New Year’s Greeting from Gomonshu Kojun Ohtani

At the beginning of this New Year, I would like to extend my warmest greetings to you.

This past year, we have been observing the ceremony known as The Commemoration on the Accession of the Jodo Shinshu Tradition since last October. This service will be continuing until the end of May over 10 sessions and a total of 80 days. The participation of the many delegates from both domestic and overseas districts has revitalized the atmosphere of all of our temple activities, and for that I am truly happy and grateful to each and every one of you.

Through holding the service together with you fellow Nembutsu followers, I am able to personally experience how the Jodo Shinshu teaching has not only been passed down to us over the span of nearly 800 years, but also how it has been delivered to many regions of the world beyond national borders. I believe that we have the Jodo Shinshu teaching today precisely because Shinran Shonin revealed his understanding of the Dharma known today as Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. It is a teaching for those of us who constantly struggle with various worries and hardships in life. But let us continue to listen to the teaching and share our own appreciation of the Dharma with family and friends in the hope that we can follow the Nembutsu path together with them.

January 1, 2017

OHITANI Kojun
Monshu
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

(Translation provided by the Hongwanji International Department)

Happy New Year!

As we greet the new year, I wish to thank each of you for your continued support, generosity, and encouragement. Together, let us continue to share Namo Amida Butsu in our daily lives.

Greetings are important in our daily life. We greet one another in the morning, during the day, and at the end of the day. Greetings are exchanged between two or more people. When and if we are greeted by someone, we naturally acknowledge them and respond with our own greetings. Likewise, Namo Amida Butsu is the calling and greeting from our True and Real Home. When we hear and recognize this greeting, we naturally respond with Namo Amida Butsu in appreciation.

Shinran Shonin clearly stated in Shoshinge that the real purpose of our life is to hear the calling coming from the Realm of Nirvana. Until we hear and receive it, we will not be able to find true satisfaction and fulfillment.

He also said that by reciting the Name, Namo Amida Butsu constantly, we will be able to encounter the caring and loving heart of Amida within the Name.

Let us together continue to recite the Name and listen to the calling coming from the Realm of Nirvana. Until we hear and receive it, we will not be able to find true satisfaction and fulfillment. But we can follow the Nembutsu path together with them.

By Hoshina Seki, New York Buddhist Church President, American Buddhist Study Center

In the heart of New York City on Sunday, December 11, light snow was falling. Traffic was almost at a standstill as people were coming into the city to see the Christmas decorations along Fifth Avenue and the Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center. It was just past noon when Japanese women in kimonos hurried down the street to enter the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). They were part of a unique program that the American Buddhist Study Center (ABSC) put together for its first “In Gratitude Tribute”; a grand tribute to Dr. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. It was also the first time for Shin and Zen Buddhism to be presented at MoMA.

D.T. Suzuki’s 50th memorial anniversary occurred in 2016. We honor him for his cosmopolitan Buddhist philosophy and intercultural point of view. He was a true pioneer in a long line of international-bly prominent Buddhist figures in America.

People started arriving early as ABC volunteers were setting up and presenters were making last minute adjustments. On the stage, tatami mats were laid down, a shoji screen put up, and tea utensils carefully arranged. The program began at 2 pm with a traditional Omoseszoku tea ceremony conducted by Mrs. Yasuko Hara, Director and Tea Instructor of Yasuko Chanso, NYC. Two guests participated: Rev. Kodo Umezu, Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America, and Madam Masako Takahashi, the wife of Ambassador Reitshito Takahashi. It was the first time in the history of MoMA that a tea ceremony was performed in their theater. Although 275 people were in attendance, it was so quiet you could hear the hot water being poured into the tea bowl.

Dr. Gary Okihiro of Colum-

D.T. Suzuki 50th Memorial & Tribute at MoMA

Words of the Buddha in the Landscape of India,
For Living in the Present Day

Continued on Page 5

United for Compassion, San Francisco Japantown
Photo by Keith Kojimoto. See Page 4

...The poignant words of the Buddha came alive amid the poignant scenery of India.

