S hihan tells us “There are two kinds of
shugendo: one is trust and the other is
searching” (Collected Works of Shihan). So-
cho Ogai stressed these two important en-
devors in his comments at the Women in
American Buddhism Conference hosted by
Tri-State Denver Buddhist Temple and In-
stitute of Buddhist Studies on Aug. 29 to
31 in Denver.
Socho Koshin Ogai told us to seek and
share the Dharma and “to challenge oneself
amidst the uncertainties of work and life
and to not be afraid to try new things or
make mistakes along the way.” With that
spirit Buddhists from Hawaii to New York
states and in between gathered for three
days trusting the process and seeking the
Dharma.
Telling us to trust and explore while
making mistakes was motivating. Several
participants from various Buddhist tradi-
tions wrote on their conference evaluation
forms how what they liked best was “the
inspiring Socho.” He modeled his advice of
trust and exploration while counter when caring for a loved one who
is disabled. As Longmont Buddhist Temple
member, Lynn Lum, described it, “Thank you
for letting me be the ‘greeter’ for the
Entrainment’ session. People left in tears.
I heard it twice and cried both times. The
speakers were so open to sharing their life
experience and intertwining Buddhism
into it. It was truly moving.” Her com-
ments capture the deep moving nature of
the conference overall.
As Shin Buddhists hosting this confer-
ce, we were able to share our tradition.
As one of our speakers, Jacqueline Kramer,
a Theravadin Buddhist who has been rec-
ognized internationally for her work in us-
ing Buddhism in teaching parenting skills
shared with me, “I didn’t know anything
about Shin Buddhism before the confer-
ence. Shin has so much to offer the mother
and homemaker and I am happy to be
learning from it now.” As Lucinda Green,
Sensei for the Rocky Mountain Insight
Meditation Center commented, “I thor-
oughly enjoyed the number and kinds of
traditions represented and that it was
ethically diverse as well.”
The diversity at the conference was list-
ed frequently as a plus on the evaluation
forms. The conference offered eleven dif-
ferent sessions with such an enlightened
atmosphere without the generous support from the Institute of
Buddhist Studies. Special thanks to IBS
staff Kumi Hadler and Scott Mitchell for
setting up a web site and handling on-line
registrations. A big thank you to Dr. Grum-
buch, Tamai Chair at the Institute of Bud-
dhist Studies who guided the on-site regis-
tration efforts and designed an on-line
course—Women, Family and Dharma’ as
part of the conference.
The result of such efforts was to attract
speakers and attendees from a variety of
traditions and ethnic backgrounds from
throughout the United States. Comments
from 60 forms indicated that the confer-
ence was an enjoyable educational experi-
ence about Buddhist teachings and their
application in American lives. As Gordon
Bermant, past president, Buddhist Church-
es of America described it, “the confer-
ence succeeded wonderfully in bringing
Jodo Shinshu, and BCA, into the wider
stream of women practicing Buddhism
across the many traditions that are vibrant
in Colorado and elsewhere in the coun-
try.”
Throughout the conference, Buddhists
from different traditions discussed the chal-
lenge of living life as it is – even when it is
not what we want. For example, the physi-
cians and psychotherapists participating in
the Taking Buddhism to Work session openly
discussed the challenges of dealing with
shame, guilt, and other sufferings that
arise when children do not grow and be-
have according to plan. Another highly
moving session was led by Reverend Mat-
sumoto, IBS, Sensei Susan J-on Postal,
Emmy Hand Zen Center and Terry Ray,
Insight Meditation Center of Colorado.
Their session focused on the realities en-
countered when caring for a loved one who
is disabled. As Longmont Buddhist Temple
member, Lynn Lum, described it, “Thank you
for letting me be the ‘greeter’ for the
‘Entrainment’ session. People left in tears.
I heard it twice and cried both times. The
speakers were so open to sharing their life
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Report on the BCA FBWA Delegates Meeting

By Keiko Furusho, BCA FBWA 1st Vice President, Enmanji Buddhist Temple

There were 107 attendees at the BCA FBWA Delegates Meeting held on Oct. 11 at the Buddhist Church of Oakland. The nine chapters in the Bay District were the hosts. It was a beautiful autumn day.

The one hour of people registering was lively. There was a wonderful continental breakfast consisting of a vast array of pastries, fruit and bagels and of course coffee, tea and juice. Many came from out of state, but most were from the nine chapters in California. The Federation of BWA delegates meets only once a year, and it was really nice to see many of you know Mr. Takei as Sulu from the popular television and movie series, “Star Trek.”

The opening ceremony started promptly at 9:30 AM. The chairperson was Jean Sato, and it was officiated by Socho Koshin Ogui and Rev. Dr. Seigen Yamaoka. Socho Ogui delivered a short message, and after announcements, the Delegates Meeting began.

