A Season of Appreciation

By Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop

S
ince I took office as Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) in April, 2012, I have conducted the Affirmation Ceremony or Kiboku at 14 temples and churches. In an Affirmation Ceremony, a person receives a Buddhist name, or Hoyo. I have conferred 204 Buddhist Names. It has been so great and encouraging to see many people expressing their desire to be identified as Buddhists. By receiving a Buddhist Name, they reaffirm their spiritual foundation and express their appreciation of the Dharma. As I visited various places and met with people, I saw more and more sangha members expressing their interest in Buddhism, especially in Shinran Shonin’s teaching.

However, we must not just look at numbers. Many years ago when I was a minister at the Buddhist Church of Oakland, after one Sunday service that was poorly attended I said to my eldest daughter, Amy, “Not too many people came today.” I think my voice sounded really disappointed and negative. Right away Amy responded, “Daddy, I was there!” Her comment really struck me hard. I thought to myself, “Yes, she was there. What am I thinking?”

As a minister I often think about how well services are attended. But am I really speaking to each person as a precious seeker? I was so shocked to see myself just looking at the people in attendance, I must conduct each service as my one and only opportunity to share my appreciation. I must treat each attendee with the highest respect and welcome all as fellow travelers.

I know that each and every one of us is given this life to live, a life that we can live only once. We must listen to our own voice coming from deep inside, seeking the true and real fulfillment of our existence. Shinran Shonin was able to find the voice coming from deep inside, seeking the true and real fulfillment of his existence. I think of those who have come to visit our temples and to meet with members of the BCA. The comparison for me as a minister serving in the four overseas districts of Canada, Hawaii, and the BCA. This year’s gathering was attended by 31 ministers from Japan, including aspiring overseas ministers in the International Ministerial Orientation Program (IMOP) and a representative from the Hongwanji International Department.

Our conversations at the 2013 IHOPE Gathering focused on the role of Hongwanji ministers in providing spiritual care at the end-of-life, as well as the inspiration we find in Buddhist scriptures, such as the Amida Sutra. Participating ministers shared their practical experiences serving families in end-of-life situations and shared strategies for conveying traditional teachings using idiomatic English expressions.

In order to take advantage of the gathering of ministers from the four districts as an opportunity to share the Dharma, an international panel of ministers addressed questions gathered from the representatives at each of our overseas regions about Jodo Shinshu teachings and temple activities. This was a live broadcast on the US-TREAM website. (A video archive of the conversation can be viewed by searching for “IHOPE Q&A” at http://www.us-tream.net/.) A video recording of the IHOPE participants chanting the beautiful Ojo Raisan liturgy has also been posted on YouTube.com (Search for “OJO Raisan”-be sure to include the quotation marks in your search). These experiments with using online technology are part of a larger project to find ways of introducing the Jodo Shinshu teachings to wider audiences once the Pure Land Buddhist tradition receives more attention in the landscape of American Buddhism.

Head of the 2013 IHOPE Planning Committee Bishop Tatsuya Aoki of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada described the goal of the gathering in the following words: “As overseas ministers serving in these four districts, there are common challenges we all face in sharing the Dharma. We have each developed our own strategies for addressing those problems, so coming together to share ideas helps us to be more effective in our ministries. What’s more, when we gather together all of our individual abilities and perspectives, we discover a great strength that transcends all of our individualities. That strength greatly contributes to the spread of the Nembutsu teaching in the world.”

One participating minister from Hawaii commented that he learned a great deal through meeting ministers from other overseas districts: “I normally don’t have an opportunity to meet ministers from other districts, so I found the conversations with colleagues from all over the world that I had at this gathering to be very stimulating. I look forward to putting the new things I have learned here into practice as soon as I get back to my temple.”

The Best Temple in BCA

D
ue to the timing of the December National Board Meeting, a report on the meeting will have to wait until the January issue of the Wheel of Dharma. However, we’re focused on the meeting to come, and one important topic for the BCA will be to discuss the future of American Buddhism. The future of American Buddhism is a topic that has been discussed at previous annual meetings of the BCA, but this year it will take on a new dimension. The BCA has made a commitment to creating a more diverse and inclusive organization.

