Nembutsu Vows
Kikyoshiki and Kieshiki Ceremonies

By Rev. Henry Adams
San Mateo Buddhist Temple

This month’s edition of the Wheel of Dharma features photos taken on the occasion of Kikyoshiki Sarana Affirmation Ceremonies conducted at local Buddhist Churches of America Temples.

While these ceremonies were conducted at different temples, in all cases, the participants came before the sacred images of Amida Buddha and Shinran Shonin to make a solemn commitment as Jodo Shinshu Buddhists to live the Nembutsu in their daily lives.

In this Shin Buddhist ceremony, the participants took an important step of affirming their reverence for the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and their determination to tread the path to Buddhahood. The Buddha is the Awakened One who spent many years reflecting on the causes of human suffering before realizing the path to liberation. The Dharma is the true teaching of the enlightened One who spent many years sharing it with the world. The Sangha is the community of people whose lives are illuminated by the teachings of the Buddha.

The Confirmation Ceremony conducted by the Abbot of the Hongwanji Temple, or Gomonshu, is called “Kikyoshiki.” The Gomonshu is a direct descendent of Shinran Shonin, and resides in Kyoto where he serves as the spiritual leader of our Jodo Shinshu tradition. The Kikyoshiki Ceremony is conducted regularly at the Hongwanji Temple, and may also be conducted in conjunction with a visit by the Gomonshu to a local temple. In the Kikyoshiki, the Gomonshu uses a ceremonial razor to express the symbolism of shaving the head—a reference to the ordination ritual conducted for those who entered the Sangha at the time of the Buddha.

The Sarana Affirmation Ceremony conducted by the Bishop of an overseas district is called “Kieshiki.” The Kieshiki Ceremony is often held in conjunction with a visit by the Bishop to a local temple. Participation in a Kikyoshiki or Kieshiki Ceremony is an once-in-a-lifetime event. All Jodo Shinshu Buddhists are encouraged to participate in either a Kikyoshiki or Kieshiki Ceremony. Receiving a Dharma Name is an expression of personal commitment to the Buddha’s teachings. As such, it does not grant any special status within the Sangha. Likewise, a person who has yet to receive a Dharma Name is not any less committed to living on the path of awakening than someone who has.

Those who have received a Dharma Name, either from the Gomonshu or the Bishop, are encouraged to keep it in a safe place. As the Dharma Name one receives on the occasion of a Kikyoshiki or Kieshiki Ceremony is an expression of one’s life as a Buddhist, it is used during funeral and memorial ceremonies.

Continued on Page 10

December 8: Bodhi Day – Buddha’s Awakening – Jodo-e
Bodhi is the Sanskrit word for enlightenment. Bodhi Day is when Siddhartha Gautama became Sakyamuni Buddha. Siddhartha was 35 when he realized Truth. As a Buddha, he shared the Dharma for 45 years until his death at age 80.

December 31: New Year’s Eve – Joya-e
The last day of the year is an opportunity to reflect upon the past year in preparation for the coming new year. It is a time to think about the interdependence of all life and to ponder all the causes and conditions that have enabled us to live. At some temples, the bell is struck 108 times to remind us of the 108 blind passions (kilesa) that permeate our everyday lives.

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Making Something from Nothing

By Rev. Kodu Umezu, BCA Bishop

Last October 38 Jodo Shinshu followers from seven different states visited Japan. This tour was organized by the Center for Bud-
dhist Education to allow members to visit sites related to the life of Shinran Shonin in three major areas of Japan. We also stopped at
important Jodo Shinshu temples established after Shinran’s time.

The first day in Tokyo, we visited the Tsukiji Hongonji, which used to be known as Tsukiji Betsuin. The building is famous for its unique Indian-style archi-
tecture. There was a sign out stating that 2014 marked 142 the anniversary of when Shrin San- nin began propagation work in the Kanto region.

We were greeted by Rev. Yoshihito Inohara and Rev. Jo- Takeuchi, two ministers who visited the church in 1986, and
two former Rakuyo University exchange student, was there and spent some time with us. It is nice to see people who really enjoyed
many people identify Tsukiji as home of the biggest fish market in Japan. It’s popular with tourists
because they can get great sushi and sashimi using fresh seafood from the area.

Many foreign visitors visit the Tsukiji market but too many visit the

wheel to: Wheel of Dharma, 1710 Octavia Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. The recipient will receive a message via
mail or email and key developments in Jodo Shinshu internationally.

Wheel of Dharma (USPS 017-700)
Official Publication of the Buddhist Churches of America

Buddhist Churches of America
1710 Octavia Street, San Francisco, CA 94109

Email: WODeditor@bcahq.org

Managing Editor: Alan H. Kita

BCA National Headquarters
1710 Octavia Street, San Francisco, CA 94109

Fax: (415) 771-6293

Telephone: (415) 771-6200

Federal Tax ID: 53-0603976

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and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER:

Wholesale and subscription rates are available for

Wheel of Dharma (USPS 017-700) is published monthly by Buddhist Churches of America, 1710 Octavia Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. Copyright 

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A New Format for the National Council Meeting

President’s Message

This year, the main goal is to provide temple leaders with information that they can use to help run their temples. We are trying to give temple leaders tools to help solve some of the common problems that face many of our temples.

Just prior to the meeting, I will host a temple presidents breakfast at the hotel. Temple presidents will be seated at tables according to the size of their sanghas. I would like to hear from each temple president about what is working well and what some of the common problems are at their respective temples.

The business meeting portion of the Wheel of Dharma is usually shortened to just six and one-half hours. Attendees need to read over the materials in the national reports prior to coming to the meeting. We will not have a lot of time for discussions. I would like to use the remaining time for questions. This will allow us to utilize our time efficiently.

