



# WHEEL OF DHARMA

Official Publication of the Buddhist Churches of America

Support the BCA Southern California Wildfire Relief Fund at [BCA.kindful.com](http://BCA.kindful.com)

## Pasadena Temple Saved in Catastrophic LA Wildfires

Quick Actions by Neighbors Credited in Preserving Structure; 16 Pasadena Sangha Members Lost Their Homes, Business



The hazy, polluted sky caused by the Eaton Fire is visible in this group photo taken on Jan. 9 in front of the Pasadena Buddhist Temple. Shown, from left, are: Alan Goto, Bobby Fukumoto, Alan and Lori Hatakeyama, Ren Gibbs and Rev. Gregory Gibbs. In bottom photo, Rev. Gregory Gibbs and Pasadena Co-Presidents Lori Hatakeyama and Jeannie Toshima flank neighbors Jessica and Elliot Sloane. Elliot and his brother-in-law Michael Murray (not pictured) are considered heroes by the Pasadena temple Sangha. The two men climbed over the temple fence to extinguish smoldering embers that had caught onto sections of the temple. (Photos courtesy of Kyoko Gibbs)

By Ralph Honda

Wheel of Dharma Correspondent

The catastrophic wildfires in Southern California in January nearly claimed the Pasadena Buddhist Temple — if not for the quick actions of neighbors.

But sadly, 16 Pasadena Sangha members lost their homes and a business in the Eaton Fire, according to Rev. Gregory Gibbs, Resident Minister of the Pasadena



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### BISHOP'S MESSAGE

## Sending Thoughts of Compassion, Support

By Rev. Marvin Harada  
Bishop of the BCA



Rev. Marvin Harada

We have all been glued to our TVs as we have witnessed the terrible wildfires in Southern California. To see the loss of life, the loss of thousands of homes, businesses, schools, churches and synagogues is tragic beyond belief.

Our own Pasadena Buddhist Temple had a close call, but has survived the fire. There are members of our Southern District who have lost their homes and others who are awaiting word of the state of their homes.

We cannot imagine what it must be like to evacuate and to wait for days only to find your beloved home gone. May I extend to you, on behalf of all of us in the Buddhist Churches of America, our thoughts of loving compassion as you face such a horrific tragedy.

I was thinking what it must be like to lose your home. Our homes give us that sense of comfort and security. When we return from a trip, we all say, "There's no place like home," like Dorothy from "The Wizard of Oz." We get to sleep in our comfortable bed. We sit in our favorite chair or sofa in front of the TV. We use our favorite coffee cup or wine glass. We wear our favorite old T-shirt or sweatshirt that is faded and stretched, but somehow is what we are most comfortable in. We have on our favorite slippers or house shoes.

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## Phishing Scam Targets BCA Sangha Members

Emails Seek Money, Gift Cards, Information

By Jon Kawamoto  
Wheel of Dharma Editor

For the past few months, a series of fraudulent emails that appear to come from BCA ministers have been sent to Sangha members — asking for money, gift cards and personal information.

In reality, these emails originate from unknown email addresses. These emails may instruct recipients not to call the minister and to respond only via email,

claiming the matter is urgent and confidential — such as surprising temple members with a gift.

These emails are not from the BCA ministers. This is a phishing scam creating fake email addresses using the minister's names.

Please be aware that ministers will never ask for gift cards or money via email.

Take the following steps if you receive a fraudulent email:

- Do not respond or click on any

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## IBS 75th Anniversary



IBS President Emeritus Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto, IBS President Dr. Scott Mitchell and IBS faculty member Dr. Nancy Lin are all smiles at IBS 75th anniversary and memorial service on Nov. 16, 2024, at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, California. For more photos, see Page 9. (Courtesy of Mark Shigenaga)



## Why Do I Give to the Dana Program?



By **Charlene Grinolds**  
White River Buddhist Temple

I have been donating to the BCA Dana Program fund ever since it was established.

I set up a recurring monthly donation so I never have to remember or think about making the donation. What an easy way to make a contribution to the BCA.

Why do I give? I give because I want the younger generation to be able to continue in the Jodo Shinshu traditions. The youth are our future and if we don't provide financial support for them to continue spreading the Dharma, they will disappear.

For those of you who know me, know that I have always supported activities for our youth and have always tried to

### FYI

To donate to the BCA Dana Program, go to: <https://bca.kindful.com/>

encourage them to take leadership roles within our temples and BCA. Their voices need to be heard.

I am so pleased to see some of our young members becoming ministers. This gives me great hope for the future of our temples and the BCA.

Making a recurring donation to the Dana Program is an easy way for us to keep our legacy going.

When people say, "I can't make a large donation, so why should I bother?" think again. If we all made a small monthly donation, it would end up being a large amount and would help fund the BCA programs.

*The Dana Program is BCA's annual giving program. The Dana Program supports Sangha education and engagement, ministerial pathways, leadership and the learning of Shin Buddhism. Many opportunities for one-time and recurring gifts are available under "Giving" on the BCA website at: [buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/giving](http://buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/giving)*

### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

## Lady Takeko Kujo and Me Beyond Time and Space



By **Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Wondra**  
Orange County Buddhist Church

I would like to dedicate this article to Lady Takeko Kujo, a founder of my alma mater.

"This week is a tōban to clean up the ghost house. Who will open the front door? Let's decide by jan-ken-pon." It has been almost 50 years since I, as a student of the Kyoto Girls High School (KGHS), cleaned up the Kinkaden 錦華殿, as we called the Ghost House.

The front door squeaked and there was no light in the hallway. There were two oddball teachers using the Kinkaden for their office. I had no idea at that time that Lady Takeko Kujo (1887-1928) and her sister-in-law Kazuko had met there periodically over afternoon tea to plan a university for women.

Kazuko was the wife of the 22nd Kozui Gomonsu-sama. This couple, with Takeko and her husband Yoshimune (Kazuko's younger brother), went on to the European tour in 1909 partly because Yoshimune got an assignment to work in the United Kingdom (UK).

Both women, who predicted the rise of Japanese women in the early 20th century, visited several girls' high schools and universities in the UK, France and Germany. After returning to Japan, they requested Nishi Hongwanji support their plans to build a women's university in Kyoto.

February is the month when Buddhist Women's Association (BWA) members and friends of BCA temples hold

the Kisaragi-ki (Kisaragi 如月 is another name of February and ki 忌 means a memorial) to remember Takeko and honor her life as a Shin Buddhist woman.

During her short 42 years of life, she encountered countless difficulties and sufferings. Kazuko, unfortunately, passed away at the age of 30 in 1911 soon after returning from Europe.

Takeko took over responsibilities from Kazuko in organizing the Fujinkai in Japan as the President. Then she followed her wish to pursue a higher educational institute for women based on Buddhist teaching, and later devoted her life as a humanitarian to help needy people affected in the Great Kantō earthquake in 1923. In 1920, Kyoto Joshi-kōtō-gakko was finally established, which became the current Kyoto Women's University in 1949.

Takeko was talented, particularly in composing essays and poems. She contributed more than 100 essays to the Yomiuri newspaper in 1926, which were compiled and published in a book titled "Muyūge" in 1927. Takeko used the royalties from "Muyūge" to create a fund to build the Asoka Hospital, which was completed in 1930 after Takeko's passing.

Born in the upper class and praised as one of the three beauties in the Taisho period, she could have had an easy life. Yet she accepted many challenges. One of my favorite poems composed by Takeko expresses the way she lived in the transient nature of this world:

*"Great Compassion from the Buddha always embraces and guides me*

*Yet each of my steps is fragile and unstable."*

*(Original in Japanese: おほひなるもののちからにひかれゆくわがあしあとのおぼつかなしや)*



*The Kyoto Girls High School's Kinkaden, where Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Wondra was a student, is shown. At left is a portrait of Lady Takeko Kujo. (Courtesy of Kyoto Girls High School)*

*ply place our hands in gassho from the heart, we will clearly see the bright torch raised high for lost and deluded seekers to gaze upon.*

*"Though your august presence is unseen,  
though your noble voice is unheard,  
there is a dimension that I alone know,  
where your Vow is ever working,  
where your Light is ever shining.*

*As I kneel with hands placed together,  
without a shred of doubt, I joyfully receive you,  
with this gassho from my heart."*

— "Leaves of the My Heart," *American Buddhist Study Center, 2018, pages 54-55*

OCBC will soon welcome the students of Kyoto Girls High School in early February. This is the school's annual visit. What a karmic event that I will welcome my old school again at OCBC! I could not foresee this when I was cleaning the Ghost House.

Namo Amida Butsu



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By Steven Terusaki  
BCA President

## Strategic Conversations to Start in 2025

Life is a bumpy road, as we hear from our senses.

Sometimes the bumps can be overwhelming and it is difficult to stay focused on what is important as we chart our lives and our futures. For many, there were major bumps in the road in January and the world is working to settle back down amid the cataclysmic events and major changes that are happening in the world around us.

