In recent months, I have been honored to be invited to open the California State Assembly a few times. In May, Speaker Anthony Rendon asked if Patti and I would be interested in being a guest at the Dalai Lama event. His Holiness was not available to us, and the event was moved to August 19-21.

On the morning of August 19, Rev. Patti and I were ready to be in the Assembly Chamber, we all stood and observed a moment of silence, and when the assembly started, His Holiness turned and made his way towards me. He stopped, took hold of my hand, and said, “Thank you for all you have done. Thank you for all you do.”

As he made his way through the Assembly Chamber, he again stopped often to engage people. His message of peace and hope was communicated with every hand he touched and the gentle way he moved easily through the room filled with standing dignitaries, all appreciating not just his presence, but his life.

Until this last month, I never felt that I had a “bucket list.” Now I’ve come to feel that true bucket list wishes are hopes we never even imagined might be possible. I can say from my heart that my life has been an ongoing fulfillment of hopes and wishes I never knew I had. For this life, Patti and I now often say, “We will be forever in Gassho…”

The Buddha Does Not Discriminate

In midst of recent painful tragedies of violence and counter violence, I would like to remember Shinran Shonin’s words describing how we are viewed in the eyes of the Buddha: “Let us humbly turn to the caring call from the Buddha’s heart and mind. We realize that there is no discrimination between noble and humble or black-robed monks and white-clothed laity, no differentiation between man and woman, old and young.” (Collected Works of Shinran, p. 107)

Although he does not mention anything about racial issues, I can hear Shinran Shonin saying that all people are equal in the eyes of the Buddha. Discrimination comes from our defiled human minds. We live our lives relying on our unenlightened minds, but Shinran Shonin has told us how truly precious we all are in the eyes of the Buddha. He is urging us to live our lives as brothers and sisters regardless of racial differences.

Let us humbly turn to the caring call from the Buddha’s True and Real Realm of Equality. Let us live our lives respecting and caring for each other on a journey to the realm known as the Pure Land.

Name Amida buta
In Gassho (With Palms Together),
Rev. Kodo Umezu, Bishop,
Buddhist Churches of America
The Buddhist Churches of America began in Santa Barbara on January 20, 1912, at 126 E. Canon Perdido Street as a branch of the Guadalupe Buddhist Church. A new church building was constructed at 131 E. Canon Perdido Street and dedicated on February 14, 1914. W.O. Washburn served as the first minister. The church continued with support from the Sangha until 1953, when the present building was acquired.

In 1966, the city purchased the land for the development of the El Presidio de Santa Barbara Historic Park and the Sangha built another church at its current location, 1015 E. Montecito Street, dedicating it in May, 1967. The Buddhist Church of Santa Barbara continues to be the central Buddhist temple in Southern California, with a strong emphasis on community service and spiritual growth.
American Shin Buddhism: New Voices

By Rev. Seijo Naomi Nakano, San Luis Obispo Buddhist Church

Continuing the Journey into Nembutsu

By Rev. Seijo Naomi Nakano, San Luis Obispo Buddhist Church

Taking Refuge

The tragedies that happened in Minneapolis, Dallas, and Baton Rouge this past month have forced this great nation to question our freedoms and personal safety. Everyone mourned the loss of lives. We are capable of inhuman acts. We cannot close our eyes to this fact.

This past month I experienced another tragedy that happened over sixty years ago. I was thrilled, for it was my first time to be asked to attend the 2016 Tule Lake Pilgrimage; an event that is held bi-annually. The Tule Lake Segregation Center was a “maximum-security segregated camp” that held over 18,000 people of Japanese descent, most of whom were citizens of the United States, whom were incarcerated in a “camp” that was located at Manzanar.

At the beginning of June I had the privilege of attending the 58th Annual Honpa Hongwan-ji Ministers’ Association Seminar in Kauai. I was thrilled, for it was my first time to be asked to represent the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) and the BCA Ministers Association. However, I thought, “Oh, with so many ministers attending, I am becoming one of the ‘older ones’ now.”

My feelings went from joy to impure thoughts and impatience. I knew there was so much to do before my journey. I had to buy a plane ticket, consider the price of the ticket, and then make the reservation. There was urges to buy, and that was another hurdle. We want to look our best in front of people we have never met. This is my vanity, looking good in front of others. I had to shop for locally made items, and decisions were difficult. I was anti-social, impatient, and frustration seeping into my thoughts and my very being.

After all the shopping, I still had to perform the service on Sunday, then jump in the car and drive for three hours to Los Angeles. But I never gave any thought to how truly fortunate I am. Arriving at my friend’s home, I had a wonderful dinner awaiting me with friends that I had not seen in a while. There was laughter, food, conversation, and good company. I was selfish and not very mindful of my friends who came to dinner or the honor of the trip bestowed upon me.