BCA FBWA President Yukiko Otake presided over the Delegates Meeting. Aided by the Parliamentarian, Jeanette Arakawa, the meeting went smoothly without going off track. At the beginning introductions were made including: Honorary Advisor to the BCA FBWA, Mrs. Mayumi Ogai, and the 2007-2008 FBWA Cabinet (Bay District). Later, the incoming 2009-2010 Cabinet (Northern California District) was introduced.

Reports were given:
- Bylaws—Sandy Seki
- World FBWA — Representatives, Janet Kameda/Jeannette Arakawa, announced the next FBWA World Conference to be held in Tokyo on May 16-17, 2011.
- Sri Lanka Project—Rev. Dr. Shoyo Taniguchi
- Campaign 21st Century—Dr. Kent Matsuda
- Center for Buddhist Education— Judy Kono
- Future FBWA Conferences: 2009 - hosted by the Northern California District, President-elect Hiroko Tsuda invited everyone to the next BCA FBWA Conference to be held in Sacramento on Oct. 9-11, 2009 at the Doubletree Hotel. In 2012 the other conference will be hosted by Coast District, and in 2014 Southern District.
- Youth Exchange—Rev. Ron Kobata

There were two resolutions voted upon. There was a quorum of 63 delegates. One passed, and one did not. The resolution (presented by the Bay District) for the FBWA to give 10% of its unrestricted funds to the Center for Buddhist Education for the years 2007, 2008 and 2009 passed.

The other resolution (presented by the Southern District) was that after 2009, each chapter add $2 per member for dues to go to The Center for Buddhist Education, did not pass.

Following the business meeting, the delegates enjoyed a delicious bento box, and after lunch we participated in a workshop that addressed the “Ministerial Shortage in the BCA.”

The workshop’s overall facilitator was Dr. Joanne Gozawa. She encouraged us to listen to everyone with our hearts and minds, and to be authentic, sincere and trusting in sharing our views. Approaches to the issues of recruitment, retention, and fostering of new ministers were to be discussed.

There were five other group leaders. They were: Susan Bottari (BCA Youth Advocacy), Glenn Kameda (Ministers’ Affairs), Judy Kono (Ministers Development & Advocacy), Dr. Billy Saeki (BCA President) and Ken Tanimoto (BCA MDA Committee).

Each group was to have members give their own temple’s account and what they are doing or have done in the past to deal with the shortage problem. Must have always had a minister. Many have been without a minister for years.

Suggestions from all the groups were recorded, and the results will be compiled. Some of the suggestions were to help and encourage the MAP and IMOP more, and to increase ministers’ benefit packages and salaries. We must encourage young people to become a minister, and older or retired to consider becoming a ministerial assistant.

There were so many suggestions, but Dr. Gozawa summarized some of the comments in the wrap-up session.

Rev. Dr. Shoyo Taniguchi gave the Dharma message for the closing service. In her presentation, she thanked Yukiko Otake for all her hard work serving as the BCA FBWA President for the last two years, and what a wonderful job she did.

Shoyo Sensei offered reflections by looking back at some accomplishments and challenges for going forward. The Closing Service ended on schedule at 3:00 PM.

We all said our good-byes until we meet again at the next BCA FBWA Conference in Sacramento on October 9-11, 2009!

Equality For All

"If, when I attain Buddha- hood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere minds, sincerely, aspires to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the Buddhist stand or slander the teachings of the Buddha, or those who prevent the propagation of the Dharma."

Rev. William Briones
Los Angeles Buddhist Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

O n Sunday, September 14 of this year, I was privileged and honored to officiate George Takei and Brad Altman’s wedding ceremony at the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy in Downtown Los Angeles in Little Tokyo. Many of you know Mr. Takei as Sulu from the popular television and movie series, “Star Trek." It was a beautiful and moving ceremony.

George and Brad declared their commitment and love to one another as family and friends wept tears of joy. Best lady, Nichelle Nichols (a.k.a Uhura), sobbed while best man Walter Koenig (a.k.a Chekov), looked on with teary eyes.

When Brad called me back in June, it was really nice to see you, not only on the issue of same gender marriage, but also on the issue of gender-neutral marriage. The California Supreme Court issued a ruling granting gays the right to marry on the occasion of George’s mother, Fujioka Takei’s funeral service.

Since the California Supreme Court issued a ruling granting gays the right to marry, I have been approached on several occasions and asked for my stance on gender-neutral marriage. My standard response is: “…no problem.”

It doesn’t like to share my thoughts with you, not only on the issue of same gender marriage, but on social issues that we cannot escape within the light of Amida Buddha’s Compassionate Vow.

