May 21: GOTAN-E: Shiran Shonin’s Birthday

This service celebrates the birth of Shin Buddhism’s founder in 1173 C.E. GOTAN-E means “coming down birthday-gathering.” Another name for this occasion is Fujinmasu (satori festival). The double wisteria crest is the emblem of Nishi Hongwanji, our mother temple in Kyoto, Japan.

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

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

Buddhist Christian/Christian Buddhist? The Importance of Interfaith Dialogue

By Rev. Jerry Hirano
Salt Lake Buddhist Temple

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

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

My wife Dr. Carmela Javelina Hirano, who was raised in Japan, is the daughter of an older brother who was a Catholic priest and an older sister a Catholic nun, was honored to receive Tokudo ordination at Nishi Hongwanji in New York City. In 2008 he found that being board members of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable has strengthened and deepened our appreciation for our Buddhist identity. The Roundtable was initially formed to create a Chaplaincy program for the 2002 Winter Olympics. Since that time we have had regular monthly meetings hosted at various churches and temples throughout the Salt Lake Valley to learn about that community’s religious beliefs and history.

I have a new favorite book called Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian, by Paul F. Knitter. He was ordained in Rome as a Catholic priest in 1966. He left the priesthood in 1975 to marry a Buddhist woman. He taught Theology at Xavier University for thirty years; after retiring he taught at Union Theological Seminary. In 2008 he received his Buddhist name Urgyen Menla (Lotus Healer) through Lama John Makransky. He states: “Our religious self, like our cultural or social self, is at its core and in its conduct a hybride. That means that our religious identity is not pure-bred, it’s hybrid. It’s not singular; it’s plural. It takes shape through an ongoing process of standing in one place and stepping into other places, of forming a sense of self and then expanding or correcting that sense as we meet other selves. There is no such thing as a neatly defined, once-and-for-all identity. Buddhists, indeed, are right there: no isolated, permanent self. We’re constantly changing and we’re changing through the hybridezation process of interacting with others who often are very different from us.”

This hybridization is at the heart of interfaith dialogue. This is why taking part in this dialogue is extremely important for us as Buddhists living in America. It is in our religious diversity that we begin to know and understand our shared humanity. Culture is such a strong part of our identity in both personal and religious aspects that, to better understand who we are as Buddhists living in America, we must also see the world through the lens of other religions.

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

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


**The following “Buddhist prayer” written by Rev. David Rye Masatomo (Institute of Bud-**

**dhism Studies, Berkeley, California) was offered at a gathering of Buddhist monks, nuns, ministers, and scholars at the Harwood School on April 23, 2015.**

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

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

May we open our eyes to seek to under- stand the extent of their plight.

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

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

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

We invoke the Name and virtues of the Tathagata Amitabha, receiving once again the buddhessence and wisdom and compassion in care, sup- port and service to those suffering and in pain in Nepal, wishing

That their suffering will come to an end;

That their lives, families, homes and com- munities may be safe and well;

That their livelihoods may be restored;

That their community, in spite of the damage to their temple building. They are asking us to help at all times and in all situations. I want to ask you to respond to their call for help.

As we respond to the call from Nepal, we must remember that tragedies and natural disasters happen constantly, all over the world. Let us remember that we are part of the world community and that our hearts and thoughts go out to all those who are suffering as a result of this tragedy.

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

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

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The Value of Failure

By Rev. Carol Myoeik Himaka

Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church

Lately, I’ve come to really appreciate the value of failure in our lives. That may sound paradoxical, but that is what we are all taught to aspire to. For the most part, we focus on “goals” and achieving those goals as a means of measuring our “success” in life. But failure is a valuable counterbalance to what we deem to be “success.”

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

For instance, Prince Siddhartha was well on his way to fulfilling his obligations. The prince, by leaving home early, did not fulfill his duties as a monarch. But, not being permanent, he did provide an heir to his father’s kingdom.

After practicing with several of the most famous teachers he discovered that, although they gave him deep spiritual realizations, those states still did not answer the question of how one could overcome the wants and needs of the body through perfecting a mental discipline capable of overcoming those impulses. He was successful—but he was so successful, even though he had conquered the world and fulfilled all the obligations he had, that it was difficult for him to continue his studies of enlightenment. He was unable to achieve the state of true enlightenment.