With that as a backdrop, a number of strategic conversations have taken place and continue as the BCA looks to address current events as well

as setting frameworks for the future. Among these conversations are:

- Responses with concern and compassion for those impacted by the Southern California wildfires;
- Discussions that are setting a tone of resolve for social justice responses that capture our Shin Buddhist perspective, particularly as federal initiatives being proposed by the new leadership in Washington can divide rather than unite;
- Pursuing new perspectives on important topics for the BCA, including: identifying new leadership; defining “who is a member” of BCA; and seeking new revenue sources of that can shift the business model for BCA;
- Partnering and commitments to alliances with the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) and Ryukoku University.

### Communicating With Compassion on Southern California Wildfires

The outpouring of concern by BCA members for those impacted by the Southern California wildfires has been heartwarming. Bishop Rev. Harada posted a message, “Sending Thoughts of Compassion, Support” on the homepage of the BCA website soon after the impacts of the wildfires were known.

The Social Welfare Committee, together with members of the Executive Committee, have been in discussions on how best to support members who have lost everything.

Conversations were held with Michael Munekiyo from the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH) to hear “lessons learned” from the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission and HHMH as background information. The conversation has informed BCA’s response to proceed two-fold: (1) support Pasadena Buddhist Temple’s (PBT) emergency relief efforts for members of PBT and their extended communities; and (2) begin the campaign through the BCA website to

seek donations from BCA members to support disaster relief for the larger Southern California communities who have been impacted by the wildfires.

The link to make those donations is <https://bca.kindful.com/> Under “Select a campaign,” use the pull-down menu to find “Disaster Relief” (Southern California wildfires). Donations directly to the PBT can be made to the PBT Easton Sangha Support Fund by using the link: <https://givebutter.com/ZIFQIN>

Other efforts for Southern District temples are still under discussion. BCA’s goal is to support all local efforts while offering disaster relief to the larger Southern California community who are suffering the impacts of this disaster.

### Setting the Tone for Social Justice Discussions

Discussions on a commitment to social justice issues stem from the Vision Statement in the updated Strategic Plan approved by the national

board in December 2024.

It is BCA’s aspiration to cultivate peace, understanding and compassion for everyone. With policy shifts resulting from changes in federal government leadership, this may become a challenge. It will require a resolve to be supportive of positions on social justice that counter the “othering” that is being sanctioned.

The Vision and Strategic Planning Committee continues to work on goals and tactics for the Strategic Plan update. Specific goals and tactics to ensure that our vision continues to provide our “north star” direction will help guide BCA decision-making and responses in this period of uncertainty.

### New Perspectives on Important Topics for BCA’s Future

Seeking to uncover new ways to address old problems is a hallmark of my strategic focus for bringing change to

Continued on Page 14

## The Middle Path and Polarized Politics

*Editor’s note: The gist of the following article was first presented as a Dharma talk by Joanna Gozawa, a Minister’s Assistant at the Palo Alto Buddhist Temple, on Nov. 24, 2024. The Wheel of Dharma is honored to publish Gozawa’s article with her permission.*

*“Know that it is impossible to be born in the true, fulfilled Pure Land by simply observing precepts, or by self-willed conviction, or by self-cultivated good.”*

— “Collective Works of Shinran I,”  
Page 458



By Joanne Gozawa  
Palo Alto Buddhist Temple

Dis-ease may have us given the presidential inauguration last month.

Ill will infects us, no matter our political party. In these polarized times, what might we learn profoundly from Buddhism’s Middle Path? In our current mood, we resist compromise; on the

other hand, consensus seems impossible. But is the Middle Path about compromise and consensus? Let us look to the polarities contemplated in Buddhism for insight. Among these are indulgence versus self-denial and good versus evil.

Insulated within the walls of his father’s castle, Prince Siddhartha led a life of indulgence and pleasure. Only when he witnessed the life of ordinary people did the prince realize the inevitability of disease, aging and death. He became an ascetic monk, living a life of self-denial. Ultimately, he became the Buddha, walking the Middle Path, living a life neither indulgent nor self-denying yet engaged in this life.

The Middle Way proved to be an enduring spiritual path. Fifteen hundred years later, Shinran Shonin claimed he was “neither monk nor lay” — neither cloistered in a monastery nor fully living the commoner life. And life in Shinran’s time was full of political upheaval.

In late Heian in Japan, the period just before Shinran’s birth, bitter political feuds broke out among Buddhist subjects who vied for imperial appointments.

The rise of Sohei warrior monks gave temples a fighting force. In Shinran’s time, incessant wars pitted warlords of competing clans

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Cleveland Buddhist Temple Sangha members and supporters pose for a group photo as the temple celebrated its 80th anniversary on Jan. 19. Below is a special cake with the Japanese inscription: “Namoamidabutsu” (left line) and “Cleveland Buddhist Temple 80th anniversary 1945-2025” (right line). (Courtesy of Rev. Anita Kazarian)

## Cleveland Buddhist Temple Celebrates 80th Anniversary

By Rev. Anita Kazarian  
Cleveland Buddhist Temple

The Cleveland Buddhist Temple celebrated its 80th anniversary on Jan. 19 amid chilly temperatures hovering around 25 degrees Fahrenheit.

A total of 34 people braved the icy roads, subfreezing temperatures and falling snow to hear the Buddha-Dharma together as a Sangha.

Rev. Patti Nakai and her husband Gary Nakai drove from Chicago to attend the special day. Rev. Nakai gave a Dharma talk on Jodo Shinshu founder Shinran Shonin as part of our Hoonko observance. Her talk gave rise to discussions after the service



about Shinran and the gateless gate.

The Cleveland Buddhist Temple’s Sangha continues to evolve into a unique cohesive Sangha to hear the Buddha-Dharma. An in-person service is held on the third Sunday of every month.

To express appreciation to the founders of the CBT 80 years ago, the celebration cake was written in Japanese text. The right line on the cake

reads: “Cleveland Buddhist Temple 80th anniversary 1945-2025.”

The left line on the cake reads: “Namoamidabutsu.”

The CBT is grateful for the support of its Sangha, the Eastern District and the BCA, and Supervising Minister BCA Minister Emeritus Rev. Ron Miyamura.

The CBT is also grateful for the volunteers who contribute their time and energy for Buddha Post, the CBT newsletter with Buddhist content.

Buddha Post is now in its sixth year of weekly publication with the first issue of each month featuring different Shin Buddhist ministers for the Dharma message.



# Join 'Not Your Parents' Pickleball



Are you or a family member living in Southern California? Are you looking for a way to connect with other Sangha or just get some exercise? If yes, then please come join the new young adult pickleball group at Orange County Buddhist Church. Contact Ryan at [ocbcypickleball@gmail.com](mailto:ocbcypickleball@gmail.com) for more information. (Courtesy of Diana Ono)

## Gozawa

Continued from Page 3

against each other. Clans enlisted Sohei into their samurai ranks, promising to protect the temples of the affiliated warrior monks. Clan troops were financed on the backs of the common people, who were severely taxed in money and kind, leaving them with little for themselves.

In human affairs, the political is ubiquitous and religious institutions are not exempt. Shinran, in exile and later by choice, lived a spiritual life among the exploited people.

One more polarity clarifies the Middle Path anew. Shinran, in the "Tannisho" said,

"I do not know what the two, good and evil, mean." Shinran was not saying that he didn't know how to behave in society. Rather, he is unknowing of ultimate good. Good and evil are the same when both are enacted by self-power. When we are "good," we are often self-righteous. This is not the true good of Amida Buddha.

What can we learn from the polarized dualities of indulgence versus self-denial and good versus evil and what insight might we fathom for our polarized political times?

Perhaps it is that humans in their inevitable duality-seeing way are prone to conflict. Still, our hearts can open, even in contentious times,

when in gratitude we realize that true good does not come through our own effort.

Rather, the good has been eternally sustaining us despite our human limitations.

Politics is about the power to decide how finite resources are distributed — who is favored and who is denied. Compromise and consensus are skillful, self-power means and worthy human goals in political life.

However, self-power does not give rise to ultimate good. When with sincere hearts we say, Namo Amida Butsu, what suddenly, without thought, is compassionately imagined and wisely enacted in the moment? In self-power, we cannot say.

## Phishing

Continued from Page 1

links, as this may compromise your security.

- Do not send any money or gift cards or give out any personal information.
- Delete the message and block the email address.
- Go to the BCA website, <https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/>, to look up email addresses for temples and ministers.

- If in doubt, call the minister or temple office directly to verify the email's authenticity.

If the email is determined to be fraudulent, you may file a report with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) at [IC3.gov](http://IC3.gov)

These scams often target older individuals and timely reporting is crucial, as cybercrimes involving victims over 60 can result in stiffer penalties.

If you responded to the

phishing email, the unethical person has your personal and financial information. Go to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission's website: <https://www.identitytheft.gov/>

There are steps you can take based on the information that you lost.

The phishing scam has also targeted the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, which is urging its Sangha members to remain vigilant and to report the fraudulent emails.



### DO YOU KNOW?

Do you know that the BCA National Council Meeting 2025 virtual event includes a workshop session on Saturday, Feb. 22, and a National Council Meeting closing program following the BCA Eitaikyo hybrid service on Sunday, March 2, open to all to view?

