic "Qualities and Strengths

of Shin Buddhism" was delivered in three sessions: Humor, Metaphors, and Action. It ended in the *Hondo* with a moving experience of Nembutsu meditation. An active question and answer session followed a group dinner. Rev. Tanaka graciously signed his popular book, *Ocean*, for those who had purchased it. Participants enjoyed the clarity of his presentation and will surely share the wisdom of his Buddhist "humor."

The next day, Rev. Dr. Tanaka and Rev. Naoyuki Ogi were guest speakers at the Eitai-kyo Service at the Buddhist Temple of San Diego. This event coincided with the conference of the American Academy of Religion. About a dozen San Diego members, among others, enjoyed a very interesting lecture by Dr. James Dobbins, a noted Shin Buddhist scholar. His talk, titled "D.T. Suzuki and the Making of a Modern Pure Land Buddhism," was hosted by the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies and held at the Omni Hotel in San Diego.



TECHNOBUDDHA MARCH 13-15 2015
JODO SHINSHU CENTER

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE BACHI: THE EXPECTATION OF KARMA

TechnoBuddha is an annual conference where you'll spend quality time reconnecting and networking with amazing young adults between 21 and 39 in the Jodo Shinshu community. With Dr. Jeff Wilson leading the way as our keynote speaker, and exciting active and educational workshops, this conference is shaping up to be a blast!

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

2014 CBE Shinran Shonin Study Tour: Part One

In October, 38 Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) members and friends joined together with Bishop Kodo Umezu and Brian Nagata for the 2014 Shinran Shonin Study Tour sponsored by the BCA Center for Buddhist Education (CBE). We visited sites associated with Shinran Shonin's life, and in particular, his exile years.



Participants in the CBE Shinran Shonin Study Tour were granted an audience with the Gomonsbu of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha, His Eminence Kojun Ohtani, on October 30, 2014. The Gomonsbu is seated in the center, with BCA Bishop, Rev. Kodo Umezu (in red) on his right. Photo by Rev. Yoshibiko Morioka, Hongwanji Press.

The official tour started with a visit to the enormous Tsukiji Hongwanji temple in downtown Tokyo. We were greeted by the temple and Hongwanji staff, including some familiar faces who had previously attended our Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) or other programs at the Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC). We enjoyed lunch at the nearby world famous Tsukiji Fish Market, followed by a visit to the new Tokyo Sky Tree, which is the world's tallest free standing tower and second tallest structure in the world, shooting up into the sky over 2,000 feet. We also visited the Tokyo-Edo Museum and the beautiful Zojoji Temple, the head temple of the Jodo Sect in Tokyo and main temple for the Tokugawa Shogun family.

The next day we traveled out to Ibaragi Prefecture where Shinran spent many years. We visited Sainenji temple, the site of the hermitage where Shinran lived, and Chinsokiji Temple which is said to possess a rock upon which Shinran slept when he was denied lodging in the middle of winter.

We traveled north to the Naoetsu area on the Japan Sea side. There we walked on Kotagahama Beach, where Shinran first landed after he was sent into exile. We



Kotagahama Beach. Photo by Dexter Mar.

recited *Juseige* in gratitude for his determination and sacrifices to share the Nembutsu with all. Later that day, we visited Eshin no Sato, the museum and memorial to Eshinni, Shinran's wife who had resided in this area. That evening we stayed at the Akakura Hotel, a resort owned by a devout Shin Buddhist who placed a huge *obutsudan* in the main lobby sitting area. A staff member said it is still used for services and Dharma talks every year during *Hoanko* season.

"While standing on the sand of Kotagahama Beach...there was a deep sense of the timelessness of our connection with Shinran as we saw the land-seascape that confronted him some 800 years ago," reflected Dexter Mar, a member of the Hawaii Betsuin (Honolulu). "The simplicity of the countryside was so very different than that of the temple city of Kyoto."

Traveling through Japan during the early fall allowed us to see the beautiful changing colors of the foliage. We walked across the Kurobe Dam (Japan's biggest dam) using seven different modes of transportation.

The Japanese Alps is a very devout Jodo Shinshu area, and the Nembutsu influence on daily life is quite evident in the local culture. Because Shin Buddhism does not believe in superstitions or amulets, local residents have sought out herbal and chemical remedies for ailments and illnesses for more than 300 years. We visited the Kokando Pharmaceutical Company which initiated a unique business practice several hundred years ago: Most Japanese homes today have a medicine chest which is refilled by "medicine peddlers" from Kokando. They come to the house once a year, take inventory, replace the medicines which were consumed during the year, and issue a bill for the medicines used, which the customer then pays.

We visited the World Heritage Site called Shirakawa-go, with amazing "*Gassho-zukuri*" thatched roof houses. They are so named because the angle of the roof beams appear to be in the shape of hands in *gassho* (palms together). This cultural heritage site is tucked in between steep mountains and was founded by Shin Buddhists. From Shirakawa-go we continued on our way to Takayama, Nagoya, and then Kyoto.

End of Part One. Part Two will appear in the February Issue of the Wheel of Dharma.

Jodo Shinshu Correspondence Course - Monthly Essay

This article was written in response to an assignment for the JSCC and reflects the author's individual understanding of this topic.