Much of our social morals and ethical values are based on Judeo-Christian values. As Buddhists, we are taught to think for ourselves and respond accordingly based on our own spiritual insights. The Buddhist stance on gender-neutral marriage is that after 2009, each chapter add $2 per member for dues to go to The Center for Buddhist Education, did not pass.
Campaign BCA News

Soon, you'll be receiving a Year-End Update brochure from the campaign. Please review it and contact me if you have any questions.

Many thanks to all those who sent in gifts and pledges during the months of September and October, including:

• Buddhist Church of San Francisco Buddhist Women’s Association – proceeds from Oton Bake Sale held 7/13.
• BCA Federation of Buddhist Women’s Association – Jodo Shinshu Center as 2008 FBWA Dana Recipient.
• Kaiser Permanente – $100,000 to Campaign BCA - The 21st Century. On Sept. of $100,000 to 2008 FBWA Dana Recipient.

Tanimura Donation

The Tanimura Family Foundation has made a pledge of $100,000 to Campaign BCA – The 21st Century. On Sept. 6, Socho Koshin Ogui, BCA President Dr. Billy Sakai and BCA Fundraising Manager Robert Noguchi visited the Tanimura Farm Headquarters in Salinas, California and met with their family. Socho Ogui spoke briefly about the vision and propagation of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism for future generations, and Dr. Sakai reviewed the financial status of the campaign. Farming for the Tanimuras dates back to the 1920’s in Salinas, California.

Matching gift from employee Ms. Sandra Inouye-Imat.
• Northern California Dharma School Students
• Buddhist Church of Parlier – gifts from members and proceeds from fundraisers.
• Tanimura Family Foundation (see related article).
• Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Education Committee – proceeds from Book Sale at 2008 Obon Festival.
• Venice Hongwanji Sangha Teens
• Walnut Grove Buddhist Women’s Association

IRA Rollover Extended

On October 3, 2008, President Bush signed the $700 billion economic bailout bill, which includes a two-year extension of the IRA Rollover provision.

The provision will be made retroactive to January 1, 2008 and will apply to gifts made from that date through December 31, 2009.

Under this law, you can use funds from your IRA to make a lifetime charitable gift free of tax obligations. Prior to the law, you would have to report any amount taken from your IRA as taxable income. This would then be a charitable deduction for the gift, but only up to 50% of your annual adjusted gross income. In effect, this caused a great deal of stress for you as you may be paying both taxes on the amount of the gift as well as taxes on the amounts less than if they didn’t make a gift at all.

Fortunately, these IRA gifts can be accomplished simply and without tax complications. Plus, you can make the gift now – while you are living and avoid the stress of the next year’s income tax returns.

You May Contribute Funds This Way:
• You are 70 1/2 or older
• The gifts do not total more than $100,000 per year

You transfer funds directly from your IRA or Rollover IRA
• You make a direct gift to a public charity (no planned gifts).

How the Pension Protection Act Works:

Betty, aged 75, has $290,000 in two separate IRAs. She made a pledge to give $50,000 in the 2008 tax year.

Continued at bottom of page

From Friday, August 15th through Sunday the 17th, I attended a three-day seminar for BCA Dharma School Teachers, held at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, California.

Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto gave a wonderful and inspiring talk. He explained the essence of shinjin and the fundamental teachings of the Buddha and Shinran Shonin.

Rev. Kodo Umezu was very helpful with explaining our boundaries as teachers and helping us understand the importance of realizing the dynamics within the classroom. He explained that being a Dharma School Teacher is sacred and very important because the students’ futures are affected by what we do in the classroom.

Personally, I was excited to see the BCA’s Jodo Shinshu Center, and I was not disappointed. The host and volunteers were extremely helpful and welcoming. This helped create a wonderful environment for our intimate group to enhance our learning experience.

The group was a mix of new and veteran teachers representing the ABC’s of Dharma School Sharing The Path Seminar

By Merrily Stewart

Tri-State/Denver Buddhist Temple

"being a Dharma School Teacher is sacred and very important..."

Washington, California and Colorado. Discussion of topics included updating curriculum, making lesson plans more accessible for teachers, and contacting current students and fervently encouraging them to return to the classroom.

As a group it was concluded that:

• The base curriculum offered by BCA is good; only lesson plans need to be updated.

• We will aspire to have lesson plans available through a website in the future.

• New teachers would be more comfortable if they could access multiple lesson plans.

• It would be easier to get volunteers to teach if lesson plans were more current and accessible.

• Research will be taking place to determine how to best deal with bullying/isolation issues.

Continued from above

Castroville, where the Iseli built a successful iceberg lettuce business, then lost it during World War II. However, in 1947, they purchased 20 acres in Armona, California growing green onions and iceberg lettuce. George Tanimura, along with his brothers Johnny, Bobby, Tommy and Charlie, continued to expand their farming operations, acquiring ranch leases for 200 crop acres.