Yes, I am selfish, ignorant, and thoughtless. However, during all the hassle and busk it was Namo Amida Butsu that settled my thoughts and helped me pull it all together. Living with Nembutsu is taken for granted, yet Amida Buddha’s light always surrounds us, no matter what thecircumstance or situation. Each moment we are blessed with compassion, and wisdom is shared for us to hear. It is our deep awaking to the teachings and our entrusting in Nembutsu that allows us to be our human, imperfect selves.

As we undertake new experiences and adventures, we become arrogant in our achievements. We tend to push the Nembutsu aside. We think that we have achieved our own successes. However, it is the working of Amida Buddha’s light and life that allows us to be “just as we are.”

We are so misguided by our blind passions that we forget our gratitude and thoughtfulness in all matters. We allow the ministers to lead us in Gaurisho, but our Nama Amida Butsu should be natural and spontaneous.

We have been given many choices but do we really stop, think, or hear what is really inside of us? This question is one that must be answered by us and alone. We must search, and that search within the self is another difficult venture to undertake. With our hands together as one in Gaurisho, it is only the beginning. We have many more adventures to enjoy and many more answers to find.

American Shin Buddhism: New Voices

Scenes from the 2016 Southern District Conference: “Listening, Hearing, Being...the Dharma” AI left: Roslyn Dong, (Vista Buddhist Temple) was one of many speakers in the Dharmathon. Center: A panel discussion with Tina Donia (Vista BT), Emily Kanyi (Venice Hongwanji BT) and Judy Nakatomi (Vista BT). Right: More panels in English with Bobby Koga (San Diego BT), Kurtis Omoni (YBL), Youth MA and Morgan Gee (San Diego YBL). Photos by Richard Matsumoto.

On Saturday, June 18, over 260 sangha members from the BCA Southern District convened at the at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in San Diego for the 2016 Southern District Conference and BCA Ministers’ Association Seminar in Kauai.

Dharmathons and lively panel discussions were conducted in Japanese and English, with speakers from many generations and backgrounds, both lay and ministerial. The 2016 Conference was co-hosted by the Buddhist Temple of San Diego and Vista Buddhist Temple.

Save the date! Saturday, June 10, 2017: Southern District Conference - Hosted by San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

It is our pleasure to invite you to share in the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC). Our vision to establish a Jodo Shinshu educational facility would not have been possible without your kind and generous support.

The construction of the JSC brought together the Institute of Buddhist Studies, Center for Buddhist Education, BCA Bookstore and offices of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temple and Berkeley Center under one roof.

The festivities will include a memorial service followed by speakers, and an open house with tours, displays, and didelights. From 4 pm, the JSC will host a social hour and barbecue at the Berkeley Buddhist Temple

If you plan to attend or need more information, please contact Judy Kono at jkono@bcabq.org or phone (510) 819-1426.

Please visit the BCA website BuddhistChurchesAmerica.org for more details! We look forward to downloading an invitation letter and RSVP forms.

The Jodo Shinshu Center 10th Anniversary Celebration: “Realizing the Vision” Saturday, October 22, 2016, 8:30 am – 7 pm

The construction of the JSC brought together the Institute of Buddhist Studies, Center for Buddhist Education, BCA Bookstore and offices of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temple and Berkeley Center under one roof.
The Youth Advocacy Committee (YAC) held its last summer retreat under the guidance of Rev. Bob and Pati Oshita at the Buddhist Church of Sacramento, with the biggest group ever, 21 attendees. Rev. Oshita retires at the end of this year.

2016 YAC Retreat: “We laughed, we cried, we grew...”

By Noel McGuire, Berkeley Buddhist Temple

Self-conscious. Nervous. Intimidated. All emotions I experienced as I entered the 2016 Youth Advocacy Committee (YAC) Retreat in Sacramento, California. Although I had heard nothing but positive remarks about the weeklong event, I could not help but be apprehensive. Upon entering the am Fraki room, I knew I would be given the opportunity to spend the Fourth of July week trying to gain a deeper understanding of the Dharma accompanied by twenty other participants in the same pursuit. However, my mind still buzzed with questions: how much do I truly know about Buddhism? Who are these other individuals? Will I be accepted by them?

Within the first ten minutes, my worries disappeared. All twenty-one of usicker instantly. Gathered around a piece of butcher paper, each participant worked together to create a “YAC 12” poster. As we laughed at all of our various attempts to decorate the sign, we connected. From this point on, we were inseparable. Every moment was a bonding moment. Whether it was taking notes during class, organizing our altar-bow [storage tray for robes, books, and ritual item] after each service, or singing karaoke, we did everything together. We laughed, we cried, we grew.