This special exhibit was presented by BDK America at the Jodo Shinshu Center, December 4 – 9, 2016. For details on this traveling exhibition, visit: www.bdkamerica.org
Happy New Year, everyone! I believe each of you spent the holiday season with family and friends. It was a New Year with varying thoughts.

Every January, we observe the Ho-onko service at each temple. As you know, Ho-onko is the most important service in our tradition, held around January 16, which is the anniversary of our founder, Shinran Shonin. Although observing the anniversary of Shinran Shonin’s death may seem like a sad occasion, it does not mean that we must only feel sad and lament. The word Ho-onko means “the gathering to repay our debts” to Shinran Shonin, Amida Buddha, and all the lives that were without. I lost my grandpa two years ago. It is very sad and painful to lose our loved ones. Yet in thinking about death, death itself is neither a good nor bad thing. We all know that once we are born, for sure this physical life will end someday. Hardships happen when they come, but it is up to us as to how we accept and face the hardships which we experience in our lives. Some may think, “This has been a year of great beauty because I have one of my family members passed away.” But others may think, “Although we have not lost anyone, we are one, I was given the precious opportunity to seriously and deeply look at my own life, and because of the deceased, they can live with appreciation for their loved ones.

The Nembutsu, which Shinran Shonin explained as part of his teaching and working that allows us to encounter the world that transcends the joy or sorrow, and good or bad which we humans perceive. Experiencing hardships, crying and laughing, sometimes getting angry with others, not being able to help others even though we are eager to do so…that’s what we are. Namo Amida Butsu is the mirror that teaches us to see ourselves and it is the light that keeps illuminating us gently but strongly. “To repay our indebtedness” is to live this way. This was a given year because it was the year of my family members passed away. But others may think, “Although we have not lost anyone, we are one, I was given the precious opportunity to seriously and deeply look at my own life, and because of the deceased, they can live with appreciation for their loved ones.”

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In Japan when people greet the New Year, many of them go to Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines to make wishes. Unfortunately, Amida Buddha will not grant such individual wishes as not getting sick or living a long live, no matter how much we pray. Namo Amida Butsu.

However, Namo Amida Butsu allows us to become true Nembutsu followers who are pleased with life here and now, just as it is, without merely being attached to immediate profit.

There is a phrase, “Jodo Shin-shu is the tradition not to hate our selfish wishes granted, but rather to listen to Buddha’s wish.” Let us keep listening to Buddha’s wish together this year as well. Gomoku...
President’s Message
Real Needs in Real Time
By Ken Tanimoto, BCA President

Happy New Year, 2017! This is the Year of the Rooster, which symbolizes carefulness and decisiveness. How fitting, for at last December’s Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) National Board meeting we tackled many challenging issues facing the BCA now and in the future. I applaud all our lay leaders and ministers for their willingness to meet the issues head on and to make clear and decisive decisions.

One of the most important tasks of the BCA is to provide ministers to our churches and temples. Thanks to the foresight of our leaders and the ongoing support of our members, last year the BCA Bishop appointed seven new ministers. We are counting on ministerial students enrolled at the Institute of Buddhist Studies to lead our temples and sanghas in the future. In addition, the International Ministerial Orientation Program (IMOP) will be hosting three ministers from Japan in 2017. IMOP has provided us with our current ministers at Florin, Lodi, Mountain View, Orland, Seattle, and Salinas.

A major BCA goal for the new year is to improve ministerial benefits. Our ministers are the heart of our organization. BCA ministers have a legacy of dedication and commitment going back to the very first missionaries sent to San Francisco in 1899. It is up to us to do the best that we can to support them at work and in retirement.

Temples will soon be receiving the proposed BCA 2017-2018 budget. In the budget are some items that have not been addressed in several years: upgrading ministerial benefits and pensions; reinstating a full-time Executive Assistant to the Bishop; and delayed maintenance of the Bishop’s Residence and BCA Headquarters.