Undergoing each ascetic practice was in itself a failure, if one is confused about the goal. But in the fifty-ninth day, the Buddha saw a giant white lotus, he made this pronouncement to Shinran: “If the believer, because of the fruits of his life, is driven by desire, then I shall take on the body of a beautiful woman to be burned, throughout his entire life I shall not fulfill my vow. And at death I shall lead him to birth in Pure Land.”

The World-Saving Bodhisat- ta who performed this task made the following pronouncement: “This message is my Vow. Exempted it to all living beings.” Based on this pronouncement, [Shinran] realized that I should tell this to millions of sentient beings and I heard it from above.

(John Yotaka, Shin Bud- dism in America, Japan, James Dobbins, pp. 24)

As a result of this revela- tory dream, Shinran left the Rokkakudo and sought out Honen Shonin. So the success of his search for an appropriate teacher in the 100-year practice can be said to have opened for Shinran a different path.

We have all heard about the ega- mons of our own lives. Our own desires and motivations prevent us from taking refuge completely in what is offered openly through Now- haku. However, we may not realize the depth of our own ego-attachments and designs until we experience failure. Failure is not really a nega- tive in our lives. It actually provides an opportunity that can lead us from our limited worldview towards the ab- solute truth found in Namo Amida Butsu. Failure can also help us become aware of that which we do not know.

Oxnard Buddhist Temple

The introduction of Buddhism to Oxnard dates back to the turn of the twentieth century. It slowly emerged after the turn of the century with a Japanese language school. In December 1964, the present site was purchased, upon which the temple building, minister’s residence, and Sangha (people committed to Buddhism) Treasure are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (people committed to the Dharma). I explained Sangha because “Sangha” originally meant “ordained monks.” If the position were reversed, the monk would be the temple and the community will receive the benefit.

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

Please Take Good Care of Your Minister

By Rev. Kodo Umeza, BCA Bishop

I recently received a card from my brother, Rev. Chido Umeza, in Fukuoka, Japan. It is an invitation to the wedding ceremony for the future resident minister of Sukagawa, my family temple. My brother doesn’t have any children so he decided to ask his wife’s nephew, Rev. Eisho Iwao, to take over this temple. This will be his wedding day. His plan is that the nephew gets married first, then the newlywed couple will be adopted into the Umeza family to eventually overtake the temple.

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

The BCA has set as its priority to nurture our religious leaders that serve in this country. It was founded in 1932 to support the Buddhist Study Institute (BSI) right after World War II. Our past leaders and ministers have tried to hear the profound teachings of our religious tradition and share them with us in the face of our own life’s vision is reflected in our BCA Mission Statement: To promote the Bud- dha, Dharma, and Sangha, as well as the Jodo Shinshu Teachings. Nurturing ministers takes ef- fort. It requires us to respect the position. It requires cultivation of the Dharma fields. It requires us for this reason to respect all of us. It requires our com- mitment and support. Thanks to the initiative of former Bishop Bishop Koshin Ogata, we now have a funded 150 minister’s assistants. Some of them are taking classes at the BISI; however, we also have a group of dharma teachers who are becoming BCA ministers. Even if they do not become ministers, they can still help us with our mis- sions. When each and every one of us takes refuge in the Three Trea- sures, we do not need to worry about the future. These Three Treasures are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (people committed to the Dharma). I explained Sangha because “Sangha” originally meant “ordained monks.” If the position were reversed, the monk would be the temple and the community will receive the benefit.

Job Announcement

Accounting Specialist

The Buddhist Churches of America National Headquarters is looking for an Accounting Specialist with a background in payroll and benefits accounting. Please respond to job description and wage information at applications@bcahq.org. The location will be primarily in San Francisco, CA.

Corrections

On page 1 of the February issue there was a misprint of “Kosagai” (Honmin Service for Lady Koshin). The Friends of BCA Memorial Scholarship Fund and donor list on page 6 of the April 2015 Wheel of Dharma had the wrong name on the card. The corrected spellings are Mrs. Namie Fukui, Mrs. Hirao Katsuy, and Mr. Richard and Mrs. Kay Shidlof. We apologize for the errors.
The article discusses the history and teachings of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, as well as its influence in the United States. It mentions the contributions of key figures such as Shinran Shonin, who founded the movement, and Honen Shonin, who later developed it further. The text also touches on the Self-Power and Other Power debate, a core aspect of Jodo Shinshu teachings, and how it relates to personal development and growth.