The BCA Music Committee is participating in the Buddhist Education workshop track with the BCA Film and Video and BCA Art Committee as well as presenting music selections in the NCM closing program.

**2025**

BCA Ministers Association and  
National Council Meeting

## A Promised Shared

**Saturday, February 22, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. PT**  
Virtual Public Workshops  
Workshop Tracks:

- Buddhist Education
- Organizational Sustainability
- Developing our Leaders
- Investing in Our Future

**Sunday, February 23, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. PT**  
BCA Townhall Featuring Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada

**Sunday, March 2, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. PT**  
BCA Eitaikyo Service  
and National Council Meeting Closing Program

Hosted by the Bay District Temples

For more info: <https://links.bcancm.org/events>

WORKSHOP SERIES

## Yoga & the Three Treasures

An introduction to Yoga history, philosophy; meditation, chanting, mantras, breathing techniques; movements (asanas) relaxation techniques for stress, anxiety, sleep; diet and lifestyle choices.

UPCOMING DATES & LOCATIONS

<p><b>FEB 15</b> Orange County Buddhist Church Anaheim, CA Dharma Talk: Rev. Jon Turner Special Guest: Linda Turner, Advanced Yoga Teacher</p>	<p><b>ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR</b> <b>Bob Matsueda</b></p> <p>Yoga &amp; Wellness Instructor, Yoga Therapist Certified by the Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India Yoga Certification Board @bobmatsuedayoga bobmatsueda.com</p>
<p><b>FEB 16</b> Vista Buddhist Temple Vista, CA</p>	
<p><b>FEB 22</b> Ogden Buddhist Church Ogden, UT</p>	<p><b>Learn More:</b> <a href="http://buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/yoga">buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/yoga</a></p> <p><b>Scheduling Inquiries:</b> <a href="mailto:rmatsueda@bcahq.org">rmatsueda@bcahq.org</a></p>
<p><b>MAR 08</b> Fowler Buddhist Church Fowler, CA Special Guests: Reverends Bob &amp; Patti, Retired Ministers of the Buddhist Church of Sacramento &amp; Alan Hirahara, Chef</p>	
<p><b>APR 12</b> Ekoji Buddhist Temple Fairfax Station, VA</p>	
<p><b>MAY 23-25</b> Jodo Shinshu Center Berkeley, CA</p>	

Sponsored by the Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) Buddhist Churches of America & Dharma Forward: Endowment Foundation Grant

A CBE Living the Dharma Committee (LTD) Seminar

## Astro-Dharma: Exploring the Intersection of Astronomy & Buddhism

Amateur astronomer Rev. Peter Hata will share images captured through his telescopes and how the truth of the Buddhist teachings—as witnessed under the night sky—can help us better understand our place in the universe.

DATE	TIME	PLACE
March 19, 2025	5:00 – 6:00 PM	Online via Zoom

SPECIAL GUEST

**Rev. Peter Hata**

Rev. Peter Hata has a background as a professional musician. He was an original member of the group Hiroshima. In the early 2000s he entered the ministry and was assigned in 2012 as minister of Higashi Honganji's West Covina Buddhist Temple. In 2014, he was reassigned to Higashi's Los Angeles Betsuin, where he helped establish the temple's lay education programs and study classes. Since retiring, Rev. Peter has been an active amateur astronomer, and has shared his thoughts on Buddhism and astronomy at the Las Vegas Buddhist Sangha and at Senshin Buddhist Temple's Family Retreat.

Please Register by: Monday, March 17, 2025

LINK TO REGISTER

https://forms.gle/4XVngv1Xbw4BDzNP9



A capacity crowd of 500 people attended the Buddhist Church of Sacramento's 125th anniversary banquet and celebration on Nov. 23, 2024. At left in second row, Sacramento Betsuin member Harley Inaba, Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada, Rimban Rev. Yuki Sugahara and Rev. Matt Hamasaki take part in the sake ceremony. At right in second row, accepting the City of Sacramento resolution from Sacramento City Councilmember Katie Valenzuela, right, are President-elect Bobby Tanaka, left, and President Karen Adachi, middle. At bottom, the group Cherry Blossomz performs with guest singer Merv Maruyama. Shown, from left, are: Lisa Orpilla, Emily Imazumi, Maruyama and Miko Shudo. (Miharu Okamura, another member of the Cherry Blossomz who performed, is not shown.) (Photos courtesy of Gregg Kochi)



## Sacramento's 125th Anniversary Celebration Draws Over 500

By Sharon Ito

Buddhist Church of Sacramento

The Buddhist Church of Sacramento's 125th anniversary banquet and celebration lived up to its tagline, demonstrating the 3 Cs — "Compassion. Culture. Community." — throughout the evening.

More than 500 people packed the Nov. 23 event at the Sacramento Asian Sports Foundation. The crowd included:

- descendants of the Issei pioneers who founded the temple;
- past ministers of the temple and their relatives;
- ministers from the Northern California District and the Buddhist Churches of America including Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada;
- elected officials who presented proclamations marking the historic occasion;
- and David Thull, an ultramarathon runner from Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple, who completed an extraordinary journey to help raise more than \$44,000 for Sacramento Betsuin teen Nathan Imura, who is battling leukemia, and the nonprofit Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer.

### A Night of 'Fun'

To kick off the evening's festivities, Rimban Rev. Yuki



Sugahara shared a favorite slogan often heard in his Sunday Dharma talks. And that's "to have FUN" — "F" for Friendship, "U" for Understanding, and "N" for Nembutsu.

"But tonight I want to change it a little bit," Rev. Sugahara said. "I still want you to have friendship and I still want you to deepen understanding among each other. And of course, I want you to recite the Nembutsu. But today, please have a nice time, It's OK to have FUN!"

From reconnecting with old friends to hamming it up at the photo booth; from toasting the occasion with a sake ceremony to listening to the musical group the Cherry Blossomz perform their favorite songs — there was no doubt that the guests had a fun and memorable time. Even the live dessert auction took on a life of its own.

A coffee crunch cake from

Le Croissant Factory sold for \$500; a pair of banana cream pies from Frank Fat's went for \$660; and bidding on a fruit basket cake from Karen's Bakery jumped to \$1,000. By the way, everyone received a piece of cake for free.

### Anniversary Tributes

California had been a state for less than 50 years when Buddhist missionaries from Japan and Sacramento's first Japanese immigrants founded the temple in 1899. In presenting a resolution from the City of Sacramento, Councilmember Katie Valenzuela honored the temple's resilience.

"I think a lot about their history, their history of discrimination, history of relocation," Valenzuela said, referring to the incarceration of temple members and others of Japanese descent during World War II and city redevelopment that decimated Sacramento's Japantown and

forced the temple to move to its present location.

"This church, despite all of that, has stayed together," Valenzuela said, "and still has a home and is doing so many incredible things for the community."

In presenting a resolution from the City of Elk Grove, Councilmember Darren Suen's remarks turned personal. He talked about Rev. Sugahara providing comfort when Suen's mother died. And years ago, former Sacramento Betsuin Resident Minister and BCA Minister Emeritus Rev. Bob

tribute with a passage from U.S. Rep. Doris Matsui of Sacramento.

Here's an excerpt from the Congressional Record:

"Mr. Speaker, as the community of the Buddhist Church of Sacramento Hongwanji Betsuin gathers to celebrate its 125th anniversary with eyes on the future setting the stage for generations to come, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in honoring their commitment to preserving and sharing the rich traditions of Japanese culture and Shin Buddhism with the community."

*"I think a lot about their history, their history of discrimination, history of relocation. This church, despite all of that, has stayed together and still has a home and is doing so many incredible things for the community."*

— Sacramento City Councilmember Katie Valenzuela

Oshita and Minister's Assistant Koichi Mizushima consoled Suen and some buddies after they lost a close friend.

The temple also received commendations from Sacramento County supervisors Pat Hume and Patrick Kennedy, Assemblymember Stephanie Nguyen, and state Sen. Angelique Ashby.

The official record of the United States Congress paid

### A Selfless Act

The most astonishing gesture celebrating the anniversary came from ultramarathoner David Thull. His idea to run from Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple to the Buddhist Church of Sacramento turned into "200 Miles of Compassion," a benefit for 13-year-old Nathan Imura,

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# Three Japanese Ministers Take Part in IMOP in United States

They Learn About Being Life as a Jodo Shinshu Minister — and Even Learn How to Play Pickleball

By Dennis Akizuki

Wheel of Dharma Correspondent

Three Japanese ministers recently learned about life as a Jodo Shinshu minister in the United States. They even learned to play pickleball.

They learned about how to solve problems they might encounter in American culture, LGBTQ+ and Buddhism, taxes and retirement, and participated in services at several Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) temples.

The Japanese ministers spent from Oct. 8 to Dec. 9 participating in the International Ministerial Orientation Program (IMOP), immersing themselves in what life would be like serving as a minister in the United States and Canada.

Japanese ministers are required to participate in IMOP before they become Kaikyoshi in Hawaii, the continental United States and Canada. Since starting in 2008, IMOP has prepared ministers such as Rev. Katsuya Kusunoki of the Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple and Rev. Yuki Sugahara of the Buddhist Church of Sacramento, both of whom are now Rimkans.