Visit: www.JSCC.cbe-bca.org for course details



Why did Shinran Shonin write *Kyogyoshinsho*, which was far too scholarly for the majority of his followers?

By Janis Hirohama
Orange County Buddhist Church

Although some of Shinran's writing was accessible for the average person, not all of his works were created for that audience. His output ran the gamut, ranging from hymns (*wasan*) in Japanese that were short, emotionally accessible, and readily understood, to his *magnum opus*, the *Kyogyoshinsho*, an intellectually challenging work written in Chinese characters. The more complex and sophisticated writings of Shinran were intended for himself and his key disciples—and for posterity—but not for the general public. The *Kyogyoshinsho*, in particular, fulfilled several important and mutually reinforcing purposes: to codify and share his teachings in order to facilitate their dissemination, continuation, and further development; to set forth a testament of his deepest beliefs; and to share his understanding of the Nembutsu path and distinguish it from other teachings during the age of *Mappo*.

By the time Shinran began the *Kyogyoshinsho*, he was 52 years old, an advanced age in an era of short life spans. He was facing the reality of his own mortality. At the same time, his followers had increased dramatically in number after his move to the Kanto region. Without intending to do so, he had become the founder of a mass religious movement. Founders and leaders of religious movements naturally feel the need and the responsibility to clearly set forth their beliefs as a guide for their followers. Shinran knew that if his teachings were to continue after his death, he had to write them out for his disciples (including his family members), in order to make a clear record and help avoid future doctrinal misinterpretations. The *Kyogyoshinsho* was his primary vehicle for doing so.

Furthermore, it appears that for Shinran the *Kyogyoshinsho* was a grand summation. As a profound and ultimately deeply personal statement of his beliefs, in a sense it was written as much for himself as for anyone else. It was the culmination of decades of study, practice, and life experience. By the time he wrote it, he had spent twenty years as a monk on Mt. Hiei, studied with Honen, married and fathered children, was exiled to Echigo where he shared the Nembutsu teaching with the common people, and moved to the Kanto area where his teachings had spread widely to as many as 100,000 followers. He had, by then, reached his great understanding of the Nembutsu teaching. The teachings and insights reflected in the *Kyogyoshinsho* were the fruit of a lifetime; Shinran was not able to write this testament of his deepest beliefs until he reached maturity. It is not surprising, then, that he devoted many years to this ultimate expression of his life's work. Furthermore, many of his writings, with the *Shobshinge* (Hymn of True Faith) being a prime example, expressed his deep gratitude and indebtedness to his teachers, particularly the Seven Pure Land Masters. Having developed what he believed to be a true teaching that drew on the work of those earlier masters, his documenting his teachings in the *Kyogyoshinsho* may have served as another expression of deep gratitude to them—sharing his teachings just as those masters had written and shared their teachings.

Shinran's desire to document and share his understanding of the Dharma, particularly the Nembutsu teaching, may have been given further impetus by his belief that we are living in the "Last Dharma Age" (*Mappo*). If salvation is no longer attainable through self-power practices, Shinran may have felt compelled to demonstrate that the only possible path was that of the Nembutsu. His conclusion that the Path of Sages was no longer viable in the time of *Mappo* may have given him an urgent sense of mission—a feeling that he had to set forth his teachings, show how they differed from other teachings, and prove that the Nembutsu was the only way forward. In a sense, he was using the *Kyogyoshinsho* to make his best argument for the Nembutsu teaching.

In fulfilling its multiple roles—as a detailed guide to Shinran's teachings for his disciples, as an intellectual and educated man's testament of personal belief, and as a passionate argument for his understanding of the Nembutsu teaching as the only viable path to salvation in the age of *Mappo*—the *Kyogyoshinsho* had to be thoroughly researched and deeply based in earlier scholarship. This is evident from the fact that its content quoted extensively from classical Buddhist texts, which required Shinran's return to Kyoto so he could have better access to the textual resources needed to complete the book. While the Nembutsu teaching is meant for everyone, Shinran wrote the *Kyogyoshinsho* for a specific audience and for specific purposes that necessitated the use of scholarly language. However, it ultimately benefited his followers of all backgrounds by enabling his teachings to be documented and propagated.

Janis Hirohama and her husband Jim Pollard are members of the Orange County Buddhist Church, where she administers the Facebook page for the Buddhist Education Center and volunteers on publications. She is currently enrolled in the Jodo Shinshu Correspondence Course.

CBE 2015 Tentative Calendar of Events (at the Jodo Shinshu Center unless noted otherwise. Dates and programming subject to change.)