I developed this bond not only with my fellow students, but with the ministers and adult teachers as well. Throughout the course of the week we were taught all aspects of how to properly run a service, sutra [altar] etiquette, and a better understanding of Buddhism. The constant guidance, wisdom, and compassion of each minister and sensei who surrounded me, I am now able to stand with a newfound confidence and approach life in a way that better embodies the teachings of the Dharma. As my fellow YAC 12 graduate once said: “On the track of life, don’t crib; don’t walk; don’t run; don’t fly. Don’t fly; take off; don’t take off... I will miss you.” Although I am sad our time together has come to a close, I am thankful my track crossed with such inspirational individuals who have truly changed my life forever.

Words cannot express how grateful I am to have been a part of this program. Thank you to the ministers, the YAC Committee, the Sacramento Betsuin, and to the Buddhist Churches of America, without whom the event would not have been possible. The wisdom I have gained from this experience has been life changing; I can only hope that others will be able to have this same experience in the future.

The Tri-State/Denver Buddhist Temples 100th Anniversary Update

The Tri-State/Denver Buddhist Temples 100th Anniversary celebration will be observed from Wednesday, October 5 to Sunday, October 9, 2016. The committee: “Oneness in the Nembutsu: Gratitude for the Past, Aspirations for the Future.” The 100th Anniversary Committee has put in all of the services held this year, beginning with the bokucei ringing on New Year’s Eve, to promote the upcoming celebration.

Recently, more than 100 members and friends of Denver Buddhist Church, Tri-State/Denver Buddhist Temple congregated at the Denver Botanic Gardens to hold a special service. Recognition was given to the late Kai Kawahara, a charter member of the Denver Bonsai Club, and a pine bonsai tree over 100 years of age was dedicated in his memory. The Denver Bonsai Club, an affiliate of the Temple, also made special donations to both the 100th Anniversary Committee and the Denver Botanic Gardens.

Other events have been scheduled for the remainder of the year. With our “Oneness in the Nembutsu” theme in mind, the 100th Anniversary Committee has planned not only the centennial weekend of services, food and fun, but also many special activities throughout the year. We hope to attract new friends and reconnect with former, forgotten friends.

For more information, please visit our website: www.GuidingLightCBO.org

by Gayle Noguchi

Coming up we are excited to bring the BCA Bookstore back to the central Cal Dist Retreat location, the annual Nembutsu Seminar on Sunday, September 25, 2016 at the Fresno Family Dharma Center. We will have a wide variety of books, custom-made omikuji, supplies, gift items, jewelry, and greeting cards. The following month we will bring the bookstore to the 44th Annual Federation of Buddhist Women’s Associations (FBWA) Conference, “Linked in the Nembutsu: Tsunagette, at the Westin Bellevue in Bellevue, Washington on October 7 and 8. Visit us in the Lake Chalet Room B on Saturday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Newly available: Silver Screen Buddha: Buddhism in Asian and Western Film by Sharon A. Suh. Paperback. $40.00.

In this book Sharon Sub presents her study of how Buddhists are represented in film – the narrow image of the “meditating Buddha” and the idealized, and largely overlooked laity practitioners, particularly women. Sub explores how these images on screen (and the lack thereof) define what is regarded as true Buddhism. Sub argues that film has the potential to serve as corrective to stereotypes and to expand our vision to encompass the diversity of race and gender among Buddhist practitioners.

Among the variety of films Sub examines is Yojiro Takini’s 2008 Oscar winning foreign language picture Departures. Sub discusses the film’s portrayal of ordinary lay practitioners and the Jodo Shinshu teachings it depicts.

Sharon Sub will be the keynote speaker at the upcoming FBWA Conference. She is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Seattle University. See the BCA Educational Events Calendar in this issue.

To order, go to budhistbookstore.com and click on the BCA Bookstore link or contact Gayle Noguchi at 510-809-1435. Open Wednesday through Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Like us on Facebook.

2016 BCA Educational Events

Programs subject to change. Events are all at the Shindo Shinsa Center unless otherwise noted.

August 19 – Institute of Buddhist Studies Symposium: Buddhism in the Modern World. Free, 9 a.m-5 p.m. Speakers: Dr. Jessica Main and Dr. Scott Mitchell.


August 19-21 – Summer Minister’s Assistant Program (MAP): See Pacific Semi- narity information above.

August 20 – Music for Kumamoto Earthquake Relief fundraiser at the San Mateo Buddhist Church (Japanese). Register by August 20.

September 2-4 ~ 2016 Eastern Buddhist League Conference: Come As You Are! A three-day celebration will be held at the temple in Denver, CO. For more information, visit ebl2016.weebly.com.

September 4 ~ Institute of Buddhist Studies Symposium: Buddhism in Asian and Western Film. Mountain View Buddhist Church Adult Buddhist Association presents a seminar with Rev. Dr. Ken Tanaka & Rev. Ron Kobata at the Mountain View Buddhist Temple from 12-3 p.m. Free, donations welcomed. Register by August 20 at koukouda325@gmail.com or call (503) 916-9029.