The BCA has recently opened new offices in San Francisco, and the organization is working to develop new programs and initiatives to attract more people of different backgrounds to become involved in Buddhism. The BCA also plans to expand its outreach efforts, including by hosting more events and conducting more workshops to introduce people to Buddhism.

The BCA is committed to creating a more inclusive and diverse organization that can attract more people of different backgrounds to become involved in Buddhism. The BCA is committed to making Buddhism accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or experience. The BCA is committed to creating a more welcoming and supportive environment for all people who are interested in learning more about Buddhism. The BCA is committed to creating a more inclusive and diverse organization that can attract more people of different backgrounds to become involved in Buddhism.
GUADALUPE BUDDHIST CHURCH

A Fork in the Road and Gassto

By Rev. Ron Miyamura, Midwest Buddhist Temple

When I am asked about Buddhism and Shin Buddhism, there are so many ways to respond, but one of my favorite ways to explain Buddhism is to share stories.

For how one might understand Buddhism, I share the story of “A Fork in the Road” which goes like this: “There is a man sitting on a rock in the forest along a path where the path divides, to the left of the rock and to the right of the rock. One day, the man sees a little girl being chased by a wild man swinging a machete. The little girl disappears into the forest, and then suddenly is running towards the man and cries out, ‘there is a wild man chasing me!’ and the little girl runs to the left. A moment later, the wild man comes running up and says, ‘I am going to kill that girl, which way did she go?’…end of story.”

How would you answer the wild man? Is it more important to always tell the truth? Or if you are mis-directed the wild man, would you come back and kill your? In short, there is no “right” answer. The important part is that one has to take responsibility for whatever response you give the wild man. One always has to be responsible for one’s thoughts, words and actions.

Buddhism is like your response. There is no right or wrong answer, the important lesson is to be responsible. In a similar way, Buddhism does not give you the answer, it only provides some guidelines.

For how one might understand Shin Buddhism, I often relate this perspective. We all like to think that we should not kill, yet, we all have to kill. Whenever we eat, we have killed plants and animals of it we can’t, we would be starving ourselves which would be to kill myself. What ever we do, we have to kill.

There is no logical way to resolve this dilemma. Certainly we can all rationalize why we kill but that seems hollow somehow. So, the religious and spiritual question is how do we understand and accept that I have to kill. Either, I kill plants and animals or I kill myself.

Perhaps the way to resolve this question is to put my hands together in Gassto (palms and thumbs together and bow) and to humbly acknowledge the sacrifices of others. Among the many characteristics of Shin Buddhism is humility, and the gesture of Gassto is humility. Parmiting our palms together is symbolically using the left hand which is the human hand, and the right hand which is the Buddhist hand. Putting the palms together is the gesture of Omno (two separate parts coming together as one). Then the gesture is to bow on’t head, the gesture of humility. To bow on’t head has so many results, among them is to lower one’s eyes which allows one to “breathe” more.

If one were a Japanese Buddhist, one would say “budakiss- mass” which might be translated as “breathe”.

Continued on Page 6

Michael is a Buddhist Church of Oakland Board member and Minister’s Assistant, as well as being a past president. He received toshoku ordination in 2002 and lysobi certification in 2007 at Honganji.

Yumi Hata began her job as CBE Program Assistant in 2008, working with the CBE staff and volunteers at the Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC) to strengthen BCA’s array of educational programs, special initiatives and resource development projects. Since April 2012 she has been based at BCA National Headquarters, assisting with CBE program coordination, and within the Office of the Bishop. However, she still spends time at the JSC, especially when CBE programs are in progress.

Continued on Page 6

BCA NATIONAL BOARD 2013

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May Peace and Tranquility Prevail Throughout the World

ShinRan Honen's 750th (Chinnery)

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On November 22, the closing service and awarding of certificates to the 2013 International Ministerial Orientation Program (IMOP) was held. Several BCA ministers and Jodo Shinshu Center staff members participated in the chanting of Nenbutsu as this year’s program came to a close. IMOP, initiated by the Hongwanji in 2008, trains Japanese ministers to become Kaikyoshi in the mainland U.S.A., Hawaii, and Canada. They take a wide variety of classes, from Buddhism in America, to hospice and end of life care, to temple management. Other activities include delivering Dharma messages in English and participating in a short intership at a temple to complete their training.