January 16: Hoonko Service
March 7: Winter Pacific Seminar @ Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple. Speaker: Prof. Tomoyasu Naito. Co-sponsored by Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS)
March 13-15: TechnoBuddha Conference with Dr. Jeff Wilson * **April 4:** Japanese Seminar
April 14-17: West & East Hongwanji Overseas Propagation Exchange (WEHOPE) Gathering and Ministers' Continuing Education (MCE) Seminar
May 21: Gotan-e Service * **June 27:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) Seminar @ New York Buddhist Church. Speaker: Dr. Jeff Wilson
July 3-5: Summer Pacific Seminar with Rev. Sonam Bhutia Wangdi and Ashma Lama (Co-sponsored by IBS) & Summer MAP Seminar
August 1: Jodo Shinshu Correspondence Course (JSCC) August Workshop

September 18-21: Eastern District Speaking Tour (TBD)
October 3: Baby Boomers' Seminar * **October 10:** Japanese Seminar
October 15-17: Ministers' Continuing Education (MCE) Seminar in Salt Lake City in conjunction with the 2015 Parliament of the World's Religions
November 13-15: CBE Music Seminar

Minister's Assistant Program (MAP) Schedule

March 26-28: Spring MAP seminar
July 3-5: Summer MAP (in conjunction with Summer Pacific Seminar)
September 24-26: Fall MAP
December 10-12: Winter MAP

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



BCA Education News & Highlights - Live a Real Life!

Amida Buddha's Resolution

by Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara, CBE Co-director

In the past year, we at CBE coordinated various programs. I appreciate that many people attended them and hope that all attendees had a good time and deepened their appreciation of Dharma. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to all CBE staff members and volunteers who devotedly supported those programs. We will coordinate various programs this year as well. We at CBE look forward to your participation in the programs.

At the beginning of the New Year, I think some of us have established resolutions. Mine would be this: "Don't eat too much and do more exercise." Our resolutions tend to be about ourselves. This is mainly because we know what needs to be improved. It is natural that our resolutions focus on that.

In addition to our own resolutions, there is another resolution established by Amida Buddha in order for us to live more profound and fulfilled lives. It is sometimes called the Primal Vow or *Hongwan* in Japanese. It could be said that Jodo Shinshu is the path in which we carefully listen to what Amida Buddha's resolution for us is and why Amida Buddha established it for us.

To deeply consider Amida Buddha's resolution could lead us to a deeper realization of ourselves, because it is all about us. By doing this, we can come to a deeper resolution about how to live our daily lives on a deeper level than just "Don't eat too much and do more exercise."

I hope that CBE programs will help us lead a fulfilled life with Amida Buddha.

Special Feature

I was privileged to hear this talk, "Jodo Shinshu: The Supreme Teaching for the Present Age" presented by Rev. John Paraskevopoulos at the 17th European Shin Buddhist Conference at Southampton Solent University, United Kingdom, in September of 2014. It shares the joy of the Nembutsu, and I felt it should be shared with readers in the US. It is being reprinted with the author's permission in six installments. Please enjoy it.

— Rev. Kodo Umezu, Bishop, Buddhist Churches of America

JODO SHINSHU: THE SUPREME TEACHING FOR THE PRESENT AGE (Part I)

by Rev. John Paraskevopoulos

In a world where confusion about values abounds and where many of the old certainties that previously governed our views on life, ethics and religion are crumbling before our eyes, one can be forgiven for feeling lost at sea without any prospect of finding *terra firma*. The spiritual traditions of the world have, each in their own way, endeavored to provide some kind of anchor to keep us rooted in what is, otherwise, a world of shifting sands. And yet, it seems, many of the traditional faiths struggle to keep adherents in the modern world (particularly the West) as the juggernaut of secular humanism encroaches leaving people bewildered as they struggle to find answers to urgent questions; answers that may appear elusive but which remain critical to our well-being.

There are many theories regarding the crisis of modernity, the collapse of traditional values, the loss of faith and the trivialization of our public culture. I do not intend to add to those theories in this presentation. Instead, I will aim to suggest how Shin is uniquely placed to offer a compelling antidote to the spiritual malaise that afflicts us today and how it is exceptionally suited to give ordinary people the inner resources to confront a world where the "three poisons" of greed, anger and ignorance are rampant. While certainly not championing the "superiority" of Shin in any chauvinistic sense, I will nevertheless propose that this tradition is eminently capable of meeting our deepest spiritual needs and, in so doing, furnishing our lives with a quiet undercurrent of abiding joy. This can give us the confidence to face the world as it is, even if we cannot change the ineluctable forces that propel our lives in uncertain and troubling directions.



In reflecting on the teachings of the Pure Land master, Hōnen, a contemporary Zen nun once remarked, "I cannot accept a path that is predicated on the notion of spiritual failure." I think this goes some way towards explaining a number of the difficulties faced by Shin today: the pervading sense of uncertainty regarding these teachings; and the not uncommon feeling of inferiority—that we are somehow not real Buddhists because we are unable to withstand traditional practices. As a result, our commitment to the Dharma has become largely lukewarm and listless. These attitudes have had the debilitating effect of preventing people experiencing the liberation that this Dharma can offer. The honest recognition of our "spiritual failure" is, in fact, critical to seeing why this is so.

In this presentation, I will aim to challenge these misconceptions (and others) with a view to demonstrating how such perceived negatives are actually positives. What makes Shin Buddhism distinctive is its focus on meeting our spiritual yearnings while not neglecting a frank assessment of our human condition—a condition which entails both obvious, and more subtle, spiritual "snares." In terms of day-to-day life, it is precisely these that Shin Buddhism seeks to bring into sharp relief, as their consequences can be far-reaching. This degree of honesty—very uncomfortable at times—confers true freedom and helps us to avoid the toxic pitfall of spiritual hypocrisy, which is the bane of so much religious thinking today.