There is always a concern about increases in the costs of running a national organization. It is only natural to feel this way. Increases are not taken lightly and are made in the interests of the future welfare and growth of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in America.

We should be proud of the fact that the BCA has endured and flourished for 117 years. It took more than dedication to get this far. Our predecessors overcame all obstacles including financial ones, and fears that temples could not be built and the Nembutsu could not be spread in the face of widespread racism and discrimination. They succeeded in enabling future generations to hear and appreciate our Jodo Shinshu legacy.

When I took office as President in March of 2106, I made the decision to be as accessible as possible. In the next two months, I will try to attend most District Council meetings to discuss the budget increases. I am open to hearing and discussing any issues our lay leaders and ministers have regard- ing the upcoming challenges.

Regardless of what may come about, 2017 is going to be a good year. I feel optimistic about the changes that will happen, but it will be up to all of us to make those changes. I would like to thank all BCA members and friends for your continuing support of our organization.

On behalf of the BCA Executive Committee (Rick Stambul, Charlene Grinolds, Gary Mukai, Susan Bortzai, Jeff Marsaska, Rev. Jerry Hirano, and Bishop Kodo Umezu), I would like to wish everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year.

The BCA National Board Meeting took place at the Jodo Shinshu Center on December 3, 2016. Photo by Michael Endo
Healing from Painful Politics
By Rev. Jerry Hirano, Salt Lake Buddhist Temple

I am the supervising minister of the Idaho Oregon Buddhist Temple (IOBT), Two of the minister’s assistants of IOBT, June Spencer and Kathy Chatterton, coordinate and ran a howakai (Dharma discussion group) in Boise, Idaho on Tuesday evening, November 8, as part of their effort in the Boise area, they held an “Election Night Regime: An Hour of Reflection on Loving Kindness and Equanimity.” They worked with Rev. Kim Cran of the First Congregational UCC to create an interfaith service to focus on equanimity and healing from the mental anguish created by this year’s elections. When they asked me what I thought about the idea, I told them, “I wish I had thought of it.”

In Salt Lake, we don’t have a Tuesday night howakai, but we have a Wednesday night meditation class. Dr. Carmela Hirano, my wife and minister’s assistant, is the coordinator for the meditation class. After telling her about June and Kathy’s idea, she wanted to create something with this same idea of healing. We called it “Healing from Painful Politics: A Special Post-Election Meditation.” We invited the community to join us to begin the process of healing from the divisiveness and toxicity of the elections.

Over fifty people attended, most coming to our temple for the first time, the majority under 30 years of age.

After the guided meditation led by Carmela, we allowed anyone with a need to speak and express their personal pain to begin their healing. One man spoke about the pain he felt for a gay friend who was contemplating suicide because of the election. Another spoke about having a friend who was thinking of going underground with her family because of their immigration status. Many expressed their gratitude that our temple had created this safe place of healing.

Shosaku Taishi, the father of Japanese Buddhism wrote the Seventeen-article constitution in 604 A.D. In this constitution, he explains the connections between government and the Dharma. In article two he encourages the people to take refuge in the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha), for within them is true and final refuge; a safe place. However, at the meditation in Salt Lake, I read article ten, for I thought of it.

Two of the minister’s assistants of IOBT, Anne Spencer and Kathy Chatterton, coordinated and ran a howakai

Enjoy CBE programs online at YouTube.com
Go to YouTube and search for the “BCA Center for Buddhist Education Channel” to view over 50 talks and lectures presented by CBE and its educational partners. Hear speakers from the Jodo Shinshu Center 10th Anniversary Commemoration, the 2016 Winter Pacific Seminar: “East Meets West” in Los Angeles, the 2016 Fall Japanese Gathering, and many more.