September 4-5 ~ Institute of Buddhist Studies Symposium: Buddhism in the Modern World. Free, 9 am-5 pm. Speakers: Dr. Jessica Main and Dr. Scott Mitchell.


October 19-21 ~ Minister’s Continuing Education (MCE) Seminar. Visit us in the Lake Chalet Room Friday from 5 to 9 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.!
The Dharma Connection Workshop: Making the Eightfold Path Meaningful to our Youth

By Ellicia Milne, Spokane Buddhist Temple

Last October was my first Minister’s Assistant Program training at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, CA. What led me to become a minister’s assistant was being a Dharma School teacher for about nine years at our small but growing temple in Spokane, WA. While attending Dharma School teacher trainings, the desire to continue learning and sharing with our kids and Sangha grew.

With the help of our new Dharma School Supervisor, Eileen Tanaka, we planned the Dharma Connection Workshop at our temple on June 25th. We were very pleased to have 25 people attend the four-hour interactive workshop led by Kiyo Masuda and Maya Lawrence. Kiyo has developed Essential Teaching charts; visual teaching tools that tie crafts, stories, and activities back to the teachings of the Buddha. Maya is a board member of the Federation of Dharma School Teachers’ Leadership (FDSTL).

Attendees provided positive feedback; several expressed the desire for more future trainings. We are very grateful to the FDSTL, which helped fund the workshop out of the “My Offering Fund,” and to all who have contributed to this fund over the years.

Visit https://bcadharmaschool.wikispaces.com for Dharma school resources.

Quinceañera Celebrated at LA Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

By Rev. Kaz Nakata, Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

On May 28 at 2 pm, over 70 people, mostly of Latino heritage, filled the hondo (main hall) of the Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple (also known as the LA Betsuin). Ms. Gloria Lopez had requested to have her quinceañera conducted as a Buddhist ceremony. Gloria and her family are quite familiar with the LA Betsuin. In particular, her aunt, Mrs. Dorado, supports a number of LA Betsuin scouting activities. When she received Gloria’s quinceañera request, I didn’t know anything about the ceremony. After I researched her history I told her, “Yes, I am so honored to conduct your quinceañera and make it one of your special memories.”

I allow me to explain the word quinceañera. A quinceañera is a coming of age ceremony. In Latin culture, quinceañera is a recognition ceremony for a girl who turns 15 years old. The majority of Latinas are Catholics, so the ceremony is often labeled as a Catholic ritual. However, anthropologists trace the origins of quinceañera to the culture of the Aztec in central Mexico from around 500 B.C.E. In the Aztec tradition, when a boy turned 15, he became a warrior, and when a girl turned 15, she was educated by older women to be a warrior’s wife. After European countries colonized Central America in the middle ages, missionaries were sent to the colonized countries and the quinceañera was syncretized, or incorporated as a Catholic ritual.

To the quinceañera seems like a wedding without a groom. In the ceremony, there are seven boys and seven girls who represent the first 14 years of the young woman’s life. They escort the 15-year-old to the altar for the quinceañera ceremony, to be recognized as a woman.

In our Jodo Shinshu tradition, the Hongwanji Temple in Kyoto, Japan has been conducting a coming of age ceremony for the last 64 years called ajiro shiki. The origin of this ceremony can be traced back to the Japanese Shinto Geppo (tradition from the Nara period (7th century). Both the shiki and quinceañera have their roots in Buddhist origin.

I believe Gloria’s quinceañera may be the first in Buddhist history. Accordingly, I discussed with our head minister, Rimban William Briones, how we could make the ceremony a Buddhist oriented one. I revised the ritual, combining parts of a wedding and Hatsumairi ceremony (first visitation of an infant to a temple). Since the majority of attendees were native Spanish speakers, I conducted Gloria’s quinceañera ceremony in Spanish and English. Instead of a commitment of love (as in a wedding), I asked her for a commitment to being a lifelong Buddhist by reading “The Three Treasures.” After the ceremony, I presented a copy of the book Buddha’s Wish for the World by Seizon Kobun Ohtani, to Gloria.

It is wonderful to see Buddhism embraced by many diverse people. As a minister, I will continuously make efforts to introduce Jodo Shinshu Buddhism to the local community.

The Hiroshima Genbaku Dome

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial, commonly called the Atomic Bomb Dome or Genbaku Dome, was the only building left standing near the hypocenter of the bomb’s blast. This silent structure is what remains of the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall (Genbaku hondo) built in 1914. It can be seen through the Memorial Cenotaph, an arched tomb for the victims of the bomb, located near the center of the park.

The Genbaku Dome was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996.