Whether we harbour any spiritual beliefs or not, we are searching for truth and certainty; a way of understanding ourselves and the mystery of our existence. This perennial need for answers to such questions cannot be ignored without distorting our humanity in some way and, indeed, doing us an injustice. And, yet, this quest—for those who take it seriously—is fraught with doubt and confusion. People today seem to live in a state of constant apprehension such that any talk of spiritual matters often seems remote and somehow irrelevant to the struggle of our everyday lives.

Indeed, the modern world seems to reinforce these doubts by denying or denigrating our spiritual needs; by regarding us merely as economic beings whose sole reason for existence is consumption—anything deeper is dismissed as fanciful and illusory. Notwithstanding the pervasive influence of these powerful forces that serve to discourage any kind of inner or contemplative life, it is impossible to deny that we are profoundly affected by our impending mortality and the ephemeral nature of things—we desperately seek, in all manner of ways, to find a lasting resolution to this problem. Why is this so? Why do we often feel that there is much more to our existence than what science and secular culture tell us there is? The totalitarianism of the latter in Western society constitutes an aberration—in terms of what people in all cultures have believed for millennia—and, arguably, has led to much unhappiness.

So how can we bring all these considerations together to help us gain a better understanding of Shin and its place in the world today? In order to do this, we need to remove some serious misconceptions that plague much current thinking about this tradition.

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 Journal of Shin Buddhism. The full text of "Jodo Shinshu: The Supreme Teaching for the Present Age" is available online at www.nembutsu.info.

THE INSTITUTE OF BUDDHIST STUDIES & BCA CENTER FOR BUDDHIST EDUCATION PRESENT
PACIFIC SEMINAR - 21ST CENTURY - WINTER SESSION

Life of Awakening: True Teaching

Guest Speaker:

Professor Tomoyasu Naito

Kangaku, Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

Saturday, March 7, 2015

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple

1427 S. Main Street, Seattle, WA 98144

Keynote Presentation in Japanese: English Translation by Rev. Mutsumi Wondra

Registration: \$30 (includes lunch) Deadline: February 23, 2015

BCA Northwest District Temple Members: Please register through your temple. Please make checks payable to "Seattle Betsuin" Memo: "Winter Pacific Seminar 2015" Mail to: Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple (at the address above) Attn: Winter Pacific Seminar

Contact: Email: office@seattlebetsuin.com Phone: (206) 329-0800

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT CBE:

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

Visit: BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org Click on CBE

More Seminars & Talks by Prof. Tomoyasu Naito
 Hosted by BCA Districts & Temples

**Please note that lectures and seminars will be delivered in Japanese with English translation. Japanese Sunday service messages will not be translated.*

- Sun., Feb. 1 **ORANGE COUNTY BUDDHIST CHURCH**
Japanese Dharma Message at Sunday Service
- Mon., Feb. 2 **SENSHIN BUDDHIST TEMPLE**
Seminar: Q & A "Gojidan" style, 7 – 9 pm
- Tue., Feb. 3 **LOS ANGELES BETSUIN**
Southern District Ministers Session:
"Contemporary Society & the Pure Land" (*Gendaishikai to Jodo*)
- Thu., Feb. 5 **GARDENA BUDDHIST CHURCH**
Seminar: "Jodo Shinshu for the 21st Century," Time TBA
- Sat., Feb. 7 **LOS ANGELES BETSUIN**
Southern District Seminar:
"Life of True Shinjin: True Teaching," 9 am – 3:30 pm
- Sun., Feb. 8 Japanese Message at Sunday Service, 10 am
- Thu., Feb. 12 **SAN JOSE BETSUIN**
Coast District Buddhist Women's League Conference:
"Buddhist Women: The Heart of Our Temple," 9 am – 3 pm
Coast District Ministers Session:
"Karmic Evil and Sin" (*Zaiaku to Tsumi*)
- Sat., Feb. 14 **SAN MATEO BUDDHIST TEMPLE**
Nembutsu Seminar: 9 am – 2:15 pm
"Contemporary Society and the Pure Land"
- Sun., Feb. 15 Japanese Message at Nirvana Day Service
- Sat., Feb. 21 **BUDDHIST CHURCH OF FLORIN:**
Northern Cal. District Seminar: 1 – 4 pm
"Contemporary Society and the Pure Land"
- Sat., Feb. 21 Northern Cal. District Ministers Session
- Sun., Feb. 22 Japanese Message at Sunday Service
- Sat., Mar. 7 **SEATTLE BETSUIN BUDDHIST TEMPLE**
Winter Pacific Seminar:
"Life of Awakening: True Teaching," 9 am – 4 pm
Presented by IBS & CBE
- Sun., Mar. 8 Japanese Message at Seattle Sunday Service

Events are subject to change. Please contact host temples to confirm dates, times, and other details. Find temple contact information on the BCA website: www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org Click Temples/Churches



In Memoriam: Rev. Dr. Taitetsu Unno (1929–2014)

We are saddened to announce the death of Rev. Dr. Taitetsu Unno, a colleague to many in the world of Buddhist studies, and to many of us a friend as well. The family has requested privacy at this time, and we ask that you respect their wishes.