Now 93, George and his wife, Masaye continue to run the business along with family members and have been active at the Buddhist Temple of Salinas. We are grateful to the Tanimura Family Foundation for their generous support of the campaign!

Continued on Page 6

DONATE BY CREDIT CARD (see website)
My Gift to Campaign BCA – The 21st Century
(via Campaign BCA - The 21st Century.
2140 Durant Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704
□ YES! I’m enclosing is my/or special gift of:
( ) $1,500, ( ) $3,000, ( ) $5,000*, ( ) $10,000,
( ) other amount to Campaign BCA - The 21st Century.

□ YES! I would like to pledge a total of:
( ) $1,500, ( ) $3,000, ( ) $5,000*, ( ) $10,000,
( ) other amount over a period of: ( ) 1 year, ( ) 2 years, ( ) 5 years
to Campaign BCA - The 21st Century.

Check enclosed, made payable to Campaign BCA - The 21st Century.

A gift or pledge of $5,000 or more will permanently place your name on the donor wall, located in the lobby of the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley.

Name
Address
City State Zip
( ) Phone ( ) Email

Temple
For more information, please contact your temple representatives, your local minister, or Campaign Manager Robert Noguchi at the Jodo Shinshu Center at (510) 809-1453, or e-mail info@bcacampaign.org.

The ABC’S OF DHARMA SCHOOL
Continued on Page 6
My Ministry as a Prison Chaplain

By Rev. Alan Urasaki, Chaplain, Federal Prison System, Federal Detention Center, Honolulu

Despite armed guards, gigantic fences topped with razor wire and peers with a penchant for trouble, many men and women in prisons across the country are becoming interested in the teachings and practices of Buddhism while in incarcerated. Currently, there are more than 2 million people incarcerated in the United States—the majority not Buddhist.

In the Federal Prison System of over 200,000 inmates, less than one percent identified themselves as Buddhist. Of that less than one percent, there are very few Jodo Shinshu followers. Most come from the meditative traditions; some Sufis, Gurbazis, and Theravada; some ethnic, cultural, and family traditions. Many inmates who have become “converts” are interested in the practice of meditation to help them deal living in prison. Where some people only see in inmates the worst that society has to offer, I see a continually growing sangha of human potential searching for a way to find peace, wisdom, and compassion in a place of cold walls, iron gates and razor wire.

My primary mission as a Chaplain is to provide pastoral care and religious accommodations for all inmates, regardless of their faith. In other words, I do not just minister only to the Buddhist inmates; I am there for everyone. I become minister, teacher, counselor, and advocate for the inmates. I have numerous opportunities to share the Buddhist dharma through worship services, study classes, personal counseling, and mentoring relationships with inmates and prison staff alike. This important aspect incorporates areas of spiritual, moral, and emotional development for the incarcerated.

Each day chaplains are penetrating the darkness of prisons despite the challenges and dangers. Such a ministry can be intense and stressful, yet for those like me, whose karmic conditions are manifested in prison ministry, there is nothing more rewarding than to be a Zenchishibis, a friend and fellow traveler, to those who are seeking for a path to follow. At the moment I am the only Buddhist chaplain in the federal system, and from time to time, called upon to be a resource for Buddhism in the bureau. I have also assisted the Hawaii state prison system with some of their issues as well. Chaplains play a vital role in keeping the institution running smoothly by being pastorally present, calm, and a stabilizing force when dealing with inmates and their families. I have on many occasions informed an inmate of the death or hospitalization of a loved one. On one occasion, I informed an inmate that her 5 year-old son had died in a car accident. As we grieved together, she asked me to pray for her and her son. And I did. I did not go through the theological exercise of “Buddhists don’t pray…” or “let me get the Christian chaplain…” Her need at that moment went beyond words and religion. She needed to be affirmed that infinite light and life, that wisdom and compassion embraces all of us uncontrollably.

As I realize the great duty and responsibility of this ministry, I believe that we are assisting lives powerfully changed in prisons across the nation. Each day chaplains walk with inmates, challenging them to live better lives and giving them the spiritual tools to do so. Isn’t that the same challenge that our temple ministers are faced with? Using the same spiritual tools, as did Shakamuni, the Seven Masters, Shinran, and Rennyo, our ministry must challenge those to live a true and real life, embraced by Amaida’s wisdom and compassion.

The Tacoma Buddhist Temple has published a new Dharma School Servicebook. The project goals were to translate Japanese gathas into “singable” English, and add new gathas.

The 108-page book includes 42 gathas, along with readings, sutras, translations and other important teachings.

The book is available at $7 a copy.