We will have up to six proposed bylaw changes to go over. I discussed five of them in the September issue of the Wheel of Dharma; however, I incorrectly worded the proposed change for Issue #2. This dealt with past BCA Presidents serving on the National Board. The way it was wording, it stated that BCA Presidents cannot serve on the National Board. As it is currently practiced, past BCA Presidents cannot become directors at large to the National Board unless they have served a three-year term as a director representative. Past BCA Presidents can always serve on the National Board if they are district representatives. I think it still deals with the situation if the past BCA President wants to be a director at large. Thanks to Dr. Billy Sack for pointing out the misinterpretation.

At the National Council Meeting, we will vote on the budget. I would like to see the budget increase this year. In past years, we have voted on the budget right after the National Council floor. Unless the Council votes to do otherwise, I would like the Council to review issues after they are discussed and not wait until the following day. Nonetheless, parliamentary procedure allows us to delay voting on an issue if the Council votes to do so.

Tom Nishikawa from the San Luis Obispo Church will again be our parliamentarian.

On Thursday, February 26, we will have an Institute of Buddhist Studies Symposium on “Buddhism and Public Policy.” Dr. Camellia Jeffries will also be participating in this event with Dr. Peter Kwasniewski. Both are ministers’ assistants. That evening, Alan Kna, BCA Chief Administrative Officer, will host an orientation workshop for attendees who are new to the National Council Meeting.

On Friday and Saturday afternoons, we will have a “Dhar- mathon” session where four ministers will give successive Dharma Talks.

On Friday night, Alan Kna, BCA Chief Administrative Officer, will host an orientation workshop for attendees who are new to the National Council Meeting.

I hope to meet all the attendees in San Diego next year, and I hope that everyone who attends this meeting will come home with useful information that can help their temples. Bishop Umeya hopes that everyone will attend this meeting and be go home enthusiastic about being a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist. We will communicate feedback from anyone who attends the upcoming meeting. I hope to continue providing you with updates to the meeting format for 2016 when we meet in Visalia, CA.

My Path to Becoming a Buddhist Minister

I witnessed a cremation. This was shocking to me, as I had not experienced death in such a way before. I could not accept the reality of a person being reduced to ashes. I came back the follow-

Register now! Check out the new format!

2015 BCA MINISTERS’ ASSOCIATION & NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

February 25 – March 1, 2015

Crown Plaza Hotel & Buddhist Temple of San Diego

San Diego, California

Packets have been mailed to BCA temples.

Registration deadline: January 15, 2015

In addition to BCA ministers, officers, committee chairs, temple representatives & delegates, guests are welcome to exciting new programs.

Highlights include IBS & CBE programs:

Feb. 26: IBS Symposium “Buddhism and Counseling” Feb. 27 & 28: Dhammarat: Expand the Experience Conference Co-Chairs: Ralph Honda (BTSD) & Terri Omori (Vista BT)

Email: 2015NMC@gmail.com

New BCA Kaikyoshi Appointed

The Buddhist Churches of America Office of the Bishop is pleased to announce that Rev. Kenji Akahoshi (left) and Rev. Diana Thompson (right) received Kaikyoshi (Overseas Minister) status from the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji Mission on October 22, 2014. Rev. Thompson serves the Tri-State/Denver Buddhist Temples and Rev. Akahoshi serves the Buddhist Temple of San Diego.

By Rev. Masanori Watatane, Onkaido Buddhist Temple

It will soon be one year since I came to the United States. As the saying goes, time flies. During this past year, I have attended the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) National Council Meeting, and I have been working on the details for several years. On behalf of the BCA Executive Committee, I would like to thank them and their committees for organizing the meeting.

By Dr. Kent Matsuda

DECEMBER 2014 WHEEL OF DHARMA PAGE 3

As the Buddhists of America, we have historically been very strong on the national level, and this year we hope to continue that tradition.

Before I entered the Buddhist way and I believed that traveling to India might help me find it. At that time I was seeking my own path, and I was looking for other ways. It was shocking to me, as I had not experienced death in such a way before. I could not accept the reality of a person being reduced to ashes. I came back the follow-

The current Buddha addressed the realities of impermanence, and events influenced me to become a Buddhist. I was seeking my own way, looking for meaning in life. I wanted to find a spiritual leader. I admired the Dalai Lama’s story, and I wanted to see him. I wanted to witness a cremation. This was shocking to me, as I had not experienced death in such a way before. I could not accept the reality of a person being reduced to ashes. I came back the follow-

The Four Marks of Existence is one of the most important teachings, because it is characteristic of Buddhism. 1. Life is interdependent (interdependent). 2. Life is impermanent (Anatta). 3. Life is interdependent (Anatta). 4. Life is suffering (Dukkha). These are key concepts. When we understand these concepts in our hearts, and when we fully accept these teachings, we can realize our true selves. Siddhartha suffered from the uncertainties of reality, but he found ultimate calm through his enlightenment. His ultimate realization was called Buddhahood. Buddhahood is difficult to imagine. Our tradition’s founder, Shinnran Shonin, expressed it as Infinite Life and Light.

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In his verse Shoshinge, Shinnan said, “Still the clouds and mists of greed and desire, anger and hatred, cover as always the sky of true light. But though the light of the sun is veiled by clouds and mists, there is brightness, not darkness.” Shinnan Shonin wrote, “Buddhahood is the ultimate truth. No matter what our circumstances, we can become a director at large. Thanks to Dr. Billy Sack for pointing out the misinterpretation.

At the National Council Meeting, we will vote on the budget. I would like to see the budget increase this year. In past years, we have voted on the budget right after the National Council floor. Unless the Council votes to do otherwise, I would like the Council to review issues after they are discussed and not wait until the following day. Nonetheless, parliamentary procedure allows us to delay voting on an issue if the Council votes to do so.

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Flourishing Through Difference

Eastern Buddhist League Meets for the 69th Time

By Kennon Nakamura, Ekoji Buddhist Temple

As it has for almost seven decades, the Eastern Buddhist League (EBL) met over Labor Day Weekend 2014, this time at the Ekoji Buddhist Temple in suburban Washington, D.C. In truth, the EBL is a non-organization—it has no constitution, by-laws, articles of incorporation, or officers. It is, instead, the embodiment of a Sangha drawn from nine Jodo Shinshu Buddhist temples and Sanghas located in the eastern part of the U.S. and Canada. It is brought together by a desire to listen to the Buddha Dharma and, through friendship and sharing concerns, to take refuge in the company of fellow travelers.