Contact CBE at cbe@bcahq.org or (510) 809-1460

BCA Bookstore News by Gayle Noguchi

“The Shin Buddhist way of life is the life of experiencing gratitude.” Reverend Marvin Kenji Harada, Orange County Buddhist Church

Introduction to Shin Buddhist brochure
Published by BCA Southern District Ministers’ Association

Now available: Finding Gratitude: A Guided Journal to Help You Notice the Good in Every Day by M.J. Ryan, paperback, $14.95. Ryan believe people who practice gratitude daily tend to be happier, healthier, and more effective in the workplace, and in and out of the classroom. The book provides exercises that help connect with those around you, enjoy simple pleasures, and appreciate what you already have. Finding Gratitude offers ideas, questions, and quotations to reflect upon and lined pages for jotting down your thoughts.

Also available: Attitudes of Gratitude, 10th Anniversary Edition: How to Grow and Root for Every Day by Your Life by M.J. Ryan, paperback, $14.95. Ryan believes people who practice gratitude daily tend to be happier, healthier, and more effective in the world, and in and out of the classroom. The book provides exercises that help you connect with those around you, enjoy simple pleasures, and appreciate what you already have. Ryan describes a wide variety of ways that you can practice gratitude and theccd with her Top 12 simple actions for bringing more gratitude into your life.

As you make the deliberate effort to notice blessings in your life both big and small, you will grow in the realization that your life is possible only because of the constant caring, support, and generosity of others. This is the path of Nembutsu.

To order, go to buddhistchurchesofamerica.org and click on the BCA Bookstore link or contact gnoguchi@bcahq.org or (510) 809-1453. Open Wednesday through Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Like us on Facebook.
Against the backdrop of a brisk and overcast coastal California day, I arrived at the Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC) for my first ever Minister’s Assistant Program (MAP) seminar. I was somewhat nervous, as this was a big step outside of my day-to-day life, and although I had been studying for years and was extremely excited to be there, it remained a step into the unknown. No one from outside of a Berkeley Buddhist temple had participated in this program in quite a long time, so I found myself unsure of what I would find. What I found, however, was a group of good Dharma friends and an experience which has left me more energized to learn, participate, and spread the Dharma than ever before.

The Winter MAP session in Berkeley for December 8-10 featured a diverse group of ministers’ assistants from temples as far away as Chicago and Seattle. On the first day, we enjoyed an excellent session from Rev. Harry Bridge on Chanting and the &France, including the &Ichokyo. From that first day found ourselves thrown directly into leading services and giving Dharma talks, including at the Dharma Hall, an event where almost everyone presented a short talk. Exceptional home-style meals graced the tables every day.

The second day was highlighted with a presentation from Professor John Nelson of the University of San Francisco titled “Adaptation and Experimentation for Religious Institutions.” He gave an overview of his research into how Buddhist Temples in Japan have approached the ongoing problem of shrinking membership. Temples are utilizing methods as unorthodox as minister fashion shows, anime-style marketing, and opening bars where the general public can be served drinks directly by ministers and monks. This last concept, the Boza Bar, has become very popular, and is growing across Japan. The following session by Rev. Ronald Kohata on Buddhism exploring the “Spiritual-But-Not-Religious” concept perfectly complimented Dr. Nelson’s talk.

Tackling in another direction, we then walked a few blocks from the JSC to the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery. We met with Rev. Heng Sure, who invited us to share the Dharma with the public. Most Buddhist ceremonies and rituals take place in or in front of the Naijin (inner) and Gejin (outer) seating arrangements. The Naijin is the (inner) altar area, and the Gejin is the (outer) seating area. Most Buddhist ceremonies and rituals take place in or in front of the Naijin. The Naijin is where objects of reverence are placed and where Buddhist priests officiate during services. You may see the word spelled “Onjin.” The letter “o” placed before the word Naijin (or “jo”) placed before other words is an honorific form showing respect for what the word represents.