Inquiries can be made to Mrs. Michiko or Rev. Ko-sho Yukawa, phone: (253) 943-9393, email: kmyukawa@comcast.net

DNC Interfaith Gathering

By Kathryn T. Ida, Tri-State Denver Buddhist Temple

I was asked to speak at an Interfaith Gathering that was part of the Democratic National Convention that was recently held in Denver. The Interfaith Gathering was held on Aug. 24 at the Wells Fargo Theater in the Colorado Convention Center. The theme of the Interfaith Gathering was “Our Sacred Responsibility to Others.”

They invited representatives from various faith traditions and other religious individuals from all across the United States to share a passage from their respective sacred texts. This reading preceded a keynote speech from a member of a different faith. The purpose of this was to show the interconnectedness of different faiths.

The reason I was asked was primarily because my aunt, D.J. Ida, is a very active member of the Asian American community in Denver, and is involved with the Obama for America organization. She passed away on Aug. 23.

I was so honored to have been a participant in this historic Democratic National Convention. It was a once in a lifetime event in which I had the opportunity to meet and interact with high-ranking members of government officials, politicians and religious leaders from so many different traditions. I met the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi and also the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Howard Dean.

This is the first time the Democratic National Convention was opened with an interfaith gathering. The intent was to show the interconnectedness of many different religions and faiths and the common religious ideas and values we share. So we can work together to achieve a common goal in electing the next President of the United States of America.

Troop 569 Contributes to Project Linus

During the month of September, in collaboration with Project Linus, more than 200 girls and leaders from Girl Scout Troop 569 of Sacramento, participated in a community service project.

Over the course of three sessions, Cadettes and Seniors measured, cut, and prepped fleece material for Project Linus’ blankets. The last session Juniors and Brownies joined the older girls in teams, named after the Peanuts characters, to look the blankets completely.

It was a great opportunity and a lot of fun for all the different age levels to work alongside each other.

All together, we were able to create 100 double sided, no-sew fleece blankets to the local Sacramento chapter, which will distribute them to children in hospitals, emergency care homes, homeless shelters and other organizations that provide care to children.

A big “Thank You” to Gifts to Share for their generous grant, Joann Stores, and to the families and Troops of 569 who donated fleece material. By supporting this wonderful event for our troop, you helped our Girl Scouts make the world a better place.

Project Linus is a non-profit organization established in 1995. The Sacramento Chapter was formed in 1997. Project Linus has distributed over two million blankets to children in need since its inception in 1995.

On Christmas Eve in 1995, Karen Loucks read an article about a small child who was gone too soon. It was con- tensive chemotherapy and looked to her security blanket to help her get through her treatment; shortly after, Karen decided to donate homemade blankets to children with cancer, and created Project Linus.

The Mission of Project Linus is to provide love, a sense of security, warmth, and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need through the gifts of new, handmade blankets and afghans, lovingly created by volunteer “blanketeers.” It is a rewarding and fun service opportunity for interested individuals and groups in local communities, for the benefit of children.

The Mission is achieved through the help of hundreds of local chapters and thousands of volunteers across the United States.

Troop 569 Contributes to Project Linus

May Peace and Tranquility Prevail Throughout the World

TheMissionIsAchieved

The book includes 42 gathas, along with readings, sutras, translations and other important teachings.
Greetings from Kyoto! Gordon Bermant, Ekoji Buddhist Temple, and Henry Adams, two Buddhist Churches of America ministerial candidates who are currently studying at the Hongwanji seminary, report from a Tokudo seminar retreat and orientation, which took place over a period of eleven days at Nishiyama Betsuin in western Kyoto.

Chuo Bukkyo Gakuin students accounted for more than half of the 99 participants at the September Tokudo session, and our friends and classmates were a great source of encouragement and support throughout the seminar. The participants were divided into six groups, and virtually every session of the training was led by one of the thirteen members of our group. Our group shared one large tatami-floored room, so we also made many new friends over the course of the training.

With a full schedule of activities from 5:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. each day, there was little time for us to get preoccupied with our personal concerns. Our training included lectures on Jodo Shinshu history and doctrine, as well as the institutional structure and activities of the Hongwanji organization. There was a strong emphasis on liturgical training, with formal morning and evening services, each lasting about 90 minutes. Many of these services were conducted in the main hall of Nishiyama Betsuin, which was originally constructed in 1618 as the Amida Hall at Hongwanji. The hall was relocated to Nishiyama Betsuin in 1756 to be replaced by the current Hongwanji Amida Hall. It was truly inspiring to conduct services in this historic hall, carrying on a rich tradition that has been passed down by generation after generation of Hongwanji ministers.