President’s Message

A Future for the BCA

By Dr. Kent Makushe BCA President

Dainin Buddhist Temple

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

On March 14, I attended the TechnoBuddha Conference at the Jodo Shinshu Center. There, 71 young adults came together to hear Sensei Jeff Wilson talk about the Dharma. They held workshops and parted into the night after the formal sessions were over. Their interest in the Dharma would inspire anyone.

On March 20, I attended the Religions for Peace USA Council of Presidents’ Meeting in New York City. This was a meeting of religious leaders from over fifty different faiths, who were dealing with the deaths of African-American men who were in police custody. The Black Lives Movement and President Obama’s participation in the march across Alabama were also discussed. The afternoon session dealt with mass incarceration, solitary confinement, and the criminal justice system. In speaking with religious leaders, I learned that many of them had difficulty bringing young adults into their fold. Fortunately for us, the BCA has an active Youth Advocacy Committee that helps to arrange events for young adults.

As the Council of Presidents’ Meeting, I met a youth minister for the United Church of Christ. She said that she wished that members of her church could engage in Buddhist practices like meditation and self-reflection. When they participated in the march, they had little time after the event to talk about how being in Selma affected them. I hope that we can continue to engage our young adults in our Sanghas. Although we may not always see them in our temples, we know that they come together to share the Dharma in various locations, becoming our future leaders. I hope that we can continue to connect with members of other religious faiths and build bonds that strengthen both communities.

While I was in New York, I had a chance to visit the New York Bud- dhist Church. They were preparing a fundraiser and I was told that they were busy cooking. Although their kitchen is small and the local laws prevent them from cooking, they are trying to increase their Sangha and make an impact in their residential neighborhood. The members inform me that they are looking to replace their aozu (mortar for pounding rice) for making New Year’s mochi. If you think you need an aozu that is about sixteen inches tall and made of ironwood, if you can help them, please let me know.

Self-Power or Other Power: The Most Difficult Decision

By Kristin Lam

Stockton Buddhist Church

A great deal of change comes with five months’ time. When I arrived at the beautiful grounds of Moun- tain View Buddhist Temple for the YAC 10 Reunion held on January 16-19, I hoped that the bond between us YAC (Youth Ad- vocates of the BCA) would remain as strong as it was during those final meaningful months.

Saturday began with a Japanese breakfast (that was to-die-for) followed by morn- ing service and Dharma session on chanting Shoshinge and waterfall techniques. It was amazing to see how two hours was difficult, but chanting with everyone was deeply calming as always. In the afternoon, we headed to San Jose’s Japanese Museum where YAC members learned about the American Museum of San Jose. It was refreshing to see familiar places I associate with family that I have in the San Jose area — now from a different perspective. A power nap later it was time for dinner and a delicious food, and then another service. Our motions were natural yet mindful as we practiced this routine. Subsequently we attended the YAC 10 Reunion Banquet where Reverend Mukojima and our Buddhist version of “Rather Be” by Clean Bandit and having our teen concert discussion.

On behalf of YAC 10, I would like to express thanks to Reverend Mukojima for this beautiful dinner. It was memorable and I was amazed by how the welcoming Shanga filled the Honda. Reverend Mukojima also shared a poignant Dharma talk on imper- manence with the help of an adorable panda puppet. To top it off, we joined the high school Dharma class for the day’s awesome lesson on suffering in Star Wars. Later as we basked in the afternoon sunshine Rev. Bob led the thought-provoking interpretation of Jodo Shinshu teachings. Laughing together about some funny anecdote, I felt waves of contentment wash over me. At that moment there was really no place I’d rather be.

During evening service, we found ourselves ardently pursuing Shoshinge and the Wasons. With Kristine Yada’s fearless leadership we became the first group to go so voluntarily. Keith Sawada had done some interesting personality tests with us… and the first goodbyes came way too soon. Not knowing when we’d be together again, we talked until our lips were numb and our sleep was the vulnerably intimate kind, well worth the next day’s exhaustion.

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

On behalf of YAC 10, I would like to express our sin- cere gratitude once more. The reunion was amazing thanks to the efforts of Reverend Mukojima, the Mountain View Sangha, Susan Bottari, Charlotte Grinolds, Keith Sawada, and the other YAC 10 members. We hope to see you again soon and we sincerely hope that the bond we have created will grow stronger.