IMOP Training Concludes

I received many messages from this IMOP program. I had many encounters with numerous people. I won’t forget your smiles and kindness. I’m looking forward to seeing you as a kaikyoshi minister. Thank you very much for everything. In Gasho, Rev. Daide Baba

I had many wonderful experiences. I was very moved that ministers of the past tried to spread the Nenbutsu at the risk of their lives. I hope I can be a BCA minister and do my best. I’ll never forget Ugo sensei’s words: “Don’t be afraid to grope in the dark.” Rev. Yoko Kato

IMOP was like a jack-in-the-box for me, filled with surprises every day. After all, I realized that the box was filled with treasures. I had many wonderful experiences. I am grateful for all that I received. With these experiences, I look forward to serving BCA with you in the coming future. Gasho, Miki Sekiya

MINISTERS’ WORDS OF APPRECIATION TO BCA:

There is a saying, “There is no ‘I’ in the word ‘BUDDHA’.” This may imply that the core essence of Buddha’s teaching is to be released from a self-centered and egoistic viewpoint; or it might suggest how difficult it is for us, who proclaim “me, me, me,” in our daily life, to become a Buddha. But in spite of this, BCA has two programs with “I” in their acronyms.

The other program with “I” is IMOP, the International Ministerial Orientation Program. IMOP is effective in that Japanese ministers who are foreign to Jodo Shinshu in the U.S. can actually be immersed in it for a period of three months. On their arrival at the San Francisco International Airport I saw their anxious faces, probably due to the prospect of living in a foreign country and studying in English. However, at the 2013 IMOP closing service, they were all smiles. The fulfillment from what they learned and experienced appeared on their smiling faces and were expressed in their words of appreciation. As the IMOP coordinator, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all who directly and indirectly supported this program. I hope that the four ministers will become truly appreciative of the Nenbutsu teaching and enthusiastically share it with others during their missionary activities. Gasho.
In Buddhism, the phrase “listen to the Dharma” is traditionally known as “monpo.” The kanji character of monpo is 明 (めい). The first character 明 (めい) means “listen.” The second character 耳 (み) means “ear.” Why would we need to know what the kanji characters are as English speakers? It is my belief that the kanji characters will help us to effectively view Buddhism more meaningfully.

The kanji character 彼 (かれ) means “an ear in the gate.”

Can you figure out why the phrase monpo kanji means “an ear in the gate”? Physically, our ears are opened for business 24/7. This is why we can wake up when we hear the alarm sound in the morning. Although our ears “open” 24/7, we sometimes hear but we don’t listen. Why does that happen? This is because our ears are not attuned to listen. We do not listen with intent in our minds. Our minds are not set to listen even though our ears can physically take in sound vibrations. This also applies to listening to the Dharma.

In Buddhism, the phrase “listen to the Dharma” is often referred to as “an ear in the gate.” This phrase is fundamental in our Jodo Shinshu tradition. According to the Hwongjeng Eighth Monshu, Rennyo Shonin’s disciple, Junsei, Rennyo Shonin’s daily sayings: “Rennyo Shonin Goichidai Kikigaki.” In this book, Junsei wrote Rennyo Shonin’s explanation of monpo. Rennyo explains, “There are many people who memorize the Dharma to gain knowledge or for intellectual understanding. But there are few people who listen to the Dharma (monpo) to reflect upon their own lives.”

So, is way of one’s approach a critical factor for enlightenment?
CHSR Symposium

Exciting News from the Institute of Buddhist Studies

By Rev. Seigen Yamaoka

A topic that often comes up in conversation when BCA members are gathered at any gathering is the cost of the educational package necessary to become a BCA minister is an increasing obstacle for our ministerial aspirants. The Board of Trustees of the Institute of Buddhist Studies approved on Nov. 8, the start of the "Friends of IBS" annual giving program, for the purpose of raising supplemental funds for the "IBS Ministerial Scholarship Fund."