A funeral service is being planned, and it will be held at the Berkeley Buddhist Temple, Rev. Dr. Matsumoto presiding. The date and time have yet to be announced. A follow up to this announcement will be made. The family have suggested that, rather than sending flowers, academic colleagues and friends who wish to express their respect and appreciation make a donation in his memory to the Institute of Buddhist Studies. Please address any donations to the attention of Richard K. Payne, Dean, Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2140 Durant Avenue, Berkeley CA 94704, USA.

Any personal communications that you wish to share with the family may be sent to Rev. Ronald Kobata, Buddhist Church of San Francisco, 1881 Pine Street, San Francisco, CA 94109.

Taitetsu's son Mark prepared a short biography, which can be found on the IBS website at: <http://wp.me/p1q1jt-fW>

BCA Endowment Foundation Planned Giving



A CRT can be an effective strategy for retirement planning as the trust can provide for delayed income distributions. For example, the trustee can sell the appreciated assets, reinvest the proceeds, defer tax payments and delay distribution (and income recognition) to the donor until he or she reaches age 65 and is in a lower tax bracket.

2. Charitable Annuities

This is a contract with a not-for-profit organization, in which you provide a gift and, in exchange, the organization guarantees you income for life.

Key characteristics

- Potential immediate (partial) tax deduction, based on your life expectancy and the anticipated income stream.
- Reduces capital gains tax liability for gifts of long-term appreciated assets.
- Tax is levied on the income stream.

A Charitable Gift Annuity is a contract under which a charity in return for a transfer of cash, marketable securities or other assets agrees to pay fixed payments to one or two individuals (beneficiaries or annuitants), for their lifetime.

The contract is between the donors and the issuing charity, in which the donors transfer property (cash, securities, and real property) in exchange for fixed dollar payments during their lifetime. Tax deductions for this type of life-income gift vary with the number of recipients and the age of the donor at the time of the gift. The issuing institution guarantees the income.

3. Making A Bequest

A charitable bequest is the most popular and simplest way that countless people of all financial means can support the organizations they care about. A bequest is a transfer by will of assets such as cash, securities, or tangible property to an individual or a charitable organization.

For many donors, a bequest offers the opportunity to make a more substantial gift than would be possible during their lifetime.

Because of the tax advantages associated with a bequest to a charitable institution, assets from your estate that

would otherwise go directly to government treasuries can instead be given to BCA Endowment Foundation to meet BCA and IBS needs.

Types of bequest

- The most common type of bequest is one in which you direct cash or specific assets to BCA Endowment Foundation. Sometimes the bequest is stated as a fixed amount or value; it can also be stated as a percentage of your estate.
- With a residuary bequest, you direct that BCA Endowment Foundation receive all or part of your estate remaining after other specific bequests and expenses related to settlement of your estate have been made.
- With a contingent bequest, you name BCA Endowment Foundation as the recipient of your estate only if others named in your estate plan are not living at the time of your death.

Other methods available for giving to BCA Endowment Foundation after death

- A testamentary trust can be written into your will so that a trust is established upon your death to provide income to your spouse and/or beneficiaries during their lifetimes.
- You can designate by beneficiary, providing that BCA Endowment Foundation will be the beneficiary of the remainder of your IRA, Keogh plan, tax shelter annuity or qualified pension, profit sharing plan or life insurance plan.

Please contact the BCA Endowment Foundation for additional information. Planned gifts to the BCA Endowment Foundation can be designated to benefit the Buddhist Churches of America, the Institute of Buddhist Studies or both. This article is not intended as legal advice. You should seek the advice of your own attorney. Your attorney is encouraged to consult with BCA Endowment Foundation legal counsel for further guidance.

BCA Endowment Foundation
1710 Octavia Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
Phone: (415) 776-5068
BCAEndowment@gmail.com

BCA Bookstore News

By Gayle Noguchi

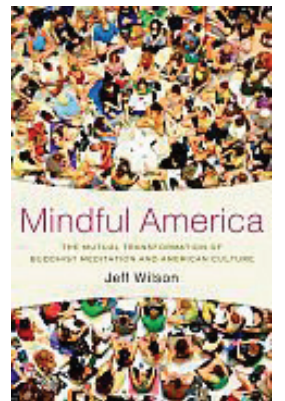
Now available: *Mindful America – The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture* by Jeff Wilson, hardcover, \$29.95.

You have probably noticed it: mindfulness is everywhere. In *Mindful America*, Jeff Wilson asserts that the mindfulness movement we've been experiencing over the last thirty years is an example of a process that has occurred throughout Buddhism's history – that of moving into new cultures and becoming domesticated.

Members of the new culture take from Buddhism what is relevant to alleviating their problems and concerns and generate new forms of Buddhism better suited to their needs. Thus the mutual transformation of Buddhism and the new host culture.

Wilson explores and chronicles this undeniable phenomenon occurring here in America. He examines how and why Americans have embraced this practice with its roots in ancient Buddhist cosmology originally taught only to monastics.

Wilson also describes the process by which mindfulness has



been made more appealing for the masses by downplaying, obscuring, or altogether eliminating its connection to Buddhism, a process he calls "mystifying mindfulness."

Wilson concludes by offering suggestions for future research to further understand and gain insight into this movement which continues to undergo explosive growth in our society.

Wilson's study provides valuable information and insight as we engage in sharing the nembutsu teachings here in America.