On the morning of our ordination ceremony, the men had their heads completely shaved and the women had their faces and necks shaved. Our hair symbolizes the severing of our attachment to base passions in preparation for the beginning of our new lives as ministers when we receive our Dharma names. After lunch, we changed into fresh white robes and hakama, the traditional attire for students, and traveled by bus to Hongwanji. We received our ordination certificates from Rev. Oshi Hoh in a solemn ceremony that evoked images of Shinran Shonin's own ordination ceremony, conducted from Hongwanji in our black ministerial robes. We concluded our training the following morning with a special service for the Hongwanji morning service and services at Otani Honbyo (Shinran Shonin's residence).

Our classes at Chuo Bukkyo Gakuin began the day after we finished our Tokudo training. As our group was made up of students with kind words of congratulations and encouragement, we were greeted with kind words from Kyoto!

Until recently, we Shin Buddhists, particularly in Japan, were a small group who had little influence outside of Japan. But we have influenced a number of people, and among these people are some who have been inspired by Buddhism. However, the influence of Buddhism has been largely limited to individuals who have been directly exposed to Buddhist teachings. In the past, we Shin Buddhists, in particular, were very careful about not being too outwardly visible or having a presence in the public domain. However, in recent years, we have been influenced by Buddhism which has spread to many people, particularly those who have been influenced by Buddhist ministers and laypeople who are working in the field of education, medicine, and other professions.

We are very proud of our achievements in spreading the teachings of Buddhism, and we are determined to continue to do so. We are very happy to see that our efforts are beginning to bear fruit, and we are grateful to our teachers and to all of our friends and classmates for their support and encouragement. We are also grateful to all of our instructors and fellow students, who have compensated for the fatigue that was setting in as the adrenaline that had built up over the eleven days at Nishiyama Betsuin began to wear off.

As we continue to build on the foundation that was laid in the first term curriculum, we are focusing on more advanced chant and meditation practices, and preparing for our final examinations in the fall. The most important task ahead of us is to take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude to everyone who has supported us in our journey so far.

In conclusion, we are very grateful for the support and encouragement we have received from our teachers and fellow students, and we are determined to continue to work hard to spread the teachings of Buddhism in the future.

In Gassho,
Gordon Bermant and Henry Adams
Visiting the Different Temples

By Valerie Chun, White River Buddhist Temple

Front row, left to right: Jamie Lynn Itokazu, BSC assistant director, Rev. David Fujimoto, Rev. Tasuo Muneto, director, Bishop Thomas Okano, Rev. Ron Kobata, Jake Change, Youth Education specialist.

Throughout our time in Hawaii, we had the opportunity to visit many different temples around the island of Oahu. Our first stop was at the Hawaii Betsuin for Sunday service. It was great to see inside the large, beautiful hondo and attend a service there. During our stay in Wahiawa and Kaneohe, we attended service inside the hondo; it was amazing to learn how old it was and how many people had been taken care of over the years. For the remaining services, we led all of them outside as to enjoy the sunrise, sunset, or simply enjoy being there. We also paid visits to Wahiawa and Kailua, where we were greeted so warmly, and were given the opportunity to prepare the onsen and run services on our own. Our final visit was in Honolulu at the Moi Temple, and Mrs. Masatomo, but instructed not to lead the service just the way we wanted rather than the way he usually does. It was a very valuable experience.

Equality

Continued from Page 2

did not insist that he had any right to enforce on others what they should do.

We do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and revered by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. So not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in tradition because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observations and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.

Social issues that were accepted to be right and true for one group or one community. For example, too long ago, racial discrimination was an accepted part of American society. When African-Americans and ethnic minorities and those sympathetic to their cause began to express opposition to discrimination, there was great deal of resistance. It took many years for people’s view to change. Yet now, racial social norms that were taken for granted only a few decades ago, such as the illegality of interracial marriages or segregation, seem unacceptable today.

Within our teachings of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism there are no doctrinal grounds that exist that prohibits neutral-gender marriage. Within the Compassion Light of Amida Buddha, all beings are equally embraced.

The opening reading I began with is the 18th Vow of the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha. The compassionate vow of Amida Buddha refers to the story in the Larger Pure Land Sutra. Within the Pure Land tradition, as well as all Mahayana Buddhism, the Bodhisattva is the major symbol of compassion. It was out of compassion for all suffering beings that the Bodhisattva Bodhisattva established the Forty-eight Vows and became Amida Buddha. Of the Forty-eight Vows the Eighth Vow became the most important to Pure Land Buddhism, since it promised Birth into Amida’s Pure Land for those “sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind striving for birth in Amida Buddha’s land...”

However, many of us find it difficult to accept this cosmological story, which took place several kalpas ago. For myself, I have the best understanding of the Dharma as a way of expressing the deepest aspirations of the human heart that some day we will be free of suffering. Amida is a symbol of reality and points to our interdependence to all things and the need to share with others.