Ekoji organized and hosted the 2014 conference under the theme “Flourishing through Difference.” The event opened with a “fireside” chat to meet the EBL ministers and continued with workshops for youth and adults to discuss the differences we face at multiple levels: as individuals, within and between our Sanghas and temples, and within our greater society. Differences can divide, differences can be ignored or merely tolerated, or differences can be acknowledged, embraced, and used to benefit the whole.

The 2014 conference was a hope for the future that we can all flourish together.

At the individual level, we learned techniques through a Nen Daiko* workshop to better understand ourselves and our relationships. At the Meditation and Mindfulness seminar, we sought to exercise our awareness of our own daily life. Rev. Kurt Rye, Ekoji’s resident minister, commented that contemplative meditation is more than the secular meditation of quieting ourselves. Through contemplative meditation, Buddhism implores us to go beyond our everyday thoughts and enter into our spirituality. The deep listening of Jodo Shinshu can be a part of this.

At temple and Sangha level workshops, participants discussed temple activities designed to share Jodo Shinshu teachings with non-traditional communities, and the dynamics in multifaith families. At the Multifamily Families seminar, people shared that they receive more support from their families than they originally thought. In some cases, while family support (or lack thereof) did not present barriers, the individuals imposed their own barriers because participating in temple activities meant time away from family members who were not Buddhist.

In the last workshop, a panel of representatives from each EBL temple explored challenges they face and how these are being addressed. There were many commonalities, as well as important differences that need to be worked through. There was even discussion related to the future of EBL through the Dynastic Sangha. Temples are struggling to figure out how to instill in members a sense of ownership in the life of the temple.

Participants in the smaller breakout groups offered additional perspectives. Some felt that Buddhism as it is practiced in our temples is losing its Asian-ness. A few felt it was important to separate Japanese culture from the Dharma to allow a broader audience to see the universal relevance of the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha and Shinran Shonin.

The Sanghas in our temples are changing. To re-develop a sense of community, everyone needs to feel at home and vested in the sense of Sangha. Temples are struggling to figure out how to instill in members a sense of ownership in the life of the temple. How do we convey that being part of the Sangha is more than financial support, coming to the temple, listening to the Dharma talk and then leaving? It also means volunteering to help with major events as well as the day-to-day running of the temple.

Beyond the workshops, participants enjoyed local tours, shopping, and each other’s company. An added bonus was the taiko concert on Saturday night. Nen Daiko, Ekoji’s taiko group, celebrated its 20th anniversary with its In Gratitude concert at the Synetic Theater. The dynamic and energetic concert included performances by New York Buddhist Church’s Soi Daiko and Seabrook Buddhist Temple’s Hol Daido. Both groups were influential in New Daido’s start and growth over the years.

In his inspiring keynote remarks at the Sunday farewell banquet, Rev. Earl Ikeda of the New York Buddhist Church talked about the importance of the Hawaii Kyoan, where he recently came from, and the EBL in the future of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. Both groups are consciously working on addressing the changing Sangha while continuing to support the legacy of the Japanese American pioneers and founders. He said the new Sangha has a thirst to learn more and even speak in Jodo Shinshu. For too long, Jodo Shinshu has been hidden under Japanese language and so it was “under the radar” of American Buddhism. It needs to move out to the community to support the legacy of the Japanese American pioneers and founders. He said the new Sangha has a thirst to learn more and even speak in Jodo Shinshu.

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The 2015 EBL Conference is scheduled for Labor Day Weekend and will be hosted by the Cleveland Buddhist Temple. Dr. Jeff Wilson will be the guest speaker.
On October 10-12, 2014, at the Hotel Jamboree Center in Irvine, Calif., the BCA Southern District (SD) hosted the Federation of Buddhist Women’s Association (FBWA) National Conference combined with the SD Federation of Dharma School Teachers League, and the SD Conference. This historic gathering included cultural activities and a variety of Buddhist talks in English and Japanese. Stories of dharma journeys and insights were shared by: Rev. Shimyo Kojima (Soto Zen), Ven. Lekshe Tsomo (founder, Sakya dtu Internationl Assoc. for Buddhist Women), Rev. Yoshiko Miyaji (Hongwanji), Rev. Nobuko Miyoshi (Higashi Honganji Betsuin), Mr. Hugh O’Neill (Zen/Mindful Way); Rev. Shoko Angela Oh (Rinzai Zen); Rev. Patricia Usuki (SFV Hongwanji Buddhist Temple); and Rev. Dr. Duncan Williams (Soto Zen/ USC School of Religion).

The banquet program was emceed by Frank Buckley of KTLA’s Morning News. Musical entertainment was provided by koto artist June Kuramoto and keyboardist Kimo Cornwell, both of the popular group Hiroshima. Miko Shudo of the Grateful Crane Ensemble and a group of talented young jazz musicians also performed.

“Sharing Our Life Stories as Buddhists” Draws 650

On October 5, 2014, the Central Cal District Council presented this annual event at the Buddhist Church of Fowler in Fowler, CA. Rev. Kiyo Kawasaki & International Ministerial Orientation Program (IMOP) ministers led interactive presentations for Dharma School students, Jr. YBA, adults and Japanese speakers.

Bay District Ministers Assoc. presents: “History, Liturgy, Teachings: Shinran Shonin’s Shoshinge”
Ikiru: To Live
by Rev. Marvin Harada, CBE-Co-director

I would like to discuss the classic Akira Kurosawa movie, *Ikiru* (to live) and re- late the Buddhist teachings and messages that I received from the movie.

*Ikiru* is about a city bureaucrat in Japan named Watanabe who begins to realize that he has stomach cancer and maybe six months or a year to live. Watanabe is shocked and dismayed by his plight. He just can’t face his death, because he realizes that he hasn’t done anything meaningful in his life.