The "Friends of IBS" plan is to reach out to friends and affiliates, past and present, to ask for their help in financially assisting the ministerial education of those students who desire to serve the Buddhist Church of America as ministers. We are asking everyone to consider what can be comfortably donated annually, for if we pool our resources, small amounts become significant. Details for the "Friends of IBS" annual program will be forthcoming: however, we are grateful to those who have only heard of the initiation of the program, and have submitted their gifts. Personally, I find this an exciting indication that there are some who are interested in being just that: interested in this kind of program to aid ministerial aspirants. We ask that you consider how you can help.

By Edythe Vassall, Berkeley Buddhist Temple

To extract vowel to the Wisdom and Compassion of Amida Buddha.

That was one of several quotable moments experienced on November 28, the 7th Annual Baby Boomers’ Seminar at JSC. A truly beautiful gathering of traditions in celebration and giving thanks on this special day! (Photo by Nat Snow)

By Michael Peppers, Executive Director SF Interfaith Council

"How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!" By Michael Peppers, Executive Director SF Interfaith Council

Hearing the Dharma at Seattle’s Women in Buddhism Conference

By Joan C. Makishima, Berkeley Buddhist Temple

"Eat well and play well." That was one of severalquotable moments experienced on November 28, the 7th Annual Baby Boomers’ Seminar at JSC. A truly beautiful gathering of traditions in celebration and giving thanks on this special day! (Photo by Nat Snow)

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**Rev. Umezono**

Continued from Front Page

As we turn the last pages on the year 2013, let us once again pay attention to our own life and reaffirm our religious and spiritual foundation so that the years to come will be fully satisfying and meaningful. Please enjoy this season of appreciation. I wish for the best for you and all of whom are currently

**Rev. Miyamura**

Continued from Page 4

As “humbly receive” meaning to gracefully receive the life forms placed before me must be ingrained into our body. This word has many meanings and more a word to acknowledge all the causes and conditions which brought about this food to be placed before me. It is a word that expresses gratitude and acknowledges the sacrifices of others.

“Now is the time to way to resolve the dilemma in eating to kill is to eat a spiritual understanding of humbly acknowledging the sacrifices of others. It is also a reminder of the interde-

**Presidential Message**

Continued from Front Page

It gave me the chance to hear about concerns, issues, and successes from dedicated professionals who make up the core leadership of their temples. We were treated very well and will be forever
delighted for the hospitality and friendship we received. We were impressed by the pride shown by our colleagues, and for the first time heard people say their temple is the best in BCA. We witnessed friendly rivalries that are in-

**BCA Staff**

Continued from Page 2

Yumi maintains the BCA News whisket (bcnews@hinet.net) publicizing events, resources and other educational news. She also emails the BCA E- News to the BCA community and that newsletter is very focused on how BCA has been to fa-

**Boomers**

Continued from Page 5

We became a Buddha.

Each time you make a **Boomers**

Continued from Page 5

in life.”

**Walk**

Continued from Page 4

Grace Cathedral held on California Street, followed by a stop at the American Buddhist Cul-

**Rev. Nakata**

Continued from Page 4

I enjoyed this walk, visit-

**Seattle BWA**

Continued from Page 5

We are overwhelmed by the sad events that happen daily. Likewise, there was much sadness in the passing of Ami-

**Boomers**

Continued from Page 5

true of the teachings of Amida’s pri-

**Walk**

Continued from Page 4

We briefly discussed the purpose and the future of the BWA—then it was time for the next session.

**Rev. Nakata**

Continued from Page 4

life as the life of a life. So, there are only a few people who really can understand the benefits of the Nembutsu through the Dharma (15)”

Shinshu Shinto Hongyo-ji de-

ominates, the ceremony is re-

dicated to as the Confession of Faith. Therefore, the BCA Bishop invites a Buddhist name (Ho-

Myo). A homy has three parts: (1) Sōtō (a) Bu-sensu (the traditional Buddhist terms. Shaka

encompass nothing but the idea of divinity, the idea of transcendence and nothing

President’s Message

Continued from Front Page

tried that I should be to live and offer a remarkable life in the world. We can find ourselves

bly acknowledging the sacrifices of others. It is also a reminder of the interde-

**Bombers**

Continued from Page 5

The Buddha is a religious discovery in the Gaunta discovering Enlightenments. Enlighten-

ment is a truth, a path and the goal of all in life.