To order, go to www.bcabookstore.com or contact sales@bcabookstore.com/510-809-1435.

The BCA Bookstore is open Wednesday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Like us on Facebook.

Rev. Umezu

Continued from Front Page

good for me is not always good for everyone. This belief that "I am right" makes the world difficult to live in.

The problem lies within each individual. It requires something outside of ourselves to shed light on all of us and show us how we are behaving toward one another. Out of deep sorrow and sadness, the call *Namo Amida Butsu* comes from the true and real realm. Unless we encounter the call, we will never find peace and happiness.

Through inconceivable causes and conditions, we have been born into human life. Difficult as it is to do so, we hear the teaching of the Blessed One. Let us continue to hear the call coming from the true and real world. Let us live a nembutsu life. *Live a Real Life** and truly have a happy new year.

**Live a Real Life* is the BCA theme for 2015.

Prof. Naito

Continued from Front Page

Studies Center. Since the construction of the Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC) in Berkeley, California eight years ago, a two-day, annual summer session has been hosted annually, featuring international scholars and teachers. In 2012, a one-day, winter/spring session was added, hosted at Southern California temples, to share this program beyond the Bay Area. This year, for the first time, the IBS and the BCA CBE will present the Winter Pacific

Seminar in the Northwest. Recent speakers at the Pacific Seminars have included: the late Rev. Dr. Taitetsu Unno, Rev. Tetsuo Unno and Rev. Dr. Mark Unno; Prof. Nobuhiro Fukagawa (Kangaku), Dr. Mark Blum, Prof. Keiko Toro, and the late Dr. Takamaro Shigaraki, among others.

Beyond Seattle: Additional Lectures & Dharma Talks at BCA Temples

In addition to the Winter Pacific Seminar, the BCA community and public will have many opportunities to partake in the ambitious educational tour of the

West Coast by Prof. Naito. Please see the dates and venues on page 5.

"We really appreciate Prof. Naito's great enthusiasm for sharing the Dharma with our BCA sangha," said Rev. Marvin Harada, CBE Co-director. "Considering last year's visit by Prof. Nobuhiro Fukagawa, and CBE's many Skype lectures with Rev. Michio Tokunaga both of whom have the title of Kangaku, we are very lucky to hear and interact with the top Jodo Shinshu scholars of our day, right here in our own temples. I encourage everyone to participate in these special learning sessions."

今月の法話

「報恩講にごよせし」

浄土真宗センター 桑原 淨信

2014年も色々な方々にお世話になりました。今年もどうぞよろしくお願ひいたします。

さて1月8日から16日まで京都にあります西本願寺において報恩講が行われ期間中全国から数千人の方々が御参りされます。報恩講とは浄土真宗の宗祖であります親鸞聖人のご命日に合わせ聖人を偲ぶ法要であり、本願寺の第三代門主であります覚如上人の時代から始まったとされる大変長い伝統を持つ法要であります。

さてこの報恩講ですが「報恩」とありますように、親鸞聖人のご恩に報い、感謝することを目的とした法要であります。ここで「ご恩」ということが出てきましたが、私たちはどのようなご恩をいただいているのでしょうか。それは浄土真宗のみ教えをあきらかにしてくださったということですが、そのみ教えが実際に私たちの日常生活の中で機能していなければ恩に報い感謝すると言われてもあまりピンとこないかもしれません。ではこの浄土真宗のみ教えが実際に私たちの日常生活にどのように関わっているのでしょうか？

浄土真宗のみ教えを深く聴いていくことにより私たちの生活や生き様に何らかの形で変化が現れるわけですが、どのような変化が現れるかはそれぞれ色々かと思ひます。ある開教使の先生は浄土真宗のみ教えを深く聴いていくこと「Coping Skill」が備わると仰っていました。

人生は山あり、谷ありと言われますように単に良い事や悪い事になることばかりではなく、時には悪いことや悪い事にならないことにも出会わなくてはなりません。そうした時に仏法の教え、浄土真宗の教えというのはいくつもの深い味あわつことのできる身にしていただき、また悪いことや悪い事にならないことに関し、はるその意義を深く見据え、受け止め、乗り越

えていけるような身にしていただくわけであり、浄土真宗のみ教えは浅薄な幸せを説いたり、喜び一辺倒の教えではなく、人生の様々な出来事をより深く味わい、消化していく力としての「Coping Skill」を私たちに与えて下さる教えということが出来ます。

これは浄土真宗のみ教えが私たちの日常生活にどのように関わっているかということの一例であります。親鸞聖人は今から約750年前に亡くなられたわけですが、親鸞聖人があきらかにして下さいました教えは今もなお多くの人の生活を深く豊かなものにし、そして強く明るく生き抜く力を与えて下さっているのではないのでしょうか。

この私がそういった素晴らしい教えに出会うことができたのは多くの人々、そして様々な縁のおかげであります。一方この私が浄土真宗のみ教えに出会い、深く肯くことが出来るような身になれるよう何らかの働きかけや願ひがそこにあつたとも言つて下さるのでしょうか。その働きかけとは真実の法の世界、つまり浄土からこの娑婆に在る私に向けられた働きかけであり、願ひとは阿弥陀如来様から凡夫であるこの私にかけられた願ひであります。我々はお浄土から光に照らされ、阿弥陀如来様からのお慈悲に育まれながらこの境涯を深く強く生きていくのであります。阿弥陀如来様やお浄土がないということになるとそれはまるで真の暗な大海原を灯台の光なしに航海するようなものかもしれません。