More recent IMOP participants have included Revs. Yukari Torii of the San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, Etsuko Mikame of the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, Noritaka Imada of the Buddhist Church of Florin and Hibiki Murakami of the Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple.

The three 2024 IMOP ministers were:

**Rev. Kensho Hashimoto** is from Kanagawa Prefecture. He grew up in a family temple built 30 years ago by his father, who served as a Kaikyoshi in Hawaii in the 1980s.

As the second son, he wasn't expected to become a minister and didn't intend to become one until he attended the 2019 World Buddhist Women's Convention in San Francisco. Rev. Hashimoto observed the attendees chanting together, reciting the Nembutsu and sharing the same teachings regardless of their background and language differences. He said that inspired him.

The following year, he enrolled in the master's program at Ryukoku University's Graduate School of Practical Shin Buddhist Studies.

The sports-minded Hashimoto enjoys watching baseball and soccer. While attending an English-language program in Vancouver, Canada, he volunteered at the Buddhist temple. Bishop Rev. Tatsuya Aoki of the Jodo Shinshu Temples of Canada (JSTBC) recruited Rev. Hashimoto to serve as an intern at the Toronto Buddhist Temple, where he continues to serve.

**Rev. Yuki Himeji** is orig-



IMOP Revs. Kensho Hashimoto, Keiya Yasutake and Yuki Himeji, shown from left, learned to play pickleball at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin. At right, Revs. Kensho Hashimoto, left, and Keiya Yasutake, right, receive instructions on how to play pickleball. (Photos courtesy of Arlene Mori)

inally from Akita Prefecture and now lives in Chigasaki City in Kanagawa Prefecture. The 37-year-old Rev. Himeji is married with an 11-year-old daughter. His father-in-law is from a temple family and when he got married in 2012, he took the family's name and started a path to become a Jodo Shinshu minister.

Four generations of the Himeji family have served as Kaikyoshi, including Rev. Shokei Masayoshi Himeji, his great-grandfather, who served in the early 1930s.

Rev. Himeji works as a massage-shiatsu therapist. He attended Keio University, where he was a submarine-delivery pitcher for the school's baseball team.

**Rev. Keiya Yasutake** is from Fukuoka and is studying for a Ph.D. at Ryukoku Graduate School. A member of a temple family, he visited Hawaii as part of an exchange program with the Hongwanji Mission School while in junior high school. He said he was shocked to see Jodo Shinshu temples and Sanghas in Hawaii, but it piqued his interest in serving overseas.

Rev. Yasutake's interest in overseas Jodo Shinshu led him to undertake research in Hawaii and write a graduate thesis about how to spread Jodo Shinshu teachings. He has continued his research into "Issues and Possibilities for International Propagation of Jodo Shinshu Through the Eyes of People Who Have Crossed Over to Jodo Shinshu."

During the two-month program, the IMOP ministers stayed in a condo in Southern California, a temple parsonage and a homestay with families in



San Jose and at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, California.

In November, at the halfway point in their stay, the three ministers shared their impressions of the IMOP program and the BCA:

**Rev. Hashimoto:**

"The two-month IMOP program started in early October and has now reached its halfway point. I am currently working as an intern minister in Toronto, Canada, and I find that American culture is quite similar to Canadian culture, so I haven't noticed many cultural

I was in high school, I was part of the volleyball club. After classes, which usually ended at 4 p.m., I would practice until 7 p.m. My school was about an hour and a half away from home by bicycle, train, and bus, so I wouldn't get home until around 9 p.m. I would often eat dinner alone and go straight to bed, too tired to talk much with my parents.

"So, seeing this family-oriented environment in San Jose made me realize how valuable it is for parent-child communication.

*"Through the International Ministers Orientation Program (IMOP), I truly felt the kindness of the ministers and members. In this program, I was able to visit many temples, and at each temple, all of the members were very welcoming and friendly."*

— Rev. Keiya Yasutake

differences. However, during my homestay in San Jose, one significant difference I observed between Japan and North America is the emphasis on family time.

"The family I stayed with had two high school children, and they always ate dinner together with their parents. This was a striking contrast to my own experience in Japan. When

experiencing authentic Mexican cuisine. Before this trip, I hadn't had many opportunities to try Mexican food, so I was pleasantly surprised by the delicious dishes served at some of the temples. The flavors and spices were new to me, making it a memorable part of my visit. These meals were not just a treat for my taste buds, but also a reflection of the open-hearted spirit of the temple communities.

"Beyond the delicious food and warm hospitality, what impressed me most was the strong sense of unity and dedication within the BCA temples. There was a noticeable atmosphere of positivity and pride among the members. Many of them expressed that the temple is truly 'our home,' and I could feel that sense of belonging in every interaction. This strong bond among the members is a testament to the supportive and inclusive communities they have built over the years.

"I was particularly inspired by how the members were not just participants but active contributors to the life of their temple. They engaged enthusiastically in various activities, events and services. It was heartening to see how each temple created a welcoming environment where everyone, from long-time members to newcomers, felt included and valued."

**Rev. Himeji:**

"It has been about a month since I arrived in the United States to participate in IMOP. During this time, I have visited many temples along the West Coast, met a wide variety of people, and gained invaluable experiences.

"Through this past month, I have deeply felt three types of 'connections.'

"The first is the 'connection with people.' When I visited BCA temples, I felt the strong bonds within each temple's Sangha. Additionally, during the TechnoBuddha and MAP training programs, I experienced connections that transcended individual temples and generations. Witnessing people's efforts to bring others together taught me many valuable lessons.

"The second is the 'connection with the past.' I had the opportunity to learn about the history of Japanese American communities in the United States, which made me reflect on the hardships endured by our predecessors in a foreign land. They faced challenges with the spirit of 'Shikatanagai' ('It cannot be helped'); 'Kodomotame' ('For our kids'), and 'Gaman' ('perseverance'), overcoming obstacles for the next generation.

"Because of their perseverance and dedication, we are now able to celebrate and share the teachings of the Nembutsu in

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## Terri Omori, First Woman to Lead BCA, Continues to Be Trailblazer



By Kaitlyn Nakagawa

Orange County Buddhist Church

One hundred twenty-three years after its founding, the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) welcomed its first female president, Terri Omori.

In March 2022, Omori officially accepted her role as BCA President and place in history. The compassion and care with which she leads has been prominent even before her involvement in the BCA.

Terri Honda Omori grew up attending the Buddhist Temple of San Diego, learning from her parents, active temple leaders Ben and Mikiye Honda.

While her family initially introduced her to the Buddhist community, she soon began to take on leadership roles in the temple on her own initiative.

Throughout her adolescence, Omori attended Sunday services, participated in Dharma School, played taiko, joined San Diego's Jr. YBA, and played the organ during services. She even became an assistant Dharma School teacher and helped her mother teach classes.

Omori had always been exposed to the BCA growing up and even traveled to San Francisco to attend the organization's 75th anniversary celebration in 1974. Her involvement in the BCA would amalgamate into leadership roles as she got older.

Following her marriage to Ford Omori, she joined the Vista Buddhist Temple. Her reputation as an organist followed her to Vista where the resident minister, Rev. Art Takemoto, asked if she could play at services. She agreed, and Omori's role as organist branched into additional leadership roles within the Shin Buddhist community.

She noticed that only a small handful of children attended the services and that there were no Dharma School classes.

Omori asked the parents if she could teach the children

how to play some gathas on the organ after service ended. Her involvement at Vista quickly grew as Terri and Ford Omori started helping out with the Jr. YBA and joined the Vista taiko group.

The Omoris soon had their own children, a daughter, Katie, and a son, Kurtis. Alongside other families, they established a Dharma School at Vista, which became part of the Southern District Dharma School Teachers' League.

Omori later helped to start a Jr. Taiko group as well as a Jr. YBA for high school students. She became a Dharma School teacher and has continued to do so even after her children graduated from high school.

"When you think of the Vista Buddhist Temple, you think of Ms. Terri," said Kaitlyn Ma, a member of Vista. "She is incredibly hardworking, supportive, and caring, which is evident in her leadership. She is also a wonderful mentor to us in Jr. YBA, and we know we can always turn to her for guidance and support, both in Buddhism and out."

Stephanie Yasukochi, Vista's Dharma School Superintendent added: "Terri is a great listener, and her ability to connect with people helps create a warm, welcoming atmosphere at our temple. Terri was the Superintendent of the Dharma School when my children started attending temple. She soon became the temple President, but continued to be involved with the youth. With her passion and ability to nurture young leaders, Terri has been instrumental in developing our Jr YBA and Shokenji Jr. Taiko groups.

"The early Dharma School students are now young adults and because of their relationships with Terri, whenever she asks for volunteers, they come right over to help," Yasukochi said. "With thoughtfulness, sincerity and always integrating the Buddhist teachings, Terri leads by example."

In 2007, Omori took on one of her most notable roles yet as Vista Buddhist Temple President. She was the first female to lead the temple and would continue as President for the next three years. During her tenure, she focused on increasing membership and was incredibly successful.