Monterey Peninsula Buddhist Temple Kielschi Ceremony

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

Continued on Page 6

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

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

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

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

Next year’s event is probably going to be the best one ever. Hope to see you there! Jei-Gado


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

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

During this historic conference, the WEHOPE Dharmathon was broadcast live on YouTube on the evenings of April 15 and 16. Each Dharmathon featured nine historic messages in Japanese presented by (from left to right) Rev. Miki Nakura (New York Sangha), Rev. Ryota Kobata (Buddhist Church of San Francisco), Rev. Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa (Higashi Honganji North America District Office), Rev. Yoichi Kameye (Zen Hospice International), and Rev. Koike Yugo (Zen Hospice Mission).

Welcome messages were presented by Bishop Kode Ungetsu (left), Buddhist Churches of America (Buddhist Church of San Francisco, Los Angeles Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple, and Head Buddhist Church of San Francisco), and Bishop Noriaki Ito (second from left), Higashi Honganji North America District Office, and Bishop Noriaki Ito (second from left), Higashi Honganji North America District Office.

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(From left to right) Rev. Ryoio Osa (Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple of Chicago), Rev. Kanaye Koonsnato (Buddhist Church of Los Angeles), Rev. Marino Sawa (Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple Mission), and Rev. Ikeda Yutaro (Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple Mission). 1


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

YBICSE provides an opportunity for youth representatives from around the world to explore the unique, historical and cultural heritage of our Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Shingon tradition. Members from the United States, Canada and South America overseas districts will gather at our mother temple, Hongwanji, in Kyoto for practice and in Japan with Young Buddhists Association (YBA) members.

Participation is open to interested individuals, age 16-25, who are currently active in their local YBA, Jr. YBA, Dharma School, and Youth Advocacy Committee (YAC)/Young Leaders Today (YLT), etc. The cost per person is $1200.00 (includes airfare, ground transportation, lodging, and most meals). Dialogue will be selected through a screening process. Application includes a personal history, a resume of temple participation, a short essay titled, “What I Have Gained/Learned Through My Activities as a BCA Buddhist Youth,” and a Letter of Recommendation from the Resident Minister. Applications must be received at the BCA Headquarters by MAY 15, 2015. Applications are available at the BCA Headquarters: 1710 Octavia Street, San Francisco, CA, 94109. For further information including all application requirements, please contact Michael Eindo in the Bishop’s Office at (415) 776-3600, ext. 211, or via e-mail at mendo@bcashq.org.

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

JODO SHINSHU: THE SUPREME TEACHING FOR THE PRESENT AGE (Part 5 of 6)
by Rev. John Paraskevopoulos
(Practise)
In reaching out and making a connection with us, the Buddha needs to descend from the realm of Suchness and communicate in a way that we can recognise and understand. What better way to announce one’s presence than through revealing one’s name? Amida Buddha, as the compassionate form of formlessness declares itself to be Infinite Light and Eternal Life; this we learn through the enlightenment experience of Shakyamuni Buddha. This Light and Life which has subsequently confirmed the veracity and efficacy of this most direct of methods.

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

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

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

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

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

As eternal and infinite, the Buddha’s Light is true reality that abides ceaselessly. It works to transform our hearts and minds without thwarting our reason or emotions; rather, it provides an enriching resource for both. The Dharma gives the most penetrative and affective level, may have a depth that means that these ‘symbols’—though taken literally—are in fact operative within that person. The Mahayana is rich in symbolism but one could argue that it is an imperative (in the proper sense of this word) symbolism and, as such, issues forth from the Void realm. We moderns are too sophisticated to take these symbols literally but because we lack the facility, or receptivity, for deep hearing (or rather, no matter how we interpret these symbols, such as mysticism, and disregard their depth. Such interpretations are a bundance and create a “block” that prevents Shink’s symbols from forming a sacred, and saving, coherence within the positioner’s being. Without this, mystics is not possible as Amida’s call must compete not only with the background noise of our everyday chaos but also the mental strain of trying to fit something so vast and deep as the Pure Land tradition into such a small and shallow mental pigeon hole.2” Chris Morgan, pers. comm. I am indebted to Mr. Morgan for his advice and many helpful insights in the preparation of this paper.

To be continued next month

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

The full text of this article is available online at www.nembutsu.info.