このように浄土真宗のみ教えは我々の日々の生活を深く豊かなものにしてくれますが、しかしそれだけではありません。この命終わった時には苦しみ悩みから本当に解放された存在としての仏に仕上げていただくのであります。浄土教である浄土真宗は死んだら何もないという教えではありません。この娑婆世界で命終わると同時に浄土に往生させていただきそこで仏となり、この娑婆世界に残された有縁の方々もまた同じように深く豊かな生活を送ることが出来るよう働きかけていく存在となるのです。つまり死が単なる終わりでなく、新しい命の始まり、それも他の方々の役に立つための命の始まりとなります。これが仏と成るといふことであり、

この人生を終わった後に私たちがそういう新たな生を営めるよう準備して下さったのも阿弥陀如来様であります。このような仏道をご用意して下さいました阿弥陀如来様、そしてその教え正しく伝えて下さった高僧方に対して親鸞聖人は大変深い感謝の念をお持ちであり、それを詠まれたのが「恩徳讚」であります。

2015年が始まったわけですが、私たち一人一人が浄土真宗のみ教えを深く味わい、そしてその法の悦びを一人でも多くの人と分かち合うような一年にしたいだけだと思います。そうすることこそ親鸞聖人のご恩に報いるということであり、念仏者としての生き方ではないのでしょうか。

今月のインタビュー

今月のインタビューでは十一月の終わりに三ヶ月の研修を終えて帰国したI M O P (国際伝道者養成講座)の参加者から話を伺った。

研修でもっとも印象に残ったことは何ですか？

一羽 諒サーブイスのあとに来てくださった方と一緒に茶やお菓子いただいたことです。日本ではこのようなリフレッシュメントの文化が無いので驚いたのと同時にとてもいいことだなと思いました。

大内 深生ーMikeです。多くの開教使が集まり、研鑽に励んでいるところをみて、日本の僧侶もかくあるべきであると感じました。仏教に卒業はないという言葉通りに、私たちは日々、学びを深めていく必要性を改めて学ばせていただきました。

禿 定心ーBCA婦人会大会(アーバイン)への参加とハワイ開教区でのインターンシップ。

林 齊昭フジヤンー実際各お寺に滞在して、お寺がどう活動しているかということ、そして法事やお葬式、またはそれぞれのサーブイスに参加したことも経験として大きく残りました。

右から梅津総長、林、一羽、禿、大内(敬称略) Socho Umez, Hashi, Ichwa, Kamuro and Douchi



苦勞したことを教えて下さい。

一羽 初めての英語の法話をしたことです。慣れてない英語での文章制作、読めない単語の確認、そして、話し方の練習など、今でも苦勞しますが、初めての時が一番苦勞したように思います。

大内 英語の法話です。伝えたいことがあるのに、思うように伝わらないもどかしさを何度も経験させていただきました。いかにシンプルに分かりやすく、しかし核はずらさないようにするか。これは日本語にも通ずること、法話の中で抽象的な表現を多用していた自分を反省するよい機会になりました。

禿 英語でのダルマトークです。(特に発音)

林 苦勞したことは、やはり人とのコミュニケーションです。違う文化違う言語で育ったもの同士でのコミュニケーションを成立させることの難しさを痛感しました。

好きな英語、こちらで覚えた言葉は？

一羽 Thank you. です多分今回の研修で一番使った単語だと思います。

大内 No means No. です。No. 言えない日本人、そして本音と建前に生きる日本人(私を含む)にこそ覚えて欲しい。この言葉から、はっきりと相手に自分の思いを伝えることが大事であると学びました。

禿 Kiss (Keep it simple and short)

林 No. 遠慮!

アメリカの開教使、門徒さんにメッセージをお願いします。

一羽 私たちの研修のために時間を空けていろいろなレクチャーをしてくださった開教使の皆様、そして、私のつたない英語の法話を聞いてよかったよと声をかけてくださったたり、発音のアドバイスをくださったメンバーの皆様本当にありがとうございました。

大内 初めてのアメリカで最初は不安も多かったのですが、皆様のおかげで、楽しく充実して三ヶ月を過ごすことができました。今回の研修で、私は本当に多くの人に支えられていたのだなと気付かせていただきました。皆様の優しさに触れるたびに、感謝の気持ちで胸がいっぱいになりました。今は何もお返しするものはございませんが、本当に有難うございました。

禿 I M O P 研修中たくさんの方の事を教えて頂き有難うございました。

今後ともご指導のほど宜しくお願い致します。

林 期間中お会いできた方々には大変お世話になりました。短い期間でしたが、開教使としての責務と現状について深く学ぶことができました。これからの自身の未来に期待しつつ、お念仏にお育て頂くことの喜びを広められるよう最大限に尽くします。

本当にお世話になり、ありがとうございます。

ご門主さま新年のご挨拶

法輪

2015年新年号

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二〇一五年度教化標語
「まことの人生を歩もう」

年頭の辞

新しい年の初めにあたり、ご挨拶申し上げます。

昨年、6月に法統を継承し、本願寺住職・浄土真宗本願寺派門主となりました。社会状況の変化が激しい現代社会において、浄土真宗のみ教えがより多くの方にとって生きる依りどころとなるよう、伝えてまいります。どうぞよろしくお願いたします。