Omori's involvement as Vista President led to her involvement in the BCA. It began with her attendance at National Council Meetings and grew into her becoming the Southern District Council chair-elect in 2014 as well as one of the representatives to the National Board. She was elected as a BCA Director, selected as a member of the Social Welfare Committee, served on a BCA ad hoc committee, and even volunteered for the Membership and



Former BCA President Terri Omori poses with Kaitlyn Nakagawa of Orange County Buddhist Church (OCBC). Omori and Nakagawa met at the Southern District Jr YBL Conference in 2024. Omori is also shown with Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada. Omori became the first woman in the history of the BCA to serve as BCA President. (Photos courtesy of Sharon Sasaki)

Propagation Committee as her concern for membership carried on from her time at Vista.

As Omori became more and more involved in the BCA, many members came to her, encouraging her to run for BCA President.

Rick Stambul, the BCA President-elect at the time and a staunch advocate of having more women in BCA leadership roles, contacted Omori regarding the presidency.

While she was honored, she initially rejected the position, worried about taking on such an important role. Her concerns for maintaining the integrity of the BCA led her to reject the nomination as President, as she believed she was not qualified for such a significant role.

Omori's deep respect for the BCA made her an exceptional candidate, but was also the initial reason she turned down the presidency. However, with the encouragement of her peers and support of

her Sangha, Omori eventually agreed to run for Vice President and eventually President.

The BCA community, as well as her husband, have been a major support system for her as she advanced through the BCA and towards the presidency.

Omori touched on her deep appreciation for the Shin Buddhist community and how much she values the care and compassion shown to her by the Sangha. The Sangha is just one of the many aspects Omori respects about the Shin Buddhist community. Her dedication to the Dharma is truly admirable as she hopes to make it accessible to all. Omori continues to find innovative ways to inform and welcome newcomers into our beautiful community of the Jodo Shinshu tradition.

When asked about how she felt about being part of the minority of women in the BCA, Omori humbly said she did not initially consider how her election as BCA President

was a historic moment for the BCA and women in Buddhism.

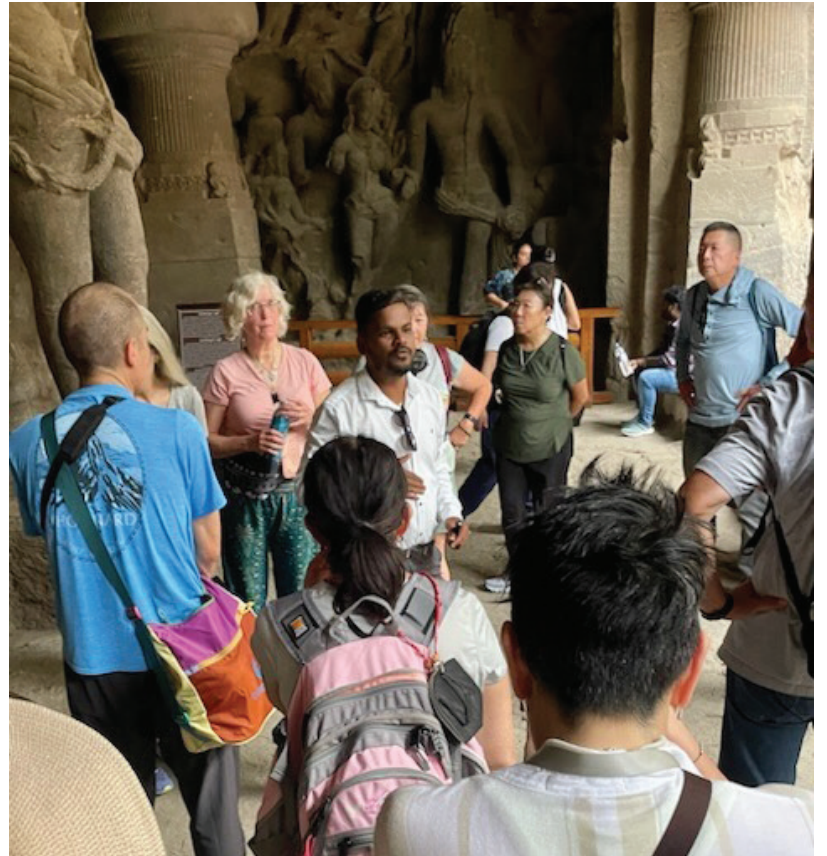
However, she was honored to take on the role and responsibilities that came with it. Omori noted that while she was the first woman BCA President, she was not the first woman to take on a leadership role in the BCA community. There are many women already taking initiative in their temples and communities that are not recognized as often as they should be.

Omori's role as BCA President, as well as her humility, are certainly deserving of recognition as she takes the time to acknowledge other women despite having accomplished such an amazing feat herself.

Hopefully, Omori's groundbreaking presidency inspires other Shin Buddhist women to take on more leadership roles and encourages the Shin Buddhist community to give credit to the amazing women currently taking charge in their own communities.

With the direction the BCA is headed in, Terri Omori may be the first, but she will certainly not be the last female BCA President.

Terri Omori's work in the BCA is commendable, but she doesn't hesitate to acknowledge others, remarking how the "BCA is made up of dedicated ministers and members. Let us continue to work together with Dharma-centered leadership."



## Yoga and Buddhism – Discovering Common Origins

Trip to India Led by BCA's Bob Matsueda Showed Similarities for Both Practices, Vista President Says

*Editor's note: Ricky Schlesinger, the President of the Vista Buddhist Temple, and his wife Judy Nakatomi were among 22 people who traveled to India from Dec. 1-20, 2024, with BCA staff member Bob Matsueda. The Wheel of Dharma is honored to publish Schlesinger's account of the trip.*

**By Ricky Schlesinger**  
President  
Vista Buddhist Temple

Most of us know Bob Matsueda as the Facilities Manager at the Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC) in Berkeley. Some of us know Bob as a yoga instructor holding online classes and an annual yoga weekend retreat at the JSC.

Matsueda is one of a few American yoga teachers and yoga therapist who is certified by the Government of India.

So, what do yoga and Buddhism have to do with each other? It turns out, maybe quite a bit.

Yoga is an ancient Indian practice prevalent in Northern India during Shakyamuni Buddha's time. It's quite likely yoga was one of the spiritual practices Shakyamuni explored and mastered during his seven-year quest for truth and enlightenment.

It's interesting to ponder how yoga likely influenced Shakyamuni's path to enlightenment. Shin Buddhism tends to be Shinran focused. But for Buddhist practices that look a bit more to Shakyamuni, it's easier to embrace yoga sharing both as a spiritual and cultural perspective with Buddhism.

Today, both yoga and Bud-



dhism are more than a spiritual belief system. They're a way of life offering followers a path to developing a deeper sense of awareness. Matsueda's classes demonstrate how yoga is a holistic practice and philosophy that can shape life, beyond the physical asana or poses we are most familiar with.

My wife Judy Nakatomi and I couldn't resist the opportunity to join Matsueda's three-week group journey to India from Dec. 1-20, 2024, to explore the true meaning of yoga and engage in Southern India's beautiful and interesting culture.

Full transparency: Judy and I live in Encinitas, California, which some call the yoga capital of America. There are more yoga studios in Encinitas than Starbucks coffee shops. It's the land of Lululemon and the downward dog; the home of Prana rock climbing apparel influenced by yoga practice.

One of the largest landowners in Encinitas is Paramahansa Yogananda estate,

also known as the Self-Realization Fellowship. Our most popular surf break is referred to as Swami's. Years ago, Judy completed yoga teacher training, but I am not deeply engaged in yoga today. Yet we were intrigued by Matsueda's adventure.

One of our first stops on the trip was the Gurukul Ashram in Nashik, India. Matsueda extensively trained and studied at this highly respected ashram. The 22 of us were honored guests for a quick three-day immersion. We participated in fire meditation sessions, asana (sitting meditation pose) classes, ayurvedic treatments, ate simple vegetarian meals, and slept in their austere accommodations. We were introduced to the complete yoga. My high point was several lectures in an intimate setting from two founders of Gurukul Ashram; Dr. Dorle, a medical doctor and the Honorable Guruji, and bioengineer.

Their inspiring talks



opened our eyes to all aspects of the integrated yoga practice. Like Buddhism, yoga's intention is to bring peace and healing to an otherwise chaotic life, through plant-based ayurvedic treatment for healing, a physical practice of asana poses and breathing on the mat for wellness and relaxation, and a vegetarian diet for health and nourishment.

Dr. Dorle explained that the human body, evidenced by evolution of our teeth and digestive system, is different than most animals, and therefore, a meat-based diet is not well-suited for people.

As a longer-term Shin Buddhist and novice yoga practitioner, the parallels between yoga and Buddhism were quite striking.