**President’s Message**

Continued from Front Page

of Infinite Wisdom and Compass-

on. When we were approached, we express our humbleness. The added benefit of Siddo is that our heads so we are less likely to talk, and much

I enjoyed this walk, visit-

**Boomers**

Continued from Page 5

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国仏教団の理事長をしておられていた方にお葬式をさせていただきました。前田博さんのお葬式でした。前田さんは、かつて米国で行われたお葬式の時の話をさせていただきました。それは親鸞聖人がいわれる「念仏者は無碍の一道なり（歎異抄）」というお言葉を味わうお縁となりました。

この法輪誌での最後の法話は、つい先日、私がさせていただきました。月の研修を終え、無事に帰国の途についた。写真は受講生の先生たち。右より馬場大道師、関谷美帆師、久保裕子師、遠藤竜平師。

プロフィール
馬場大道、千葉県出身。お寺の四男。龍谷大学、真宗学で修士を取得後、本願寺派宗務所に勤める。二児の父。現在は奥さんの実家、一六〇年続く奈良の筆屋を手伝い、聞法生活を送っている。

11月の仏教学院、龍大、IMOPなど、いろいろなところで学ばせていただきましたが、課題や研究、ご法話の作成など、いつも精一杯やるように努めてきました。それで今の私があるので、これからも今できることをがんばりたいです。

IMOPのプログラムは、お浄土へと導いていてくださいます。みなさん、だから、わたしたちは、ただ念仏をして感謝を示せばいいのであります。英語圏でい...トライアル&エラーでやっていきたいと思います。お浄土や阿弥陀さまを絵画で表現すると、言葉の違いという枠を超えて分かり合える世界が展開されるのではないかと期待しています。

インタビューのコーナーでは、日本人の開教使志望の
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総長メッセージ

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昨年四月に総長職に就いてから今まで、十四ヶ所で帰依式（*注）を行い、合計二百四名に法名を授与いたしました。これだけの方々が仏前で三宝に帰依することを決意されたことを喜ぶと同時に力強く感じました。自ら仏教徒としての歩みを始めようとする人たちの数が増えてきているように思えます。

ところで、私たち現代人はすべて数で判断するきらいがあります。メンバーの数が減ったとか増えたとか、お参りの数が多かったとか少なかったという具合に、仏教の繁盛も数で決められます。団体の場合ある程度は仕方がないかもしれませんが、気をつけなければならないことだと思います。だいぶ前のことですが、私がオークランド仏教会にお世話になったときのことです。ある日曜礼拝の後、お参りの数が少なかったのが気になって、「今日はお参りが少なかったなぁ。」とつぶやいたら、そばにいた当時10歳位の長女がすぐに、「ダディ、私がいたじゃない。」とコメントしました。その時、頭をゴツンと何かで殴られた気しかしました。「あぁ、そうだった。自分の考えは間違っていた。」と気づかされました。

お参りの数よりも、お参りしてくださっている方に何を語ろうとしているのかが大事ではないかと気づかされました。せっかくお寺に足を運んでくださった方を相手に、数が少ないからとかいうことだけで、法座を台無しにしないようにしなければならないと思いを新たにしたことでした。人生の一日一日も、それを大事にできなければ、せっかくの一生が台無しになります。人身受けがたし、仏法あいがたしです。恥ずべしと思わされるこのごろです。どうか今年一年を振り返らせていただき、新しい年には、三宝を大切にして、仏法を聞かせていただきながら、新しい思いで歩ませていただきましょう。どうか皆さまよいお年をお迎えください。

* 帰依式―本願寺でご門主さまよりおかみそりをしていただいて法名を授与されるのを帰敬式とよびます。海外の寺院ではその機会がすくないので、特別に帰依式という儀式が行われます。その儀式では、開教総長が、頂経（ちょうきょう-経典を頭に頂く）をして、法名の授与がなされます。この式を受け法名を頂くことで、仏教徒としての自覚を深め、仏弟子となることを喜ばせていただきます。法名は釈という字のあとに仏教経典から二字をいただいて名前とするのです。釈は釈尊の釈で、仏弟子もしくは仏家の一員となることを意味します。