浄土真宗の教えは、親鸞聖人によって説かれました。以来、790年以上にわたり受け継がれ、今日の私たちに届いています。それは、み教えが、時代や場所に関係なく、すべての人にとって生きる依りどころとなってきたからです。仏教は、自己中心的なとらわれを離れ、真理に基づいて生きる生き方を明らかにしています。しかし、そのようにできない私たちは、様々な悲しみや苦しみを抱えることとなります。

親鸞聖人は、このような私たちを必ず仏にならせようと阿弥陀様がはたらいて下さると教えてくれました。この阿弥陀様のはたらきによって、私たちは、真理に気づき、わが身の姿を省みることが出来ます。

本年も、み教えを聞き、お念仏申す生活を送らせていただきます。

2015年1月1日

浄土真宗本願寺派
門主 大谷光淳

総長メッセージ

明けましておめでとうございます。

新しい年が明けました。この国では「ハッピーニューイヤー」、日本では「今年も良いとしでありますように」と、お互いの幸せを願っています。

誰もが幸せやよいことを求めて生きています。ところが仏教はちょっと違った見方をします。お釈迦さまは、幸せを求める人に幸せはない、真実に目覚めてこそ本当の幸せを感じる事ができるとおっしゃっています。考えさせられるお言葉です。

最近、世の中いろいろな出来事がおこっています。そこに人間の持つ業を感じさせられます。これは時代や場所に関係なく、人間が生きていくときに知らず知らずのうちに、お互い自分の思いを中心に物事をすすめていこうとするから、ガタガタ(我他)するのです。

親鸞聖人が大変尊敬されていた聖徳太子は十七条の憲法を制定しました。その第十条の一部に次のようなことが書かれています。

『人それぞれに考えがあり、それぞれにこれが正しいと思うことがある。相手がこれこそいいとも自分はよくないと思うし、自分がこれこそいいとも相手はよくないとする。しかし、自分がかたがた聖人であるわけがなく、相手がかならず愚かだというわけではない。皆ともに凡夫(ただびと)ふつうのひとなのだ。略』

太子は仏教的な考えで国を治めようとして、民に三宝を敬うようにと進めたのです。その影響を強く受けた親鸞聖人はいつも太子を心の父母として慕っておられました。

その親鸞聖人の言葉として残されている「歎異抄」の最後の方には次のような言葉が、聖人のものとして書き留められています。

『何が本当に善であるのか、悪であるのか、私はまったく知りません。もし、私が仏さまと同じようにすべてのものを見通す智慧をもっていれば、何が善で何が悪か知っていると見えましよう。しかし、私はいろいろな煩惱をすべて具えている凡夫であり、この境界はまるで燃えている家のように危なく、すべてが変化して止まない無常の世界です。そして凡夫のすることは、すべて空しく、偽りごとくであって、まことのことは何一つありません。そんな中であって、ただ念仏だけが、真実であります。略』

すごい言葉を私たちに残していただきありがとうございます。自分が幸せという、ありもしないものを追いかけている、その姿の愚かさに気づいて欲しいという深い願いをもった仏さまの呼び声だけが、真実であるとおっしゃっておられます。

生を幸せと思い、死を受け付けようとしないうちに、生死を超えたまことの世界からの呼びかけに気づかせていただくことによって、本当によかったねと言える日々をたまるのではないのでしょうか。

今年の標語は「まことの人生を歩もう」です。仏さまの願いを聞き開き、尊いものに気づかせていただき、お互いいたわりあいなから今年もおくらせていただきます。

米国仏教団 総長 梅津廣道

京都で得度

十二名が受式



十一月中旬に京都の本願寺で12名のBCA開教使アシスタントが得度を受式した。仏教教育部の桑原浄信開教使が同行し、本願寺国際部のスタッフと共に通訳と世話役を務めた。得度を受式するにあたり、数年かけて所属寺院の開教使から指導を受けつつ、浄土真宗センターでの開教使アシスタントプログラム(MAP)への参加、浄土真宗通信教育の受講を通して真宗の教え、勤式、僧侶となることに対しての心構えなどを学んだ。受式者は「本願寺で行われた得度式で日本語で覚えた領解文を皆で唱和した時、受け継がれてきた真宗の教えの重みを感じました。この感動をお寺の皆さんとシェアしたいと思っています。」と語った。受式者の名前と所属寺は以下のとおり。カメラ・ヒラノ(ソルトレイク仏教会)、シェリル・イケミヤ(ニューヨーク仏教会)、エレン・クレン(オレンジ郡仏教会)、アイリーン・ゴトウ(シアトル別院)イザベル・バーナード(ニューヨーク仏教会)、カレン・ムカイ(フアラーイ仏教会)、キース・カトウ(サクラメント別院)、ラバーン・イモリ(恵光寺)、タタオ・コヤマ(フロリンン仏教会)、ボン・マグナン(アリゾナ仏教会)、森雄八郎(パリア仏教会)、森俊江(パリア仏教会)、敬称略。