He goes on a search to find something meaningful. He goes to a bar and thinks about “living it up” for a night, but he realizes his life has been so mundane that he doesn’t even know how to “free it up.”

Watanabe then begins to follow around and spend time with a young woman who worked to use his office. He is attracted to her not in a romantic sense, but because she seems so alive, so vibrant. He wants to live even one day like her but doesn’t know how. Finally, she suggests that he start building or making something. She has a job in which she makes toys. She finds making toys for children very enjoyable.

The light goes on in Watanabe’s head, and he realizes that he can make some- thing. Mothers had been coming into the city office complaining about a swampy area of town that was a mess, but these citizens just got the runaround. Watanabe himself had sent them off to the engineering department, where they were sent to sewage, then to pest control, etc., etc. He realized he could do something meaningful in his life. He could make a park for children.

In the touching final scene of the movie, Watanabe had gone to the park at night and died while sitting on one of the swings in the park he had built, happy and content with his life, because he had done something meaningful.

What would you do if the doctor told you that you had six months or a year to live? It could happen to any of us at any time. Would you feel like Watanabe, that you wouldn’t be able to die because you have never done anything meaningful in life? How would you live those remaining months?

It is a challenging question. If we have been living a meaningful life, then even if we only had six months to live, we would be able to face and accept our death. But if we haven’t been living a meaningful life, even if we have been just existing and not truly living, then death poses a real question for us. What have I been living for? Just to take up space on this earth? Just to consume precious natural resources? Even if we have had a meaningful career, we might feel like we were just one cog in a big wheel of a corpora- tion that went on just fine without us after we retired.

The late Rev. Kazue Miyaji, father of our Rev. Akio Miyaji, used to say in his lectures that if you truly understand Shin Buddhism, then you can die at any time, no matter when it comes. I think this means that a person who has found their deepest meaning of life is able to face and accept death whenever it comes, because they have lived a most meaningful life, every day.

*Myokonin*: a very devout Jodo Shinshu follower; usually a person from a humble background.

*Myokonin* says in one of his poems, “When I die, I will become the immortal Namuamidabutsu.” For *Myokonin*, he can die at any time because he has found the deepest meaning of life in the Nembutsu. Death doesn’t mean simply the end of his life, because he has encountered the truth of the Nembutsu as a timeless, eternal truth. *Myokonin* doesn’t become immortal, but he becomes the immortal Namuamidabutsu.

Through the Nembutsu we can find our deepest meaning of life. We can come to know deeply what it means to live (dharma), and we can come to face and accept our own death because we have lived something meaningful.

*Myokonin*: a very devout Jodo Shinshu follower; usually a person from a humble background.

What would you do if the doctor told you that you had six months or a year to live? It could happen to any of us at any time. Would you feel like Watanabe, that you wouldn’t be able to die because you have never done anything meaningful in life? How would you live those remaining months?

“Ikiru” is a very powerful film that has given me much inspiration and hope in my personal life.

—Rev. Nariaki Hayashi

*Note: *This article is based on the author’s lecture that he gave at the 2014 Japan-Buddhist Church Conference in Boston. The lecture was presented by the author at the 2014 Japan-Buddhist Church Conference in Boston.

**IMOP Ministers Successfully Complete Training**

Buddhist Churches of America Bishop, Rev. Kodo Umezu presented the particip- ants in the International Ministerial Orientation Program (IMOP) with certificates of completion at a ceremony on November 21, 2014. IMOP ministers aspire to be- come *kaiyōshi* ministers in the mainl US, Hawaii, or Canada. The program enables them to learn about Jodo Shinshu ministry in the West. In three months, they visited over 20 temples, participated in 34 activities, and attended over 186 hours of lectures.

**On the Relationship between Seeking Spiritual Enlightenment Oneself and the Practical Helping Others: The Bodhisattva Path of Mahayana Buddhism**

By Caroline Brazier

Tokiyo Trust, Leicester, UK

The great innovation of Mahayana Buddhism was the establishment of the bodhisat- tva ideal as the path to awakening. The bodhisattva vows to save all beings before entering nirvana and to “remain in the realm of birth and death” working- for the benefit of all beings until even last one is delivered from suffering.

Whilst the Buddha himself had established a teaching based on ethical behaviour and had exemplified compassion and practical caring in his dealing with the early sangha, the spiritual realm of Buddhism was largely based on the idea of individual progression within the ordained sangha towards personal liberation. This was achieved through following a lifestyle of practice and asceticism. The path of the *Arya*, as it was known, was the embodiment of nobility and was supported by adherence to a set of rules known as the *niraya*.

About five centuries after the time of the Buddha, a new movement was estab- lished within Buddhism. This was partly the result of various changes which had hap- pened in the Buddhist community and discipline which had arisen from these vows. We can, however, see that this movement in fact gave form to aspects of Bud- dhist thought which dated back to the time of the Buddha himself.

Mahayana Buddhism seems to have emerged as a distinct entity around the first century CE. It was principally associated with that period of rapid growth and development across East Asia of the Lotus Sutra. This text particularly expressed the bodhisattva ideal, a concept which was to become the hallmark of the Mahayana.

Vows and Aspiration

The bodhisattva ideal is centered on the bodhisattva vow. This vow to save all sentient beings is aspirational. In contrast with the practical monastic vows of the vi- hara, which define the duties of the religious life, the bodhisattva vow, in practical terms, is an ideal. Vowing to save all sentient beings is a logical impossibility, especially if one is competing with all other Mahayana Buddhists for the privilege! Rather, vows of this kind primarily offer inspiration. They are intended as a way to evoke particular mental states as we are to be freely achieved. This does not negate the intent of the practice in developing deep compassion, however. Compassion is the bedrock of Ma- hyana.