The image depicted in this woodblock print was created by Gen Nakayama, a master sculptor who worked for the Atomic Bombs Casualty Commission. The print is dated December 25, 1961. It was donated to the Buddhist Churches of America by Miyoko Kamera and hangs in the Jodo Shinshu Center.

On August 6 and 9, 2016 mark the 71st anniversary of the first atomic bombings. This essay is by Masako Hanada, who survived the bombing of Hiroshima and described her faith in the Nenbutsu that day as “my anchor and my strength…”

Hiroshima Peace Memorial Woodblock print by Gen Nakayama

That Day

By Masako Hanada

Orange County Buddhist Church

On August 6, 1945, I was 23 years old and living in Hiroshima City, just over a mile from Sange Shrine,* ground zero. At 8:15 a.m. I was home alone, standing at the kitchen sink washing dishes when I saw a tremendous flash. I immediately turned around to the interior when the entire house collapsed on top of me. At first I crouched with my hands over my head, debris falling everywhere, I heard a sound like rolling thunder all around me, going on and on. Laying there, the Norutani was all I could say, over and over. After everything stopped, I struggled out of the rub- ble and checked myself for injuries. I found my ankle bleeding and my left wrist home exposed and spattering blood. With two hands I bound my wounds as best I could. I didn’t know what had happened but I knew I had to leave the city as soon as possible. I grabbed a small bag with important papers and left. I was not frightened, instead I felt a deep calm as I continued to repeat the Nenbutsu under my breath.

Outside, everything was in chaos. Buildings as far as I could see were leveled, with nothing left standing. The wooden houses were beginning to smolder and burn, especially the delicate shoji screens. I headed northeast towards Nishin, past Hijiyama Mountain, where I had lived; friends living on the outskirts of town three to four miles away. I passed sights that I will never forget. A mother was trying to coax her young child from the shattered remains; the little boy was too frightened by the sight of his mother, totally disheveled and whose right eye was gashed and bleeding. Another neighbor was running toward her collapsed house, calling for her aged mother. Hiroshima is built on a delta with five rivers and I was worried that the bridges would be out. I crossed over one river filled with black mud and debris. Much later, I heard stories from my cousins about the people who later filled the rivers, trying to cool their burned bodies. Some rivers had to be crossed by stepping over dead bodies.

I walked about three miles when I finally reached my friend Nishimatsu-san’s house. She came to the door, but was so frightened by me that she shut the door and wouldn’t let me in. I must have been a sight—a clothes torn and dirty, body covered in ash and debris, with my hair sticking straight up. I was too weary to my own and decided to go to my close friend Takeuchi-san’s house instead. When she answered the door, I collapsed. When I awoke three days later, I found myself in a cave that had turned into a recovery center. It was there that I heard about the bombing of Nagasaki. A week later the Emperor spoke over the radio for the first time. He notified us of Japan’s surrender and the end of the war.

Seventy-one years have passed and I am now 94. Tiny shards of glass still remain in my body. As I lie there on that day and every day since, I have a deep sense of gratitude for the life the Nenbutsu has revealed to me. I could have easily died; didn’t know how I lived. My house was designated to be just outside the one mile radius of the hypocenter of the bomb. I’m so thankful I lived to tell this story.

On May 27, 2016 President Barack Obama visited Japan to lay a wreath at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and made a speech in which he stated, “...perhaps, above all, we must reignite our connection to one another as members of one human race.”

Masako Hanada was born in Parker, California (near Fresno), the second of eight children. Her father was a farmer and a strong supporter of the Fresno Betsuin. At age 14, she was sent to Japan with her older sister to study. She remained there until the end of World War II.

On May 7, 2016 President Barack Obama visited Japan to lay a wreath at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and made a speech in which he stated, “...perhaps, above all, we must reignite our connection to one another as members of one human race.” Masako considers his visit an important gesture for peace.

*Gift of Miyoko Kaneta

The first quinceañera ceremony ever held at the LA Betsuin was celebrated for Gloria Alejandra Lopez on May 28, 2016. Photographed (l-r) to (r) are: Aiyoshi (Yoshi), Yumiko Nishimura, Michael Mizutani, Kimiyo Masuda, Rusty Espinoza, Ray Golden, Oscar Martinez, Michael Ramirez, Amear Spruill, and Tristan Fierros. Rev. Kaz Nakata officiated.

August 6, 2016 marked the 71st anniversary of the first atomic bombings. This essay is by Masako Hanada, who survived the bombing of Hiroshima and described her faith in the Nenbutsu that day as “my anchor and my strength...”

Visit https://bcadharmaschool.wikispaces.com for Dharma school resources.
May 20, 2016: Toby Vissesuk, MA and Buddhist Chaplaincy Certificate (BCC) recipient, joined the commencement ceremony at the Institute of Buddhist Studies. From left: Kenneth L. Watanabe, BCC, Todd Jordan, MA and BCC, Thomas R. Calobrisi, MA, and at far right: Joanne Lawrence, MA and BCC.