Karma yoga is a selfless giving practice at an ashram which includes volunteerism, cooking, cleaning and tending to the facility. It's remarkably like Buddhist Dana and toban at our temples. Yoga philosophy believes there is a yoga spirit in all of us waiting to be discovered. It sounds like the Buddha spirit that resides in

A group of 22 people, including BCA Sangha members and friends, went on a tour of Southern India on Dec. 1-20, 2024. BCA staff member Bob Matsueda, who is an American yoga teacher and yoga therapist, led the tour on yoga and Buddhism. The group's tour included a visit to Thanjavur in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The photos at left are of BCA Sangha members and friends at Krishnamachrya Ashram, Chennai Tamil Nadu. (Photos courtesy of Bob Matsueda and Ricky Schlesinger)

all sentient beings. They both utilize meditation and chanting. Yoga practitioners reject India's social caste system and everyone is on the same level. Buddhism embraces a universal, "come as you are" spirit.

Superficially, Buddhism and yoga appear to be different. Both have been overcommercialized to the public and largely misunderstood. But after our experience, they seem synergistic and parallel, share similar values, engage in some common practice, and offer a holistic approach to enriching life in a complex world.

I feel very fortunate to be included on Matsueda's trip and to experience the true holistic yoga practice while discovering the rich culture of Southern India.

I'm not planning to trade in my Buddhist Sangha for a new Yoga ashram. But now, with an appreciation of the similar roots of both, it does seem beneficial to include elements of yoga into my practice and see the world through a broader lens.

In 2025, Matsueda is leading a group to Northern India to explore the historic path of Shakyamuni Buddha and the trip will include a visit with the Dalai Lama.



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# Scenes From IBS 75th Anniversary, Memorial Service at JSC



The Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) 75th anniversary and memorial service paid tribute to the late IBS President and BCA Bishop Rev. Dr. Seigen Yamaoka, shown in a photo at left. At right, BCA Emeritus Minister Rev. Dr. Kenji Akahoshi and Karen Akahoshi offer incense and Gassho during the program. (Photos courtesy of Mark Shigenaga).



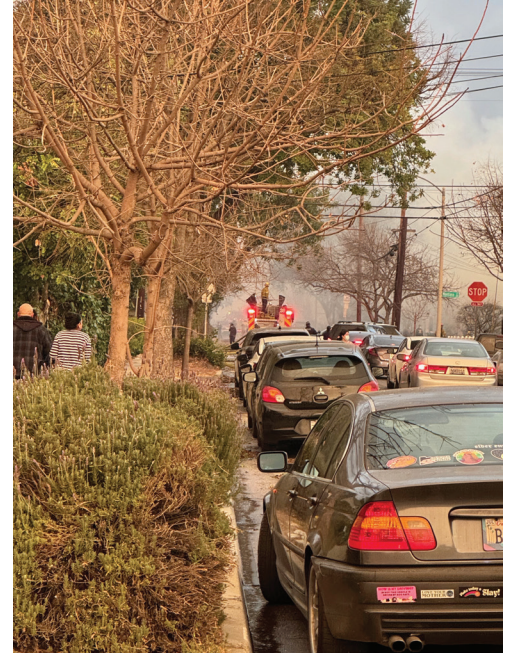
At left, IBS faculty, students and alumni discuss the impact the IBS has had on their lives during a panel discussion. Thomas Calobrisi (IBS graduate and current IBS Research Fellow) prompts laughter from Rev. Landon Yamaoka (IBS graduate) and Letesa Isler (current IBS MDIV student, chaplaincy track) during his talk. Other panelists included: Jamie Kimmel (IBS graduate and chaplain at UCSF), Amy Shoemaker (current IBS MDIV student, chaplaincy track), Victor Ogundipe (current IBS MDIV student in Shinshu studies), and Dr. Paula Arai. At right, IBS President Emeritus Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto delivers a tribute to Rev. Dr. Seigen Yamaoka.



At far left, Rev. Kodo Umezu delivers the Dharma message. Center left, IBS Dean Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji gives his remarks about IBS. Left, IBS Board of Trustees Chair Leroy Morishita welcomes the audience.



Participants gather for a group photo at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, California. At right, IBS President Dr. Scott Mitchell offers a toast in honor of the special occasion of the institute's 75th anniversary.



Top left, Ren Gibbs and other volunteers survey the damage of the area burned near the Hondo of the Pasadena Buddhist Temple (PBT). Top right, a fire truck appears close to the burning homes north of the temple entrance. Far left in second row, remnants of the burned areas near the Hondo are shown. At left, Scott Yoshikawa helps with cleaning the Pasadena Buddhist Temple gymnasium. Below, PBT Dharma School students create a sign located in front of the temple driveway entrance. (Photos courtesy of Kyoko Gibbs)

## LA Wildfires

Continued from Page 1

Buddhist Temple (PBT).

In addition, there were additional reports of Sangha members throughout the Los Angeles area who lost their homes. A precise number of those affected, including West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple members, was not immediately available.

There have been no reports of fire-related deaths among BCA members.

As of Jan. 30, the wildfires in Los Angeles County have killed at least 29 people, destroyed more than 16,000 structures and burned nearly 48,000 acres, according to Cal Fire and news reports.

The weather forecasting service AccuWeather estimates the total economic loss from the wildfires at over \$250 billion, making it one of the most costly natural disasters in U.S. history. The estimate includes costs of damage, loss of life, business disruptions, health care and other economic impacts.

The most notable of the wildfires were the Palisades Fire in Pacific Palisades and Malibu, and the Eaton Fire in Altadena and Pasadena.

The Eaton Fire, which started the night of Jan. 7, came within 75 yards of the Pasadena temple and leveled nearby homes, according to Rev. Gibbs.

The Pasadena Buddhist Temple praised the actions of neighbor Elliot Sloane and his brother-in-law, Michael Mur-



### How to Help

BCA Southern California Wildfire Relief Fund: [BCA.kindful.com](https://bca.kindful.com)

PBT Eaton Sangha Support Fund: <https://givebutter.com/ZIFQIN>

GoFundMe fundraisers for Pasadena Sangha members: <https://www.pasadenabuddhisttemple.org/eaton-fire-info.html>

ray. Sloane and his wife, Jessica, are next-door neighbors of the temple and their backyard fence is the temple's west fence.

"On that first day, Elliot and Michael noticed that there was smoke rising from the temple grounds," the Pasadena Buddhist Temple said in a Facebook post dated Jan. 21. "So they ran to hop the fence, grabbed hoses and started wetting the hot spots that started from the fire on Montana (Avenue). When Lori and Alan Hatakeyama came by that day to open the

parking lot gates, they found them on the roof of the Hondo, wetting down the roof.

"We know that without their selfless efforts, our temple would have also been burned," the Facebook post continued. "Their home was also threatened, but they came to help us!"

Rev. Gibbs said: "Flying embers hit our (tea) garden and the railing around our temple. Fortunately, some of our temple leaders, along with (wife) Kyoko and I, arrived not too far behind to help Michael (Mur-

## Donate to BCA's Wildfire Relief Fund

By **Ralph Honda** Wheel of Dharma Correspondent  
and **Jon Kawamoto** Wheel of Dharma Editor

The BCA has established the Southern California Wildfire Relief fund in response to the catastrophic and deadly wildfires across Southern California.

The fund is on the BCA website at: <https://bca.kindful.com>

The BCA's Social Welfare Committee decided at its Jan. 18 meeting to begin accepting donations with the intent of supporting the Pasadena Buddhist Temple (PBT) and other Southern District temples and churches to help members affected by the wildfires.

The Pasadena Buddhist Temple was saved because of the quick actions of neighbors. Unfortunately, 16 Pasadena Sangha members lost their homes and a business.

There have also been additional Sangha members in Southern California who have lost their homes and have been forced to evacuate.

If you or your family have been affected by the fires, please let your local minister or temple know so that we may support all those in need of assistance.

The BCA fund will also support disaster relief organizations such as Direct Relief with ongoing community support.

BCA Secretary Darlene Bagshaw, who is the Chair of the BCA Committee on Development, said: "We need to look at not just the monetary loss and possession loss but also the emotional, mental and spiritual needs as a result of such devastation and stress. I am sure all aspects affecting our Southern California temples and communities will be the focus of the SWC and BCA for a long time to come."

ray) and Elliot (Sloane) with watering down the grounds." Rev. Gibbs and his wife were forced to evacuate the parsonage on the temple grounds Jan. 8 as the Eaton Fire approached the temple, and later returned to safeguard the campus.

According to Rev. Gibbs and

Pasadena Co-President Jeannie Toshima, the temple suffered smoke damage that will need to be professionally cleaned. The ash from the wildfires carries toxic substances such as heavy metals like lead, arsenic, as well

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Far left, Pasadena Buddhist Temple Azay volunteers, from left, Dona Mitoma, Marvin Inouye, June Chin, Shelley Yamane Shinmoto, Ren Gibbs, Cathy Mikuni, Ron Toshima and Philip Hirose (from Azay), helped prepare and distribute 80 meals. At left, Brian Kito, owner of Fugetsu-do confectionery, provided mochi for meals distributed to fire victims. (Photos courtesy of Nancy Chin)



At left, Volunteers received donations to aid fire victims at a drop off event at the Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple parking lot in downtown Los Angeles' Little Tokyo district on Jan. 12. At right, Kiyomi Mitsuda and Kent Marume, co-organizers for the wildfire relief collections on Jan. 11-12, stand with supplies received at the Venice Japanese Community Center (VJCC) on Jan. 11. Marume reported a successful outpouring of support for the two-day event. (Photos courtesy of Jun Nagata/Rafu Shimpo and VJCC President Bob Onishi)



Far left, volunteers sort through donations received at the Pasadena Buddhist Temple. PBT members delivered supplies to Sangha members affected by the Eaton Fire. At left, after an announcement was made to collect relief supplies at Orange County Buddhist Church's New Year's party on Jan. 11, donations began pouring in the next day. (Photos courtesy of Jeannie Toshima and Chris Lock)

## LA Wildfires

Continued from Page 10

as asbestos fibers and microplastics.