The idea of aspirational vows permeates Mahayana thought. The traditions of this movement, which is known as “the great way,” are, big-minded. The great vows of the tradition indeed evoke big-mindedness; they give birth to the vow-mind. In the text this month, in addition to references to the bodhisattva vow itself, we read of the great bodhisattvas; celestial beings who are each associated with particular vows. These figures, including Dharmakara Bodhisattva, show that the vow-mind itself be- comes a channel for the transformation of all sentient beings.

Vows and Personal Transformation

The bodhisattva vows are intended to cultivate compassion and to invite noble mind states. They are also concerned with personal transformation. Many Mahayana traditions have numerous affirmations related to developing bodhisattvahood. Much of this, the bodhisattva vows aspire to transcend selfishness through the focus on others. Transcending self is the path to enlightenment, since, in the service of others, one naturally transcends selfishness.

This link between the bodhisattva aspiration and personal transformation raises questions. Does a person aspire to all beings altruistically, or is the aspiration basically for their own benefit because it is a route to enlightenment? In response to such questions, Mahayana Buddhists claim that in order to help all sentient beings we need first to be enlightened, since without the insight of an enlightened mind, they are likely to be acting out of self-interest anyway. Such arguments, however, seem to me rather gratuitous against the teaching of the Sutras.

The Bodhisattva Vow: Self Power or Other Power?

Although the bodhisattva vow reads as the ultimate expression of intentionality, it is also deeply devotional. The eighth century Indian scholar, Shantideva, described bodhicitta, the bodhisattva mind, as a lightning flash in the dark of night. Aspiration to bodhicitta is as a gift, arriving unexpectedly to inspire the practitioner to joy-filled action.

The bodhisattva vow can therefore be seen as an expression of transformation as much a route towards it, embodying the spirit of Buddha within everyday practice.

The vow-mind is not our own. According to the Shin tradition, it is Amida’s grace, working on us through the vows of the *niraya*. This grace is allowing the lives, we do not choose our own enlightenment or to work for universal salvation, so much as we allow our lives to arise to the light, unfolding in the fruition of Amida’s vow, avail- able to all who seek it.

Caroline Brazier is a Shin practitioner living in Leicester, UK at Tariki Trust (www.tarikitrust.org) where she teaches and practicesAvailability Therapy. She has been tak- ing the online JSSC study program with BCA for the last year.

**CBE 2014 Calendar of Events**

Programs subject to change. Events are at the Jodo Shinshu Center unless otherwise noted.

**March 7, 2015: Winter Pacific Seminar at the Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple**

Guest Speaker: Rev. Tomoyama Chiko Naito, Professor Emeritus, Ryukoku University

Contact: JSSC, March 10, 2015: Tohoku Minister’s Seminar

June 27, 2015: Shin Buddhism & the LGBTQ Community Seminar at the New York Buddhist Church

www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org Email: cbe@bcahq.org Ph: (510) 809-1460
Our Tokudo Experience

By Sensei Tadao Koyama, Buddhist Church of Florin

I was certainly blessed to be accompanied by extremely supportive and encouraging individuals. Despite all of us being from different temples, states, and in Bob’s case, from another country, we all stuck together and supported each other. We were the “gokubakko” or “foreigner” Tokudo group. Not that we felt prejudice from the Japanese group—they were extremely supportive of us as well—but we especially needed to look out for each other as many of us were not familiar with the culture of Japan. Thank goodness we had Rev. Koyomin Koarashira, Rev. Gino Sekiya, and the Hongwanji staff to assist us!

During our stay at the Hongwanji International Center, we were fortunate to have Sekiya Sensei and Kuwahara Sensei escort us to many of the historic and significant sites that played a large part in Nishi Hongwanji’s past, such as the Otani Mausoleum, Higashi Hongwanji, and the Honzan [Nishi Hongwanji] itself. After three days of touring these sites, we were driven to Nishiyama Betsuin to begin our training.

Our schedule was incredibly demanding. Wake up every morning at 5:30 am for cleaning chores. Shoshugi morning service at 7:00 am, a three-hour morning lecture at 9:00 am, another three-hour lecture after lunch, Shoshugi evening service at 5:00 pm, testing starting at 6:45 pm, bedtime service at 7:30 pm, and if you were assigned to sit on the Night Sitting, you weren’t supposed to leave the temple until morning. Some nights we did not get to sleep until 11:00 pm. We would repeat this schedule for ten days and by day eight, we were starting to buckle against the schedule.

Our instructors were incredibly strict! They would scold us as many times if we made a mistake in our chanting or if we made the slightest error in our ritual practice. They expected us to do our very best and refused to accept anything less. While the instructors might have seemed harsh, our group also viewed them as some of the most important people we had met whenever they conveyed the sincerity of us becoming Tokudo ministers and not to take it lightly. We were reprimanded and reminded again and again that people will now look at us as ministers so our expectations for ourselves should be just as high if not higher than those of the Hongwanji.

Our instructors made sure that we were in the best condition when we were officially ordained as Jodo Shinshu ministers on the tenth day by Gomonshu Sama. Our group shared one thing in common that will forever bind us together; we will forever be grateful to them.

“Thanks to Dr. Tanabe for his careful planning of the seminar on dharma talks,” said Rev. Henry Adams. “I came away from the seminar with a better understanding of how to give dharma talks and areas in which I can improve. As much as reflecting on my own speaking, I was inspired by hearing other ministers speak.”

This seminar was co-sponsored by Bukkyo Denso Kiyoshiki America.
I've found that being half Japanese puts me in a weird position of being admired for my heritage and being more important than me getting to school twenty seconds earlier than I should have. It's not worth getting angry. I've learned to take a step back and analyze the situation before getting emotional or taking things personally.

I use Buddhism at night. When I get home from school, all I want to do is take a shower and sleep. This plan is usually interrupted by my parents’ relentless questions about classes, homework, and my social life. As much as I want to lock myself in my room and relax, I know that I have to suck it up and hang out with my family. After being separated for the majority of the day, it can be hard to spend time with me and save the little time they have left before I leave for college. I need to appreciate the time that I have and not waste it.