When the DharmaKaraka made his Vows he said, “If he begins Buddha, all beings do not experience the same reatization, then he would not accept the highest enlightenment. The DharmaKaraka, points out that salvation is not just for human beings but as enlightenment is a way to enlightenment must include others, or else there can be no meaning to the Vow. And this I take to heart. Amida’s Primal Vow does not discriminate between the young and old, rich and poor, Japanese and American, Black and White, gay and straight... if it doesn’t include them... there can be no meaning to Amida’s salvation.

It is within Amida’s Primal Vow we become aware of the intimate interconnectedness with others. To truly realize this interdependence, one can only manifest a profound sense of responsibility for our fellow human beings.

As a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist our goal is to awaken to this spiritual truth of interdependence and equality. If one truly awakens to the reality of Amida’s Primal Vow, one cannot help but share the awareness and joy derived from the teachings.

I believe it is this awareness that lead our BCA Minister to pass a resolution during the National Council meeting in 2004, supporting gender-neutral weddings. The resolution reads: “Whereas, there is no negative judgment of homosexuality in the Buddhist religion, whereas, a number of BCA ministers have already performed same sex weddings for a period of at least thirty years, whereas, we wish to affirm the worthiness of all persons independent of his or her sexual orientation, now therefore be it resolved, that the Ministers Association of the Buddhists Churches of America oppose any prohibition of same sex marriage.”

In the Tannisho it is written that Shinran said, “All beings have been fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, in the timeless process of birth and death. When I attain Budhhahood in the next birth, each and everyone will be saved.” In other words we are all karmic bound, our lives are interconnected. Why then would we want to see our friends, relatives or neighbors whose sexual orientation is different, be mistreated and not be allowed the same rights that many of us enjoy?

The guests were all treated to little boxes of manji as wedding favors. On the outside wrapping was inscribed, “May sweet equality live long and prosper.” Live long and prosper in equality.

Namo amida butsu

President’s Message

Continued from Front Page

have personalized the reasons to give. My wife Sandy and I support the BCA strategic goals:

- Shin Buddhism as a major religious tradition in the United States
- A thriving Jodo Shinshu ministry
- Self Reliance
- Service to the greater community

There are many pieces to the puzzle to propagate the Buddha Dharma; these pieces include:

- Flourishing BCA Temples and Churches
- Ministers Assistant Program
- Graduate Buddhist Education
- Institute of Buddhist Studies
- Youth Advocacy
- Ministerial Benefits
- Shin Buddhism as a major religious
- Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC)

These are some of the puzzle pieces to realize the vision of Jodo Shinshu as a major religious tradition, we require financial support. Gifts to the campaign are one avenue to support the BCA, if you believe they are all deserving of our support.

But today, the BCA debt to establish the BCA’s Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, California stands at $5 million, down from the $11.75 million in March 2007. The debt is comprised of loans from the Endowment Foundation and California Bank & Trust (CB&T). Both the Endowment Foundation and CB&T have worked with us to provide us with financial vehicles we have needed. We are indeed fortunate to have them as our financial partners. But we must pay off this debt.

The Jodo Shinshu Center has become a central part of the BCA vision for the future and has been designated the BCA’s commemorative project for our Shinran Shinon’s 750th Memorial Observance. Since the opening of the center, the enrollment at the Institute of Buddhist Studies has significantly increased; Hongwani has established the IMOP (International Ministerial Orientation Program) at the JSC; public lectures, workshops and youth retreats have been held at the JSC; Ministers Assistants are being trained at the BCA and there is continuing education at the JSC. Thus, the Jodo Shinshu Center is a central piece of the puzzle to realize the vision for Jodo Shinshu in America.

Please personalize the vision for Jodo Shinshu as a major religious tradition; please consider what it means to you. Make a gift to Campaign BCA – 21st Century today. If you have already given, consider an additional gift. Give to the BCA no matter whether small or large. But most of all, please participate.

Seminar

Continued from Page 3

This seminar helped all of us put the Dharma School experience in perspective. In the year and a half since that seminar, we felt that perhaps the issues and problems facing our own Dharma Schools were more serious and critical. However, when we met as a group and discussed our own individual situations, we discovered that we share the same issues, and more importantly, our desire to improve our Dharma Schools and provide an enhanced future for our Dharma School students. As we continued to discuss these issues, we each contributed an individual ingredient, which enabled us to formulate a collective blueprint for the programs and activities all participating BCA Dharma Schools.