**The Wheel: What is your favorite aspect of the Buddhist Chaplaincy program?**

**Vissesuk:** At first, I thought studying Buddhism would be an extension of what I had faith in. My previous experience was based on Thai and monastic Buddhism. Postgraduate studies at the Institute of Buddhist Studies, I encountered many different sects of Buddhism, which oftentimes contrasted with what I had faith in. Therefore, it was challenge to take in all these different forms of Buddhism. Postgraduate studies has played a very important role in my practice. I learned Buddhism and the Sangha, the Dharma and the Sangha. This is no small thing, in a society where there is much confusion about what Buddhism is and what it has to offer. They are writing, teaching, serving as mentors, and the practice of Buddhism will only grow in the future.

**Buddhist studies and practice can take many forms, but I think you would agree that a yearning to alleviate suffering is shared by them all. One way of talking about how this yearning is expressed is the life of bodhisattva – the being (astra) who is dedicated to awakening (budhi) in order to alleviate suffering. I call this the bodhisattva way.**

**What was the most challenging part of your studies?**

**Vissesuk:** The most challenging part was writing my thesis. How could I make a body of work my own out of an empty document? English is my second language, and it was difficult to translate my thoughts into words. So, my plan of attack was to write, write, write, even if there was no end… and then edit my work. My discipline kept me going until I finished. I may have made mistakes, but it is not often. They started to tell me, "It’s okay, just be calm!"

**The Wheel: What are your future plans?**

**Vissesuk:** I’m in the process of becoming a chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserve. In the meantime, I’m working as a flight attendant. Funny thing is, I can apply so much of what I learned at IBS to helping people on flights and in everyday life.
このメッセージは、日本時間7月15日に京都東久留米市の自宅で往生された花山勝清開教使が生前に書いたもの。5月14日に別れの挨拶として、ソーシャルネットワークの自身のページに掲載された。「明日ありと、思う心の仇桜、夜半に嵐の吹かぬものかは…」

花山勝清

御年9才にして、夜の儚さを綴った、聖人の焦りとも思える人生の決意、私は、感動してなりません。2002年にワッソンビルに赴任して以来、こんなにも、情けなく、申し訳なく、一人の人間でしか過ぎない自分を晒しださなければならない今、お恥ずかしい限りです。

しかし、ワッソンビルに来て、本当に良かっ...とうれしくさえ思えています。死ななければならない自分を前にして、このようなことをいうのも変な話ですが、もし、ワッソンビルに来ていなかったら、数十年前に、命は奪われていた...と思うのです。

結婚をし、家族に恵まれ、何不自由ない生活にこそ、「幸福」があるにも拘らず、日々欲望に縛られていた自分が恥ずかしくてなりません。

変な話、父と同じ病気になり、同じような苦しみを味わう羽目になるとは思いませんでしたが、今なら、父の最後の言葉「往かせてくれ...」という言葉が、頭の中で、ぐるぐる回っています。正直言って、日々、苦しみの生活であるこの世に、誰もが同じことですが、こんなにも酷い「痛み」や「苦しみ」、そして、辛いことはありません。まるで地獄へ突き飛ばされた気分です。

しかし、お浄土があるお陰で、このような苦しみからも、もうすぐ解放される...。そう思えると、苦しみも楽しみに少し変化するような気がします。人生にとって、「悲しみ」は、大切なことです。「悲しみ」や「苦しみ」がなければ、誰にも生きている実感が湧かないからです。

皆さん、本当にお世話になりました。もっと、もっと、何かのお役に立ちたかったのですが、もはや、これまでです。あとは、「仏」として、皆さんのことを、必ず、お救いさせていただきます。それまで、人々によって多少時間の違いはありましょうが、あちこちで、必ず声を掛けて下さいね。

いつの日か、「すい臓がん」も、治る病気になることでしょう。しかし、今は、父と共に、「仏教による世界平和」をテーマにでも、議論しておこうと思います。長らく、お知らせもできず、面会謝絶にしてしまい、本当に申し訳ございませんでした。どなたかに会って、何かに感染すると、母の願いである、「日本での火葬」をすることができなくなっ...すが、胸が苦しく、声も出ない状態でした。ベッドの上で横になっているのもつらい状態だったのです。つまり、私のシンボルマーク「笑顔」すらお見せできまない、冗談のひとつも言えない状況の中で、お会いすることができませんでしたことをどうかお許しください。

合掌

北米におけるお盆ミュージック

(先月号からの続き)