1Symbolism is often misinterpreted by modern people. A person of faith may have a completely literal understanding of the Pure Land, Amida and Dharmakaya, yet this understanding, at a trivisive and affective level, may have a depth that means that these ‘symbols’—though taken literally—are in fact operative within that person. The Mahayana is rich in symbolism but one could argue that it is an imperative (in the proper sense of this word) symbolism and, as such, issues forth from the Void realm. We moderns are too sophisticated to take these symbols literally but because we lack the facility, or receptivity, for deep hearing (or rather, no matter how we interpret these symbols, such as mysticism, and disregard their depth. Such interpretations are a bundance and create a “block” that prevents Shink’s symbols from forming a sacred, and saving, coherence within the positioner’s being. Without this, mystics is not possible as Amida’s call must compete not only with the background noise of our everyday chaos but also the mental strain of trying to fit something so vast and deep as the Pure Land tradition into such a small and shallow mental pigeon hole.2” Chris Morgan, pers. comm. I am indebted to Mr. Morgan for his advice and many helpful insights in the preparation of this paper.

2In the name? Amida Buddha, as the compassionate form of formlessness declares itself to be Infinite Light and Eternal Life; this we learn through the enlightenment experience of Shakyamuni Buddha. This Light and Life which has subsequently confirmed the veracity and efficacy of this most direct of methods.

3Symbolism is often misinterpreted by modern people. A person of faith may have a completely literal understanding of the Pure Land, Amida and Dharmakaya, yet this understanding, at a trivisive and affective level, may have a depth that means that these ‘symbols’—though taken literally—are in fact operative within that person. The Mahayana is rich in symbolism but one could argue that it is an imperative (in the proper sense of this word) symbolism and, as such, issues forth from the Void realm. We moderns are too sophisticated to take these symbols literally but because we lack the facility, or receptivity, for deep hearing (or rather, no matter how we interpret these symbols, such as mysticism, and disregard their depth. Such interpretations are a bundance and create a “block” that prevents Shink’s symbols from forming a sacred, and saving, coherence within the positioner’s being. Without this, mystics is not possible as Amida’s call must compete not only with the background noise of our everyday chaos but also the mental strain of trying to fit something so vast and deep as the Pure Land tradition into such a small and shallow mental pigeon hole.2” Chris Morgan, pers. comm. I am indebted to Mr. Morgan for his advice and many helpful insights in the preparation of this paper.

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www.nembutsu.info

Sign up for CBE E-News! Additional events and more resources online. Go to the CBE section of the BCA website: www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org
### BCA Altar Finds New Home in Saitama

**By Christopher and Jill Tange with Rev. Brian Nagata**

In October of 2014, Florence, Staci, and Lesli Hamamoto along with Jill and I participated in the Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) Shinran Shonin Study Tour to Japan led by Bishop Kodo Um- ma, Rev. Nagata. Prior to the start of the official study tour Brian took us out to Saitama to visit Rev. Joko Yoshii, Mizuho, William and Clifford at their beautiful temple in Kawaguchi City. Zengyoji temple is an attraction with the Hondo on the first floor and the family’s residence on the second floor. Upon entering the Hondo we were all amazed at how wonderful the altar looked. I asked Jill, “Was this in the Bowles Buddhist Church?”

When it was decided to close down the Bowles Buddhist Church, located in Central California, the altar was offered to Rev. Yoshii as he embarked on his mission to open the first Jodo Shinshu Temple in Kawaguchi City, about an hour’s train ride from Tokyo. The altar was dismantled by Wakabayashi Bottsya Company and taken back to Kyoto, where it was cleaned and polished and then installed in its new home in the Zengyoji Temple. Zengyoji eats about 20 people, many in chairs, and the Bowles altar fits perfectly into an area that was originally from Hiroshina but moved to Kawaguchi City and became a member of the temple. The design reminded me of the Chiso Church that Henry Kawasaki and Kevin built. The first call to Rev. Yoshii’s temple has about 200 members and they are replacing many programs conducted in our BCA temples in an effort to attract even more members.

As we entered the Hondo of Zengyoji, we had Jizo soko (offer incense) first, as a representative of the members of the Bowles Buddhist Church. We are certain that the Jizo and Nio members who have returned to the Pure Land must be happy to see their altar receive a “second life.” It is similar to a symbol of the Buddha’s Infinite Wisdom and Compassion for all those who have followed the Nembutsu in the Kawaguchi City area.