All these components are what I have learned from practicing Buddhism. I use Buddhism during the day. For me, Rosie Yasukochi, Buddhism has shaped me into the person that I am today. I'm never quite sure how to accurately describe it. I usually give the simplified version: treat all beings with respect, avoid anger, greed, and ignorance by being compassionate. To me, Buddhism is a way of life. Buddhism teaches patience, understanding, and empathy. With these three, life is in a different way. I don't just use Buddhist teachings at church. I practice them every single day.

I use Buddhism during the day. Most of the time when I'm on the mom cuts me off on my drive to school. Instead of shouting some choice words, I take a breath and imagine things from their point of view. Maybe she's late to a meeting for a job that she loves. Maybe she's rushed to get to a job interview that she needs in order to provide for her family. With this mindset, I realize that the situation is not as dire as I thought. It's much more important than me getting to school twenty seconds earlier than I would have. It's not worth getting angry. I've learned to take a step back and analyze the situation before getting emotional or taking things personally.

I use Buddhism at night. When I get home from school, all I want to do is take a shower and sleep. This plan is usually interrupted by my parents’ relentless questions about classes, homework, and my social life. As much as I want to lock myself in my room and relax, I know that I have to suck it up and hang out with my family. After being separated for the majority of the day, it can be hard to spend time with me and save the little time they have left before I leave for college. I need to appreciate the time that I have and not waste it. All these components are what I have learned from practicing Buddhism.
Brave, Courageous! Women in odo Shinshu Buddhism

By Julianne Ho, Lauren Ho, Stacey Kawabata, Kylie Mukomiyka, Vicky Shinkawa
University of Hawaii at Manoa, Girl Scout Troop #07036
Padma Award – Dharma Talk given on Girl Scout Sunday, March 2014

Brave, courageous, bold, antireligious, determined, and independent. Raise your hand if some of these words describe someone that you know. Keep your hand raised if that person is a family member. Now, keep it raised if it is a woman. If you are still raising your hand, it means she was something in common with women who have influenced Buddhism. We are going to tell you about some brave and bold women and their contributions to Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.

First we will go to India 566 BCE. Queen Maya died, Prajapati married Maya’s younger sister. After Gotami was a princess and Queen in her right side. It meant she gave birth to him in Lumbini’s garden and then died seven days after. It was brave and courageous of her to give up the life of a privileged queen, cut off her hair and wear the yellow robes of a monk. Her contribution to Buddhism was very important. She became the first Buddhist nun, allowing other women to join the sangha.

Now let’s fast forward to 12th century Japan…..

Eshiniko-ko and Kazukiko-ko are two very important women in our religion. They were the closest family members to Shinran. They have much to tell us of how we can find success in our lives. Eshiniko-ko was Shinran Shonin’s wife, born as an aristocrat’s daughter. Kazukiko-ko was one of Shinran’s major benefactors. Even though she was financially successful, she still had to provide for her husband. Shintoku’s teachings of home management, and household. It is important to remember that even today women have always been as important as men in the foundation of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.

Without these two women, we may not even be practicing Jodo Shinshu Buddhism today. Two current day ministers are Reverend Seijo Naomi Nakano and Reverend Patricia Ushiki. Reverend Seijo Naomi Nakano is the current minister at Otsu Hongwanji Buddhist Church and San Luis Obispo Buddhist Temple. Reverend Nakano was brave and determined to go back to school after 20 years. She spent her first year learning how to become a student again. She was courageous enough to enter a field of work where there are mostly men. She was determined to become a minister and to spread her teachings. She began to reflect on her life and the teachings of Amida Buddha.

Reverend Patricia Ushiki is the current head minister at the San Fernando Val

IN GRATITUDE TO OUR DONORS

Friends of IBS Ministerial Scholarship Fund

The Institute of Buddhist Studies would like to gratefully acknowledge all who have extended their generosity and support of the Friends of IBS Ministerial Scholarship Fund. The total amount received since we began this fund is $82,745. Thanks to the generous and timely response of BCA members, organizations and friends, we have already begun distribution of financial aid to ordained Buddhist clergy. This was the first wave of a very exciting development in odo Shinshu Buddhism. We are very grateful for these historical and current figures.

The Buddhist tradition, and she was determined to become a minister and to spread her teachings. She began to reflect on her life and the teachings of Amida Buddha. She is known for the ten letters that she sent to her daughter, Kazukiko-ko. These letters tell us how ordinary women practiced Buddhism at the time. They show us how the Nembutsu guides someone through the typical wor-

Dear dear Sister Amida, if you can hear these words, may you know the wisdom and compassion of all Buddhas. May you know the ability to save all living beings, and may you be able to enter the true meaning of the Golden Light of the teachings of Amida Buddha. Without these two women, we may not even be practicing Jodo Shinshu Buddhism today.

And today, there are women in the foundation of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism that is seen planting a bodhi tree in Southampton, UK, September 1-4, 2014. The Buddhist Conference held at Solent University was some insight into Shinran’s estilo of life. The letters also give us some of the reasons that our founder, the Buddhist woman.

Reverend Usuki is an important Buddhist woman. Her experiences in being a Buddhist woman. We hope that we have learned something through our personal experiences.

Without these two women? Would you be here today, and that you appreciate these women? We hope that you have learned something through our personal experiences. The total amount received since we began this fund is $82,745. Thanks to the generous and timely response of BCA members, organizations and friends, we have already begun distribution of financial aid to ordained Buddhist clergy. This was the first wave of a very exciting development in odo Shinshu Buddhism.

When no women were allowed. It was determined to join the sangha. After her father died, she was determined to become a minister and to spread her teachings. She began to reflect on her life and the teachings of Amida Buddha. She is known for the ten letters that she sent to her daughter, Kazukiko-ko. These letters tell us how ordinary women practiced Buddhism at the time. They show us how the Nembutsu guides someone through the typical wor-

Dear dear Sister Amida, if you can hear these words, may you know the wisdom and compassion of all Buddhas. May you know the ability to save all living beings, and may you be able to enter the true meaning of the Golden Light of the teachings of Amida Buddha.
Photographing Nishi Hongwanji, Kyoto

By Carol Bonomo

Visa Buddhist Temple

When we announced our plan to visit Kyoto during the Obon festival, my husband Felix was asked to bring back photographs of our mother temple, Nishi Hongwanji, to share with temple members and dharma friends who otherwise might not have the opportunity to visit it themselves.