National Conf. Continued from Front Page

Different sessions with quality speakers such as Masao Masao, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Vajrayana traditions. The conference overall was ranked overwhelmingly as excellent. The keynote presentation by Dr. Judith Simmer-
今月の法話
お念仏が あなたの支えになってますか

アラメダ仏教会駐在 谷口瑞流

報恩講をお迎えする時期となりました。ええ！報恩講？まだ十一月の
にと不審にと思われるのであろうが、アラメダ仏教会では旧暦の
十一月に報恩講をお勧めいたしております。

そうして、御正直報恩講法要の後でいただくお食事はお精進で、
婦人の皆さんが特別心をこめて二日間にわたり準備、調理してくださ
ります。

昨年秋服 教区担当の下に開催された米国仏教 連盟大会にお招
いた姫村 教区の福岡 教区 仏教 妇人会連盟の委員長が、私たちも
報恩講には精進のお食事を調理ますが、その中で白合えは雪の世界を
あらわし、ニノンジの赤字は親鸞聖人のご苦労、ラグジーにみ集
る血の色を、シタクエは聖人がかぶられた苦をあらわし、親鸞聖人の
ご教化のご苦労をお食事を調理する一つ一つの中にいただきます」と
お話ししてくださった心、国が違っても同じ教えを生かされる喜びを
楽しみにいたしました。

日ごろ何かについて、他の生命をいただきながら生活をしています私たち
です。せめて一日でも親鸞聖人のご日報恩講に、生命の尊さを思い
た精進のお食事をいただくように、一国の河合さまが導く教えを頭に
していただきました。その温かい心を二世の皆さまが受け継ぎ、そうし
て今年も若婦人の会の方も参加、調理して下さいます。このように
尊ながら受け継がっていくことに、胸が熱くなります。時代がいかに
変わろうか、これが先ず私たちが伝えたいという教えを各教会の主として、
守っていくことは大切なることになります。

私がお世話になっているアラメダ仏教会の誰も、親鸞聖人にお会
いたいのですかが、九十二年間、み仏を通して親鸞聖人にお
会いし、教えを生き、そうして次の世代へと引き継がれてまいりまし
た。だが我が家は家は仏教と真宗の門徒です、という大切な心が、次の
世代へと喜びに引き継がれていくのが、大変素晴らしい時代となってきま
ました。

この困難な時だからこそ、確かな心の揺り所を、再構築してみる
必要があるのではないでしょうか。

そこで私は、お念仏の教えを、このようにいただいているのです。

私の人生は、誰にも代わりはつくれません。また日々
困難な問題に出くわすことが多々あります。誰も私の心をわかってく
れない時もあります。それでも私は、親鸞聖人の教えを
理解してから組織を、親鸞
聖人さまは、私のすべてを知って
いて下さいます。そう思うと、私
はほっとします。その時、お念仏
が私の勇気を与えてくださり、温
かい心に満たされます。

私が生きていく中で、どんな時
でも変わるしかない真実、どうし
てもいるのです。もしそれがなければ、人生を支えてくれる確かな生
き方、歩みを見失ってしまいます。その確かなものが、教仏道のもの
です。

では、お念仏のみ教えに生きると、私の人生が変わるのでしょう。
何か、何が変わるのでしょうか？それについて言えば、お
念仏に遇えた今、私の三途の煩悩（欲と怒りと愚かさ）がいかに
増悪するのかが知られると。それによって、今まで考えも
せずに脇を立て、悪縁ばかり培っていた自分、人なまえ思いや
りの心を持つようになっています。また、どんな状態の時でも、
自分の誠な居場所があって、ほっと安らぐ心得ることができる
のです。

念仏の教えは、病気を治すとか、お金がもっとかかるという教えでは
ありません。お念仏は絶えず一方的にしか物事を考えてことし
かいない「そうではないのです。もう少し他の角度からみ
てごらんなさい」と、方向転換の心を与えてくれます。

また、大事な決断をせねばならない時に、いつも相談できる場所
があります。そのところとは、私のお仏師の前です。お家のお仏師
は Inspirer ではありません、朝夕二回、私が変わらない真実に補
充、それがお仏師であり、大切な事務を自問する場であります。
現実という社会、私たちは絶えず目で見えない悪縁にさらされ
て生きています。だから、確かにあるのが私です。私たちがその光
に輝かれて安らぎな生活を、今送らせているのが、お念仏
の教えに遇えた、あなたであり私であります。

今年も終わりに近づいてまいりました、お互いは日々を送いてい
きますが、心は仏法、あなたがお念仏によって、いつも若く
保ちましょう。念仏者はどれだけ年を重ねても、ただいま音指盛り
でございますと、常に生き生きとひらがらをさせていただきますよ
う。

合掌

東海岸の念仏者たち

ニュージーランド州のシーブルッ
ク仏教会、彼女たちの女性が移
り住み、現在でも原生林とのアシ
スタンで活動を続けている。近
くに「浄土」という町がある。

首都ワシントン郊外にある惠光寺。ここでも水端先生のもと、大勢が遊
を続けていて、現在開教者アシスタン
ト希望者が九名いる。将来が楽しみ
である。