(Excepted from the pamphlet "The Jodo Shinshu Naijin Shrine" by Rev. C. Myokai Hinakai, published by the Buddhist Churches of America Southern District Ministers’ Association with funding from the Southern District Council) See the Spokane Buddhist Temple’s oenjo in page 2.
The Hongwanji Scholarship Award
Thanks to the generous support of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha, IBS is pleased to offer an annual scholarship to one qualified student enrolled in either the Master of Buddhist Studies or Master of Divinity degree program. This scholarship is awarded to a student in need who shows exceptional academic promise or a history of religious leadership with a clear vision of how she/he will apply their education at the IBS post-graduation as a scholar, minister, or chaplain. The applicant must intend to enroll as a full-time student for the duration of the year of the award; the award will be in minimum cover the first 6 credit hours for a full academic year. Award recipients will be profiled in the Buddhist Churches of America’s Wheel of Dharma and on the IBS website.

Application materials must be received no later than March 1. Applications should include:
1. Hongwanji Scholarship Award application (available via the IBS website);
2. IBS financial aid application (available via the IBS website);
3. Cover letter addressed to the Scholarship Committee detailing why the applicant is qualified for the award, what her/his goals are in the IBS program, and what contribution she/he hopes to make post-graduation in a specific community or academic field;
4. Current resume or curriculum vitae;
5. Two letters of recommendation (they may be the same letters used for application to the degree program).

Additionally, IBS is able to offer the following scholarships to eligible students:

Shin Buddhist Clergy Support Program

Shin Buddhist Ministerial Scholarships
Thanks to the generous support of private donors, members of the BCA, and the Friends of IBS program, those students wishing to pursue a career in Shin Buddhism are eligible for generous financial aid awards. A special fund has been created for female ministerial aspirants.

Buddhist Chaplaincy Scholarships

Students enrolled in qualifying programs with career aspirations in Buddhist chaplaincy are encouraged to apply for scholarships to support their studies at IBS.

New and returning students must complete the IBS financial aid application and return all application materials no later than March 1 to be eligible. To apply to a degree or certificate program, please visit our website shin-ibs.edu. Applications for students entering the program in fall 2017 are due February 15. If you have any questions, would like more information, or would like to donate to IBS, please message us at info@shin-ibs.edu or call 510-809-1444.

Thank you for helping to share the Buddha, Dharma & Sangha!
29日(日)にオックスナード仏教会で行われた。師のメモリアルサービスは1月25日に開催され、親鸞聖人的往生された年が1263年と論証変更すべきことを提案されたほか、親鸞の呼称を寺の意味に近いテンプルの語に変えたいとのことで、賽銭の訳とされている「チャーチ」会、サンタバーバラ仏教会を兼任した。センター長を辞任後、オックスナード仏教会、サンタバーバラ仏教会を経てIBSの前身、ブディストスタディセンター・マウンテンビュー仏教会、オレゴン仏教会を経て1951年に来米し、93歳。1993年に引退後、日本へ帰還し、佐賀県伊万里市の自宅で亡くなられた。名誉開教使の藤谷政躬師が11月24日に開催された。
ご門主年頭の挨拶

年頭の辞

新しい年のはじめにあたり、ご挨拶申し上げます。

本願寺では、昨年10月1日より本年5月31日まで10期80日にわたって伝灯奉告法要をお勤めしています。海外からの皆さまも含め、たいへん多くの方々にご参拝・ご協力いただき、法要をお勤めできていますことは、まことに有難く、感謝申し上げたいと思います。

皆さまとともに伝灯奉告法要をお勤めして、浄土真宗のみ教えが800年近くの時を経て私たちに伝えられ、また、日本だけでなく世界各地に伝わっていることを改めて実感しています。それぞれの時代の中にあって、浄土真宗のみ教えが一人一人の方の生きていく依りどころ、支えであったから、今日まで絶えることなく受け継がれてきたと思います。

親鸞聖人は、さまざまな出来事に悩み苦しむ私たちのために、浄土真宗のみ教えをお示しくださいました。本年も浄土真宗のみ教えを聞き、ご家族の方などご縁のある方々にお伝えいただき、南無阿弥陀仏とお念仏申す日々をともに過ごさせていただきましょう。

2017年1月1日