After presenting the Yoshii family with our Central California Buddhist Church’s birthday cake, Rev. Yoshii and family members followed us to the altar, expressing how wonderful the memories they had of serving at the Fresno Buddhist Church and they asked upon returning to express their gratitude for the many kindnesses they received back then.

When you visit Japan, and if you have a free day in Tokyo, please make time to see the Yoshii family and their beautiful temple. We were really honored and happy to have the opportunity to see Yoshii sensei’s temple and the wonderful work he and Mizuho are doing to share the Dharma with new followers in the greater Tokyo area.

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### Upcoming Events at the Jodo Shinshu Center

**May 2: IBS presents “Buddhist Chaplany: An Overview,” 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Learn more about this professional path to becoming a Buddhist Chaplain with this informational symposium. Speakers are Rev. Dr. Daijaku Kino; Institute of Buddhist Studies; Rev. Eddie Lee; MDiv, Coordinator of Zenshu University Education and Staff Chaplain; Dignity Health, Sequoia Hospital, Redwood City; and Jennifer Lemmus, Sati Center for Buddhist Studies. Read more at the IBS website: www.ibs.edu**

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


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### Introducing Our New Development Assistant

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

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

Chris is a 2009 graduate of the University of California, Berkeley with a BA in Economics. In the six years since his graduation, Chris has had a unique set of experiences that were very compelling as the Foundation interviewed several candidates for the position. For a four-year period since 2010, Chris lived in Asia, first teaching English to elementary school children in Seoul, Korea; and finally spending two years working with the Women Foundation in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The Women Foundation is a non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to assisting Burmese women from marginalized communities with professional and educational opportunities for a life in Thailand. As its Communications Officer and Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Teacher, Chris was instrumental in donor relationships development for both written and social media-based communications; and generally “hands-on” for anything that was required to make the small NGO successful. Among Chris’ interests are event photography, event planning and community mobilization, and writing. He brings to BCA his knowledge of websites, blogs, and proficiency in the software to support those social media vehicles in addition to his proficiency in customer relationship management (CRM)/donor relations software. While a student at UC Berkeley, Chris had been a Program Development and Marketing Intern with Asian Pacific Islander (API) Legal Outreach in San Francisco working on donors for the API Legal Outreach’s Annual Report.

He commented about the new position, saying, “BCA members, organizations, and temples possess immense potential, which may be realized through working together. The Development Assistant role is an opportunity to apply all best practices, up-to-date techniques, organization-wide coordination, member feedback, and new strategies to support BCA in honoring the Dharma. For this, I am grateful. After a one-month visit Vipanyana retreat in Northern Thailand and excursions into Theravada practice, I carry with me the knowledge that Buddhism has a place in everyone’s life, no matter who you are, and especially now. I appreciate the chance to connect with each of you in some way.”

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

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

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**YAC Continued from Page 3**

Reverend Bob, Reverend Parit, and countless others. We’d also like to thank everyone at the Sacramento Betsuin and the YAC committee for putting on the YAC annual retreat. The Betsuin temple and the wonderful work he and Mizuho are doing to share the Dharma with new followers in the greater Tokyo area.
フローリン仏教会
開教使 菅原 祐軌

「清浄光明ならびなし 遇斯光のゆゑなれば一切の業繋ものがこりぬ 略眼依を帰命せよ」（現代語訳）

一切の煩悩をはなれた、清らかなさとりより
放たれる弥陀如来の光明が、諸仏の光明にすぐれていることは、他に比べるものがない。この光明にお遇いするゆえ、迷いの世界に繋ぎとめる煩悩悪業は、すべてみな除かれてしまう。究極のよりどころである阿弥陀如来に帰命したてまつれ。『浄土和讃』（黒田覚忍著：聖典セミナー三帖