Pasadena Buddhist Temple is in a residential neighborhood. Three main structures encompass the property with the primary building housing the Hondo. A short walkway leads to the building, which includes the minister's office, meeting room, kitchen and dining room, and is attached to the gymnasium. The minister's parsonage sits at the main entrance of the property.

PBT has begun the process to get estimates for remediation of repairs from fire and wind damage to temple structures.

Other BCA Southern District temples in the Los Angeles

area were also affected by the wildfires.

Ministers reported that Sangha members were forced to flee their homes because of mandatory evacuation orders.

On Jan. 9, former BCA President Rick Stambul was

Stambul's home.

"I raced home to evacuate," Stambul said. "Traffic was heavy, bumper to bumper. To the southwest, the sky was lit an eerie orange color. The smoke was disturbing and orange embers were hitting my wind-

the slow-moving traffic," he said.

The wildfires caused several Southern District temples such as Pasadena, West Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple to cancel in-person services on

Ko'e Umezu removed sacred objects from the Onajin and moved them to a safer location. The West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple is on the border of the evacuation zone of the Palisades Fire.

"We moved a statue of the Buddha, hanging scrolls of masters and standing scrolls of the three Pure Land sutras from the altar," Rev. Takata said.

Also removed was a scroll image of Amida Buddha from the Nokotsudo altar along with the Eitaiyo book and the temple's Kakocho, the death records book.

The West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple is providing its rummage sale inventory of goods and supplies to the fire victims. Rev. Takata said the

*"We know that without their selfless efforts, our temple would have also been burned. Their home was also threatened, but they came to help us!"*

— Pasadena Buddhist Temple, citing the efforts of next-door neighbor Elliot Sloane and his brother-in-law, Michael Murray

visiting a friend in Van Nuys, about 25 miles from Pacific Palisades, who had lost his home. Stambul said his iPhone triggered a notification for a fire alert showing an evacuation order in Oak Park, the area near

shield. It was scary.

"But the most frightening part of the drive home were the reckless drivers racing on the freeway going about 80-plus mph on the shoulder of the road in an attempt to get past

Jan. 12. Some of the temples instead offered Zoom or livestream services.

Rev. Koho Takata, Resident Minister of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple, said he and Assistant Minister Rev.

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## Sourdough Baking Also Yields Dharma Lessons

*Editor's note: Teresa Shimogawa, a Minister's Assistant at the Orange County Buddhist Church (OCBC), delivered the following presentation at OCBC's service on Oct. 13, 2024. The Wheel of Dharma is pleased to publish Shimogawa's message with her permission.*



By Teresa Shimogawa  
Orange County Buddhist Church

I recently went to a sourdough class with a friend from work. I did not participate in the sourdough craze or any baking craze during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The kids and I instead got into raising monarch butterflies, which arguably wasn't as tasty, but it was a way to pass the time and get absorbed in something beyond our current state of affairs.

It was a stress reliever, a way to focus on something other than myself. My life has been exceptionally busy lately, so sourdough has become a reprieve from the chaos, something to get lost in, almost meditative as I weigh flour and water to feed my starter, stretching dough, fussing over timing, marveling at my successes and failures like a science project.

One aspect about sourdough baking that intrigued me was the fact that it is an ancient practice. Sourdough is made by the fermentation of

dough using wild yeast. They found evidence of sourdough as far back as 3,700 BC.

When you think of sourdough, you may also think of the sourdough bread bowls popularly made in San Francisco. French bakers brought the technique to the area during the Gold Rush.

As I learn more about it, I'm falling into the rabbit hole of online communities, where enthusiastic sourdough hobbyists share their tips and tricks and troubleshoot problems together.

I really love the tradition of sharing starters — some people have starters that are decades and decades old — and exchanging knowledge about the art of sourdough baking. To me, this is interdependence. It's one of the more beautiful sides of humanity, the part where we work together, help each other, create together, share and celebrate. In a world with so much darkness, this is a bright spot.

Another fascinating aspect about sourdough bread making is that it is kind of a game or a puzzle to be solved due to the number of causes and conditions that can affect the outcome of your bread. Variables such as temperature, fermentation time and moisture levels can all produce different outcomes.

You begin the process with a starter. I was given mine at the class I went to, which was given to the teacher by a friend. You feed it with a mix of water and flour to produce carbon dioxide gas in the fermentation cycle to create a levain that will be used to bake your sourdough bread. It is generally a two-day process.

Based on the problems your loaf may have, a sourdough baker then takes pleasure in troubleshooting so their next loaf is better. I learned in



Teresa Shimogawa shows one of her sourdough bread creations from her starter. (Courtesy of Teresa Shimogawa)

my class and from the online communities that there is always a way to fix your bread. It's a never ending journey of learning technique and style. There are numerous recipes and several possible methods and ideas about what works best in baking sourdough. With so many causes and conditions, you can't really take it personally if you don't get a beautiful loaf each time you bake.

Tricycle article "To the Pure Land and Back."

In short, the sailor boards a ship, encounters choppy waters and is thrown overboard. He is convinced he is going to die until he hears a call from the ocean, "Let go. Let go of your striving. You're fine just as you are."

This prompts the sailor to turn over on his back and float until he finds safety.

The ocean represents Ami-

*I really love the tradition of sharing starters and exchanging knowledge about the art of sourdough baking. To me, this is interdependence. It's one of the more beautiful sides of humanity, the part where we work together, help each other, create together, share and celebrate. In a world with so much darkness, this is a bright spot.*

My sourdough bread journey made me think about Buddhism. Rev. Dr. Kenneth Tanaka's parable of the drowning sailor came to mind. Rev. Dr. Tanaka uses the parable of the drowning sailor to illustrate the "Shin way" in the Spring 2019

da, a manifestation of ultimate reality. In Shin Buddhism, the sailor turning on his back and allowing the ocean to hold him up represents shin-jin. One lets go of striving and realizes that the ocean embraces and uplifts them, letting go of egoic self-power

and awakening to other power, just as they are. Nothing about the ocean changes; only the perspective of the sailor. The sailor is embraced by the compassion of Other Power.

In the Fall 2022 Tricycle article "The Awakening of Infinite Light," Rev. Dr. Mark Unno wrote that "'Other Power' does not refer to an external being, like a god. It really means 'other than ego.' The foolish being filled with blind passions is the calculating ego, the karmic self. Amida Buddha as the self-expression of emptiness, oneness and boundless compassion, the deepest reality of the self, is the 'Amida Self,' as it were. For this reason, Shinran states that 'true entrusting is buddhanature.'"

He goes on to explain, "Letting go of the ego and entrusting oneself to the flow of reality that arises from deep within occurs from the true self beyond words — one's own buddhanature."

It makes me think about Namo Amida Butsu and being grateful for everything I've been given in this life. This gift to try again. To be. To experience joy. To taste joy, even. It's something we likely will never fully appreciate until we no longer have it.

Sourdough baking isn't fun if you are attached to the results. It's enjoyable precisely because of the unknown; the joy of discovering, trial and error, creating something out of a magical starter nurtured with the knowledge of people from thousands of years ago, the interdependence, the love, the spirit of the here and now.

Imagine if you approached life that way — with curiosity — not attached to the results, but in love with the process. You were given a magical starter of life. It's a rare and wondrous gift. What will you do with it?

### Bishop's Message

Continued from Page 1

Our pets have the run of the house, whether they are cats or dogs, or maybe both. We have our favorite mementos displayed on the fireplace and our family photos are displayed on the wall or hallway. Our homes are an expression of our entire lives. Photos of our children are displayed — from infancy to their wedding photos and even photos of grandchildren or great-grand-

children.

To lose such memories and mementos is like losing a part of our past, our history, our life. How devastating that must feel like. As we all reflect on how we would feel if we lost our homes, all the more we feel for what you must be going through.

What can we say in the face of such devastation? What words of comfort can we share to someone who lost their home and the lifetime of memories that it holds?

What comes to my mind

is the Japanese expression that goes something like, "You fall down seven times, but you get up eight." This means that in the face of a great challenge, a great loss and a great tragedy, we just have to stand up again, hard as it might seem, but that is what we have to do.

Buddhism teaches us that our life is never alone. We are supported by innumerable causes and conditions each and every day. Family, friends, teachers, co-workers, neighbors, strangers,

sustenance from the food that we eat, the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, our life is always supported by "others." That continues even in the face of great tragedy. We are not alone. We are supported by innumerable causes and conditions, even in the face of the insurmountable.