日本の真珠湾攻撃によって、米国民の日本人に対する恐れと差別意識が高まり、12万人の日系アメリカ人と2万2千人の日系カナダ人が強制収用所に送られることになりました。しかしながら、このような逆境に立たされた中でも、お盆の行事は各収用所において続けられたのです。ヒラリバー、アマチ、ハートマ...残っています。戦後数年は、盆法要は勤めたものの、盆踊りはあまり開催されなかったのですが、1948年にBCA創立50周年の記念行事がサンフランシスコシビックセンターで営まれ、行事の一環として、岩永師が再び約1000名を集めて盆踊りを行っています。

1949年には二世ウィークが再開、「東京ブギウギ」などで知られる、服部良一氏による新しい盆踊りの曲が制作されました。服部氏はNamiki Isao氏作詞による「二世音頭」を作曲し、Shindo Takeshi氏が録音したその曲は二世ウィークで披露されました。同時期に、岩永師はフレスノ仏教会のピアニストTaira Mary氏と「フレスノ音頭」を制作。この曲は作詞、作曲、振り付けのすべてが北米でつくられた最初の盆踊りの曲だとも言われています。1960年代の初頭には多くの曲が寺院向けやイベント向けに制作されました。「ソングオブ二世ウィーク」、「カナダ音頭」、「ワンダフルカナダ」、「小東京音頭」、「アメリカ音頭」、「サンフランシスコ日本町音頭」の他、寺院向けに「リバーサイド音頭」、「千鳥バンド音頭」、「サリナス親鸞音頭」などがあります。それらの曲は、1940年代から60年代の洋楽のポップソングの要素を取り入れた、日本の流行歌の曲調になっています。

1980年代のはじめには、ロサンゼルスの洗心仏教会開教使、小谷政雄師がソングライターの宮本信子氏と英語歌詞による盆踊りの曲を制作しました。その一つの曲に「唯踊音頭(ゆいようおんど)」があり、「自己を忘れ、ただ踊る」という仏教的なメッセージを強調するだけでなく、西洋的な楽器を使用せず、太鼓や篠笛、三味線などをとりいれた、より日本的でシンプルな楽曲を意識しました。宮本氏には、「ガーデナーズソング」、「モッタイナイ」、仏教的なメッセージ性の強い「一期一会」、世界平和を訴えた「万物のつながり」、「千羽鶴」などを手がけています。宮本氏に影響を受けた北カリフォルニアのサンノゼ太鼓は「ええじゃないか?」「サンノゼばやし」、Hojo Yumi氏作曲の仏教讃仏歌をお盆用にアレンジした「Obon Obon, It's a Festival Day」などを制作しました。その他、ミネソタ、シアトル、タコマ、ポートランドの盆踊りの曲も日本的でシンプルな曲調となれ、最近では、バンクーバー、モントリオール、ニューヨーク、シカゴ、ラスベガス、ロサンゼルスなどで、新一世によるさまざまな曲調のお盆の曲が作られています。

各地の盆踊りでは、素晴らしい踊り手、生演奏、ポップスの曲の使用などで特徴的なところもあります。南カリフォルニアでは「お盆ジャイバーズ」と呼ばれるグループが盆踊りを盛り上げます。彼らはエルビス・プレスリーやマイケル・ジャクソンに扮していますが、これは昔、盆踊りの時に、男性が侍や農民や女性などに変装していたことに似ています。盆踊りの曲を生演奏するバンドには、千鳥バンド、ハッピースマイル、民謡ステーションなどがいます。また最近では盆踊りの曲にマイケル・ジャクソンの「Rock with You」やビーチボーイズの「Kokomo」、ファレル・ウイリアムスの「Happy」を用いるところもあります。アリゾナ仏教会では1950年代より盆踊りに洋楽を使用しており、「Ac-Cent-Tch-Ate the Positive」、「雨にぬれても」、「Candy Man」やマドンナ、69ボーイズ、また、日本のSMAPの曲などで踊っています。

毎夏、北米の浄土真宗寺院には、宗教や人種のべつなく何千人もの人々が集まって盆踊りを楽しみます。また、盆踊りは日本の伝統的文化として各都市でのパレードやフェスティバルなどで紹介されています。盆踊りが宗教的な場で行われるか、俗的な場で行われるかの違いはありますが、日系アメリカ人およびカナダ人コミュニティーにとって、盆踊りは最も大切で代表的な行事であり続けています。年齢に関係なく、すべての人々が参加でき、踊りを楽しみ、亡くなった方々へ感謝するのです。「炭坑節」、「東京音頭」、「1+1音頭」などの日本の曲が踊り手たちに人気が高く好まれていますが、北米で制作されている曲も踊りには欠かせないものとなっています。
6名が得度を受式