It also became a way of seeing through the camera lens with the eyes of the sangha rather than a photographer’s usual emphasis on the mechanics of focal point, composition and color balance. Felix would have to pay attention to those mechanics too, of course, but his overriding concern would be to capture the spirit of the place and bring it home.

The first surprise was the size and scale of Nishi Hongwanji. Behind its walls and gates—some of them works of art in themselves—a complex of buildings filled with rituals, rites, education, outreach, and administration for a worldwide Buddhist sect. “How can I do justice to this?” he asked, a little desperately at our first glimpse.

First you regroup and drink tea. The Visitor’s Center offers free hot tea all day, and the chance to sit and think about what we’ve gotten into.

We found the Chinese Gate (Kara-mon) and the famous, long wooden picket fence in front of it, caught in early morning sunlight. “What does that look like?” he mused, frustrated that he would never know. “It looks like a really big pile of really old books,” I suggested. He conformed himself to a very fine photo of it from the outside.

And anyway, the spirit of Nishi Hongwanji wasn’t going to be found in dusty old sutras, or inside the Drum Tower (another place he was dying to get inside, and also to get a quick photo). It was in the Amida Hall, where the faithful gathered by 6:00 a.m. each morning to chant with more enthusiasm than you hear at football matches, with Nanrō Amida Butsu rushing up from their socks and setting the air to tingling. It was in the banquet hall, caught in early morning silence before ringing bells would awaken all the faithful, students, ministers, and two Caucasian visitors, to begin chanting Shōbō-kyō. It was in the wooden statue that Shinran (it is said) carved of himself—a 15th century “selfie,” much venerated, whose lacquer coating is mixed with some of the ashes of its maker.

Felix photographed the spirit of Nishi Hongwanji—not some ghostly or supernatural force, but the living, breathing life of Nōbu- kuro that permeated the buildings, the sanghas, and the light between, like incense.

Photographing Nishi Hongwanji

*Obon—Shinran Shinon’s birthday.*

(Visit Carol Bonomo’s images, “Ken Shin: Spirit of Peace” at Felix Bonomo's other exhibition, “Tengu: Spirit of War” at the San Diego Historical Society’s examination of the historical significance of the Buddhist shrines of the Buddha Corporation of America National Council Meetings in San Diego, California.)

Kieshiki

Continued from Front Page

services after one passes over to the Other Shore. In a case where someone passes over to the Other Shore before bringing ministers, students, the faithful—and two Caucasian visitors—nosing to Founders Hall to begin chanting Shōbō-kyō. It was in the wooden statue that Shinran (it is said) carved of himself—a 15th century “selfie,” much venerated, whose lacquer coating is mixed with some of the ashes of its maker.

Rev. Oshita

Continued from Page 2

see if we could remember just a moment of that simple innocence.

As December comes to a close, New Year’s Eve becomes a naturally reflective time. It is a moment that we quietly look back on as a year that we have lived through. We reflect on the many Changes we’ve lived through, the many new beginnings, the many new meanings...and also difficult partings.

But we know that deep within our most difficult of partings, there remains, at the very heart of our sadness, a feeling of endless Gratitude; Gratitude for the Love and Life that we have been able to share with the people whose lives have had meaning to our own.

With the Dharma as our guide, every year also becomes a year of growth. Knowing that every moment is a “Beginning and Ending,” the Dharma encourages us to live our lives trying to appreciate every day...and every opportunity we have to be with those we love. To live with our Dharma Eyes Open, is to live each day, aware that every moment is filled with “Beginnings and Endings.” To live with our Dharma Eyes Open, is to Live a Life of Nembutsu.

With the start of a New Year, we begin a New Cycle of Seasons. Let us all try to live the New Year with our Dharma Eyes Open; appreciating each day...and every opportunity to be with those we love.

A Seminar for Dharma School Teachers: Helping Children Deal with Difficult People

Guest Presenter: Kiyo Masuda

We will use children’s books to connect with Jodo Shinshu teachers. Share your lessons that help children deal with difficult people.

Open to all Dharma School Teachers in any FDS District

Saturday, January 10, 2015

9:30 am to 2:30 pm

No registration charge (lunch will be provided).

Jodo Shinshu Center

2140 Durant St., Berkeley, CA 94704 (510) 809-1460

Please register by January 8, 2015.

Email your name, school and the grade level that you teach to Maya Lawrence (mayalawrence@berknet.net) or mail to Buddhist Church of Berkeley, 820 Jackson St., Oakland CA 94607

This program is sponsored by the Bay Area Dharma School Teachers’ League (BDSSTL) & Federation of Dharma School Teachers’ Leagues (FDSSTL)

Visit: http://bodhacollege.wikiispaces.com

Placer MAP Certification Ceremony

On Sunday, November 9, 2014, Rev. Umezu, RCA Bishop, officiated the Minister’s Assistant Certification Ceremony for Rieko Kawahata, Ron Kawahata, Michi Mitani and Ed Nakamoto.

Top photo: Kieshiki at Palo Alto Buddhist Temple’s 100th Anniversary, Palo Alto, CA, October 19.

Ekoji Buddhist Temple, October 5.