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

数年前、開教使として赴任してから一年半経ったときのことです。開教使としてフレズノ別院で行われたJR YBAカンファレンスのゲストスピーカーとして呼ばれた時のことです。カンファレンスの朝、フレズノ別院でカンファレンスが行われていて、私はGPSに「フレズノ別院」と入力してフレズノ別院へと向かいました。しかし、いざそこに着いてみると車が一台も停まっていません。私はのんきに「セントラルの方々は少々ゆっくりなのだなー。」と思っておりましたけれども、五分、十分と経っても誰も来ません。そこでこれは何か間違えているのだろうか？そこで私はフレズノ別院で働くライ先生が、偶然にも別院にお供えのお花を取りに来られました。そこでライ先生に事情を説明すると、頼もしく「付いておいで！」と私の車をリードしてくださり、無事に（五分遅刻しましたが）ダルマセンターへとたどり着くことが出来ました。

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

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

中国の善導大師の『観経疏』の中には有名な二河白道のお話があります。そのお話の中でお釈迦さまは「この道を行きなさい」と勧められ、「この道を来なさい」と阿弥陀さまは招いてくださっておられます。私たちはさとりへと至る道は知りません。なぜならばさとりへと至ったことはないからです。しかし阿弥陀さまも、それがさとりの世界へとたどり着く道であるとご存知であるからお勧めされ、お招きされているのです。ですから、さとりへと至ったことのない私が「本当かな？こうした方が良いのではないか？」などと疑っても意味の無いことです。先ほどの話で言うなら、道を知っているライ先生が「付いておいで！」とおっしゃっているのに、道を知らない私が「いや、違う道の方が確実だから私はこの道を行きます」と言うようなものです。それでは余計に迷うだけですね。

さて、お釈迦さまが「この道を行きなさい」とお勧めされ、「この道を来なさい」と阿弥陀さまがお招きされている道、それが南無阿弥陀仏のお念仏の道であります。そしてこのお念仏の道を「真のよりどころ」としなさいと私たちにお勧めされているのがご開山親鸞聖人です。

では、「よりどころ」とするということはどのようなことだろうかと私なりに味あわせていただきますと、お勧め、お招きをそのままに頂くということではなかろうかと思います。それは「南無阿弥陀仏 この道を行きなさい/この道を来なさい」と如来さま方がおっしゃるのに対して、「南無阿弥陀仏 はい、この道を行かせていただきます」と受け取っていくことです。

「お勧め、お招きにおまかせしていくことがよりどころ」とするということです。

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

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

五月は親鸞聖人のご誕生をお祝いする「降誕会」の月です。この降誕会を機縁として今一度、私たちの「真のよりどころ」となるお念仏のみ教えを聞かせていただきましょう。
4月14日(火)から17日(金)の4日間、北米、カナダ、ハワイ、南米の浄土真宗本願寺派（西本願寺）海外開教区有志による研修会が開催され、28名が浄土真宗センターに集った。3回目となる今回は真宗大谷派（東本願寺）の開教使も多数参加。東・西本願寺の開教使による研修会であるため従来の名称「IHOPE（International Hongwanji Overseas Propagation Exchange）」を「WEHOPE（West and East Hongwanji Overseas Propagation Exchange）」と改めた。研修会では両派の参加者がそれぞれの正信偈のお勤めをし、作法や節の違いに触れた。更に教義や制度などの相違点についても学びあった。

15日、16日に18名の開教使がそれぞれ約8分の法話をする「ダルマソン」が行われ、参加者や聴聞に訪れた者が耳をすました。参加者は「いろいろな開教区の先生がお念仏のお話をされているのを聞いて、親鸞聖人のみ教えは、宗派や国籍、人種、性別を超えて世界中で受け入れられているのだな、と思いました。」と感激していた。

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

4月4日(土)に毎年恒例の春の日本語聞法会が浄土真宗センターで開催された。今回のご講師にはサンマテオ仏教会のアダムス・ヘンリー開教使と真宗大谷派前北米・ハワイ開教監督の今井亮徳師が招かれた。アダムス師は「在家の法門、お念仏と家庭生活」の講題で話し、浄土真宗の特徴である在家仏教の観点から家庭での念仏やお仏壇を中心とした生活の重要性を説いた。今井師は「御縁」について話し、自身が海外で僧侶となった歴史や、北米、ハワイでの多くのご門徒さんとの出会いのありがたさを伝えた。毎回お参りされている参加者は「日本語で法話が聞ける浄土真宗センターでの聞法セミナーをいつも楽しみにしています。いろいろな先生方のお話が聞けるのがありがたいです。それに、毎回違うメニューの美味しいランチも用意してくださって、最高です。また秋にも来たいです。」と耳と舌で聞法の集いを楽しんだ。