七月 十六日 に BCA の六名が、本山での得度式を終え僧侶としての歩みをふみだした。6名は各所属寺院で開教使のアシスタントをつとめながら、浄土真宗センターで開講されているアシスタント向けの研修プログラムや得度のためのクラスなどへ数年かけて参加してきた。参加者の一人は「日本で得度を受けることはたいへん ... 原開教使は「酷暑の中の7月得度で、体調を崩される方もいらっしゃいましたがお互い助け合い、一人も脱落者を出すことなくお得度を受けることができました。習礼所で学ばれたことをもとにこれから伝道者として各地の仏教会で頑張っていただきたいと思います。」と

得度 受式者が、各仏教会の開教使を支え、活発な伝道活動が行われるよう、期待をよせた。得度の受式者は、ヒューズ・ジョン(ロングモント仏教会)、石井エリック(恵光寺) 、マーク・ケヴィン(サクラメント別院)、メイ・マシュー(シアトル別院)、メイ・ロサリー(シアトル別院)、タン・マイケル(アリゾナ仏教会)。

梅津総長は六月に訪日し、地震見舞いのため熊本県益城郡にある法光寺を訪ねた。外からはその被害があまりわからないが、本堂は傾き、お内仏を仮本堂として使っている。なお沖田住職はご門徒の家の修復が第一で、おり

米国仏教団婦人会連盟大会

参加申し込み受付け中!

タコマ仏教会の柿原興乗開教使より、今年10月に行われる全米婦人会大会の案内。日本語のプログラムも充実しており、多くの婦人会会員の参加を呼びかけている。

2016年10月7日～10日、シアトル近郊のベルビュー市、ウェスティンホテルにて、「つながって」のテーマのもと、米国仏教団婦人会連盟大会が開催されます。現在、参加申し込みを受付け中です。日本語でのプログラムも盛りだくさんです。OCBCからお招きするご講師のワンドラ睦先生は、ご自身のお念仏との出遭いと喜びについて、またお仏壇の不思議についてお話しされます。去年、シアトルに赴任された関谷沙羅先生は、皆さんでお勤めの練習をして、お勤めの意義についてお話しされます。私、タコマの柿原は、インターネットで映像を紹介しながら、いのちのつながりについてお話しくださいます。参加申し込みは、個人でも、それぞれのお寺の婦人会を通じてでもできます。申し込みの締め切りは8月31日です。詳しい内容は、お寺の婦人会会長に聞かれるか、以下のサイトをご覧ください。

http://buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/2016fbwaconference/

参加を予定されている方は、ホテルの予約をお早めにお願いします。婦人会大会のための特別価格は一部屋129ドルですが、部屋数に限りがあります。

総長コラム

米国仏教団総長 梅津廣道

九月一日は北米の開教記念日です。過去百十七年の間、実に多くの人たちがお念仏の教えに励まされ生きてこられました。その方々の深い願いによって今の教団があるのです。

ところで、北米最初の二世の開教使は誰だかご存知でしょうか。その方はオックスナード生まれの角田昇道先生です。私のフレスノ別院時代、その角田先生がご輪番で、その下で働かせていただいたことは本当に光栄でした。先生は、本当に純粋無欲なかたで、怒ったすがたを見たことがありませんでした。困ったことに遭遇しても、それに真剣に向き合い、前向きに生きていたことを覚えています。

そこで、私の前の人生の問題を述べる前に、この世界はシャバ世界です。シャバとはインドの言葉で、ものごとが思い通りに行かない世界のことを言うのです。それを日本語では、忍土といいます。耐え忍んでいかなければならないところです。

ところで先日散髪のため床屋に行きました。そこはいつも行く散髪屋で、私の名前を覚えていてくれます。そこはいつも忙しいのですが、アポイントをとりません。だから、ラッキーなら待ち時間十分位ですが、待っている人が多いと帰ります。ただ、この日はどうしても散髪してもらわねばならない事情が ... もう三人の客が待っていました。まあ仕方なく、一時間ほど待って髪を切ってもらいましたが、その時、散髪屋さんが、「広道、あなたはなぜそんなに辛抱強いのですか?」とたずねたのです。私の身近な人たちは、私がいかに短気かをよく知っています。ただその時は、待つよりほかに方法がなかったからです。

お釈迦さまは、この世は忍土であるとおっしゃっておられたのは、私たちに人生とはそういうものであるということを覚悟しなさいといわれていたのでしょう。思い通りにならないのが常であり、その事実に腰を据えなさいということではないでしょうか。だから、思い通りにならないことが起きても、なるほど、本当にそうだなと、頷いていけるのです。科学技術が発達して、便利な世の中になればなるほど、このことが忘れられますが、お釈迦さまの教えのまことは変わりません。多くの念仏者は人生の覚悟ができていた人たちでしょう。何が起こっても、それを受けとり、乗り越えていくことができたのでしょう。角田先生が、アメリカに来たての私に、人生は思い通りにいかないんだよと諭してくださったことが、今私の中に思いおこされ、ありがたく思います。