Ekoji Buddhist Temple, October 5.
サンタクロースの神話

今月の法話

サントラクルースの神話

オレンジ郡仏教会開教使 原田マービン

今月のご法話のタイトルは仏教のお話としては少し変に聞こえるかもしれません。けれども、12月のホリデーシーズンに入ると、町のいたるところでクリスマスのデコレーションを見たり、クリスマスの曲が聞こえてきたりしますので、私もなにかクリスマスにちなんだお話をしてみようかと思ったのです。そこで今日はサンタクロースのお話を通して大無量寿経の説話をご紹介したいと思います。

最近私は、サンタクロースのお話はとても美しいメッセージを伝えている神話だと考えるようになりました。けれども普通私たちは、サンタクロースのお話しを神話ではなく、さまざまな解釈をしていると思います。子供達は、サンタクロースが本当に存在していると思っていて、クリスマスに素敵なプレゼントがもらえることを心待っています。大人にとっては、サンタクロースはおとぎ話のたぐいのもので、子供達をきちんとさせるのに有効なものだと思っています。クリスマスが近くなると、「そんな悪い子にはサンタさんが来てくれませんよ。」という言葉にはとても効き目があります。青春期の若者たちは、サンタクロースは「子供っぽいもの」とみなして、本当に存在するなんて思っていません。けれども彼らはクリスマスには新しい服やお小遣いなどがもらえるものだと期待しています。このように、世代によってそれぞれのサンタクロースの見方や解釈があります。

しかし、少し見方を変えてサンタクロースを神話として解釈してみると、そこには時間を超えたメッセージ、歴史や事実を超えた真実というものが見えてきます。サンタクロースと彼の妻の生活に目を向けてみましょう。彼らは一年の全てを使っておもちゃを作り、それを贈り物として子供達に届けるのです。しかもそれを無料で行い、報酬もありません。また何かの賞を受けとることもありません。さらにサンタクロースは夜、わざわざ皆が寝ている時間を選んで誰にも見られないようにプレゼントを届けるのです。もし私が誰かに贈り物をする場合、自分でその人に渡したいと思いますし、またその人がプレゼントの包みを開けて私に「なんて素晴らしいプレゼントでしょう！どうして私が欲しいものがわかったの？」と賛辞と感謝の言葉をかけてくれるのを期待しています。それどころか、プレゼント交換の場合だと、自分が贈ったプレゼントと自分がもらったプレゼントを比べて、「えー、このプレゼンを贈るのです。」さらに彼は良い気候のときではなく、一年で最も寒く、届け物をするのが困難な時期にこのプレゼント贈りをします。そんな苦労の多いサンタクロースに私たちがするたったひとつのことといえば、クッキーとミルクを置いてあげることだけです。

もう少しサンタクロースについて考えてみましょう。彼は年老いていて、もうリタイアして楽しい老後を送ってもよいはずです。けれどもリタイアなどせず、骨を折っておもちゃを作り、しかもそれを贈り届けるのです。そしてそれは自分の子供のためでなく、他人の子供のためです。

このように私はサンタクロースの神話には時代を超えた美しいメッセージがあるように思えます。私たちの住む、欲の多い、自己中心性の世界において、サンタクロースは仏教でいうダーナ(布施)を行じる者のお話なのではないでしょうか。彼の純粋な贈りものは世界中の子供に向かっているのです。「サンタクロースは本当にいるのでしょうか?」科学や歴史の見方で見ると、私たちは「いません。」と答えなければならないでしょう。けれども、神話や詩的真実の見方からはどうでしょうか?もちろんサンタクロースはいるに決まっています。何億もの子供たちにとってサンタクロースは間違いなく存在していますし、彼はこれから何百年も、いや何千年も生き続け、世界中の人々に純粋な贈りものについて教えていくのです。

私たちが通常、「本当」だとみなしている科学や歴史の事実からはそういった深い真実は見えてきません。むしろ私たちは神話の表現を通してこそ深いレベルの真実に気づき始めることができるのです。もし私たちがサンタクロースの神話の中に詩的に表現された真実を見いだそうとすることができるのなら、それは大無量寿経に示されている、たいへん深い真実をいただくのに、心の準備ができてきたということだといえるでしょう。

大無量寿経には釈迦牟尼仏のお悟りの心の最も深いところが表わされています。このお悟りの心はとても深遠で難解なので、釈尊は最初、そのことを説くのをためらったと言われています。他の人々に話しても、理解してもらえないだろうと思われたからです。けれども、後に釈尊は法を説き始め、そのおかげで釈尊の教えが2500年経て、私たちに届いてくださっているのです。釈尊が、大無量寿経となったご法話をされたとき、今までになく輝いておられたと伝えられています。釈尊の弟子、アーナンダは釈尊のお顔が尊く光り輝いていることに気づいたので、なぜかを尋ねました。「今日のお釈迦さまのお顔はたいへん気高く、威厳に満ちておられます。なぜなのでしょうか?」と。釈尊は「よくぞそのことに気がついた。君の智慧と深い洞察力が気付かせたのだろう。」とアーナンダを誉めました。そして釈尊はお悟りの心の最も奥深いところを、説話、つまりは神話のスタ...まとめてみました。子供たちがサンタクロースの膝にのるように、あたかも私たちが仏さまのひざに座らせていただけると思ってください。そして、仏さまが私たちにお話をしてくださっていると思って、仏さまの深く、素晴らしいお話を聞かせていただきましょう。
十一月十一日（火）から十三日（木）の三日間、開教使連続研修会（MCE）が浄土真宗センターで行われた。今回のテーマは「効果的な法話の仕方を学ぶ」で、ハワイ大学名誉教授の田辺ジョージ博士が講義をした。参加者は十六名で、それぞれが五分から十分の法話を実演、ビデオに録画し、田辺博士や他の参加者から良い点や悪い点などの指摘を受けた。はじめて自分の法話をビデオでみた開教使は「思っていたほど悪くなかった」とか「自分のお話のスピードがわかってためになった」など感想を述べ、有意義なワークショップとなった。

また、徳永一道勧学が京都からビデオ通話で講義をされ、講義のトピックは「往生」で、浄土真宗本願寺派の解釈では「現生往生（生きているうちに浄土に生まれること）」はないとの見解を示された。他に往生礼讃のお勤めの練習や、社会参画仏教の講義などがあり、参加者はお互いに交流と学びを深めた。研修会は年二回開催されており、次回は春季に開催予定。