A few years ago, I spoke in Colorado at the Longmont Buddhist Temple. One of the members took me for a drive to show the nearby area of Colorado that was devastated

by the Marshall Fire, the most destructive fire in the history of Colorado. I saw a huge residential area that was devastated, but homes were being rebuilt. It was an encouraging sight to see how a community, which had been devastated, was rebuilding.

Although the scale of those fires are no doubt different, I hope that our communities in Southern California can, over time, be rebuilt.

May our thoughts of compassion and support help you to stand up this eighth time.



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## IMOP

Continued from Page 6

America. I also had the chance to visit temples where my relatives once served as ministers, including Buddhist Temple of Salinas, Gardena Buddhist Church, Buddhist Church of Santa Barbara, Oxnard Buddhist Temple, and Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple Betsuin.

“Seeing my relatives’ photos displayed in these temples was incredibly moving. I even had the opportunity to speak with members who had connections with my family over 60 years ago, which made me feel a strong link between the past and the present.

“The words of Shinran Shonin at the end of the ‘Kyogyoshinsho’ came to mind: ‘I have collected true words to aid others in their practice for attaining birth, in order that the process be made continuous, without end and without interruption, by which those who have been born first guide those who come later, and those who are born later join those who were born before. This is so that the boundless ocean of birth-and-death be exhausted.’



As Rev. Keiya Yasutake (foreground left) listens to pickleball tips from Jeanne Katsuro (background left), Revs. Kensho Hashimoto (foreground right) and Yuki Himeji (background right) hit to one another. (Courtesy of Arlene Mori)

“This experience reinforced my commitment to pass on the teachings of the Nembutsu as an emissary of Amida Buddha for generations to come.

“Lastly, the third is the ‘connection with the Buddha.’ At each temple in BCA, it was customary to recite the ‘Golden Chain’ during services. I was particularly touched at San Jose Betsuin, where preschool children recited it in loud, clear voices.

“I learned that BCA temples not only recite the ‘Golden Chain’ but also engage in practices like Buddhist hymns, meditation, zazen, and sutra copying — practices that are not as commonly observed at Jodo Shinshu temples in Japan. Just as the voice of the Nembutsu brings me peace, I feel that cultivating a ‘connection with the Buddha’ is essential.

“Each individual’s journey to ‘Shinjin’ is different, and I

realized that diverse experiences and practices can transform ‘practical-level Buddhism’ into ‘truth-level Buddhism.’ Having the courage to embrace new practices, even if they are unfamiliar, can be an important step in this journey.

“In conclusion, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made this invaluable experience possible: the Hongwanji, the International Department, the

teachers at BCA and JSIO, and the members of the temples who welcomed us so warmly. Above all, I offer my deepest gratitude to Amida Buddha. Namo Amida Butsu.”

**Rev. Yasutake:**

“Through the International Ministers Orientation Program (IMOP), I truly felt the kindness of the ministers and members. In this program, I was able to visit many temples, and at each temple, all of the members were very welcoming and friendly. Also, all of them talked with me about how the temple and the Jodo Shinshu teaching is great. I like Jodo Shinshu as well as the Shinran Shonin teachings, so it was a very wonderful opportunity for me to talk about these things in English.

“I am impressed how the Nembutsu is spreading overseas. In Japan, our first language or culture is a little different but the Nembutsu ‘Namo Amida Butsu’ is completely the same.

“I have one more month left in the United States, so I would like to share the gratitude for the Dharma with all ministers and members. I would like to rejoice about Amida Buddha and the teachings of Shinran Shonin together.”

## LA Wildfires

Continued from Page 11

West Los Angeles temple’s board of directors planned to discuss other options to aid those in need.

Rev. Ryuta Furumoto, Resident Minister of the Senshin Buddhist Temple, said a few Senshin members had to evacuate from their homes.

Rev. John Iwihara, Resident Minister of the Gardena Buddhist Church, said some Sangha families were assisting families displaced by the fires.

In addition, Rev. Furumoto, Supervising Minister of the Buddhist Church of Santa Barbara and Oxnard Buddhist Temple, reported that a few Oxnard members were affected by the November fire that scorched the foothills of Camarillo.

Gomonshu Kojun Ohtani has expressed his concerns for those who have lost their homes in the Southern District, and the Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan, will be sending over a simple home altar kit for families to use. Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada will be delivering them to those families on behalf of the Gomonshu in the near future.

### Relief Efforts

There has been an outpouring of support for the victims affected by the Palisades and Eaton fires.

Southern District temples are supporting community programs or holding their own events.

Two donation drives were organized in the West Los Angeles and downtown Los

Angeles Little Tokyo communities over the weekend of Jan. 11-12.

Kent Marume, a member of the Vista Buddhist Temple, and his counterpart, Kiyomi Mitsuda, spearheaded the community efforts.

Contributions of water, canned foods, clothing and other disaster relief supplies were received on Jan. 11 at the Venice Japanese Community Center.

On the following day, at the Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple parking lot, similar donations were received with all goods sent to It’s Bigger Than Us Los Angeles, a nonprofit organization aiding fire victims and first responders.

“We received outstanding support from both the West Los Angeles and Little Tokyo communities,” Marume said. “We had community members donating water, non-perishable food, toiletries, hygiene products and clothes the entire duration of both drives.”

According to Marume, donations from the two events totaled approximately 15 pallets worth of goods.

“It was overwhelming to see all the donations. It filled up the lobby area of the (VJCC) gym,” Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple President Tom Nakagiri said.

In San Diego, a campaign to collect monetary and in-kind donations of gift cards was held at its Sunday service on Jan. 12. The temple received over \$3,800 in gifts. The gift cards for grocery stores, Target, Walmart, Home Depot and restaurants were sent to

Pasadena.

“The gift cards were a great idea,” said Rev. Gibbs, San Diego’s Supervising Minister. “I am delivering them along with other supplies and food.”

He noted that PBT has received many donations from the Southern District temples and relief agencies.

“We received a great deal of supplies from Orange County Buddhist Church,” Rev. Gibbs said. “Water, toiletries, clothing and snacks were received, and we have been handing them out to anybody who comes to the temple.

*“It has been very challenging, both emotionally and physically. Yet, experiencing everyone’s selfless action is quite touching. We are stronger together.”*

— Kyoko Gibbs, wife of Pasadena Buddhist Temple Resident Minister Rev. Gregory Gibbs

“We received a lot of gift cards from San Diego and that has been very helpful,” Rev. Gibbs continued. “Families have been grateful to receive gift cards to restaurants, grocery and department stores.”

OCBC President Bryan Furumoto described the damage to the area when supplies were delivered to the Pasadena Temple.

“During our drive, we witnessed some of the extensive damage the neighborhood suffered,” he said. “Upon arrival, we were greeted by grateful Pasadena Sangha members.”

In support of its Sangha and community, the Pasadena

Buddhist Temple established the PBT Eaton Sangha Support Fund.

To date, PBT has reported over \$34,000 in monetary gifts through the GiveButter campaign.

“Our fundraiser for our Sangha support efforts blew past its online goal of \$20,000 in about 72 hours — amazing support,” said Pasadena member Kathy Kumagai.

PBT is also supporting the GoFundMe drives for Sangha members who are in need of assistance.

The fundraising drives

can be found on the PBT website homepage [www.pasadenabuddhisttemple.org/eaton-fire-info.html](http://www.pasadenabuddhisttemple.org/eaton-fire-info.html)

### Looking Ahead

The Pasadena Buddhist Temple has teamed up with Azay restaurant, the Japanese Cultural Institute of Pasadena, Pasadena Nikkei Seniors and the First Presbyterian Church of Altadena to deliver meals and supplies to victims in need.

“Azay, the Japanese French restaurant in Little Tokyo (formerly known as ‘Akira’ in Pasadena), reached out to us in the greater Japanese American communities in the Pasadena and Altadena area to see if

impacted people could have meals,” Kyoko Gibbs said.

Azay, along with the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo, Mutual Trading Company, Fugetsu-Do, a manju confectionery sweet shop and Yama Seafood in San Gabriel, are collaborating with the assistance of preparing foods and delivery.

“Akira Hirose, the former owner of Azay who passed away last year, was always a community supporter, and his family, widow Joann and son Philip, have continued to do so. We are sincerely grateful for their selfless giving,” Kyoko Gibbs added.

The NAACP, which has its Pasadena branch office at the Pasadena Japanese Cultural Institute, is also offering assistance.

“They have kindly offered their relief supplies and two attorneys who have offered their services for free to assist with homeowners’ insurance,” event organizer June Chin said. “It’s very reassuring to be able to reach out to each other, whether it’s a bento or a hug.”

Approximately 470 meals have been prepared for families in Pasadena and Altadena. Volunteers have delivered the meals and other donations, while the Pasadena temple has served as a pickup location.

“It has been very challenging, both emotionally and physically,” Kyoko Gibbs said. “Yet, experiencing everyone’s selfless action is quite touching. We are stronger together.”

*Wheel of Dharma Editor Jon Kawamoto contributed to this article.*



## President's Message

Continued from Page 3

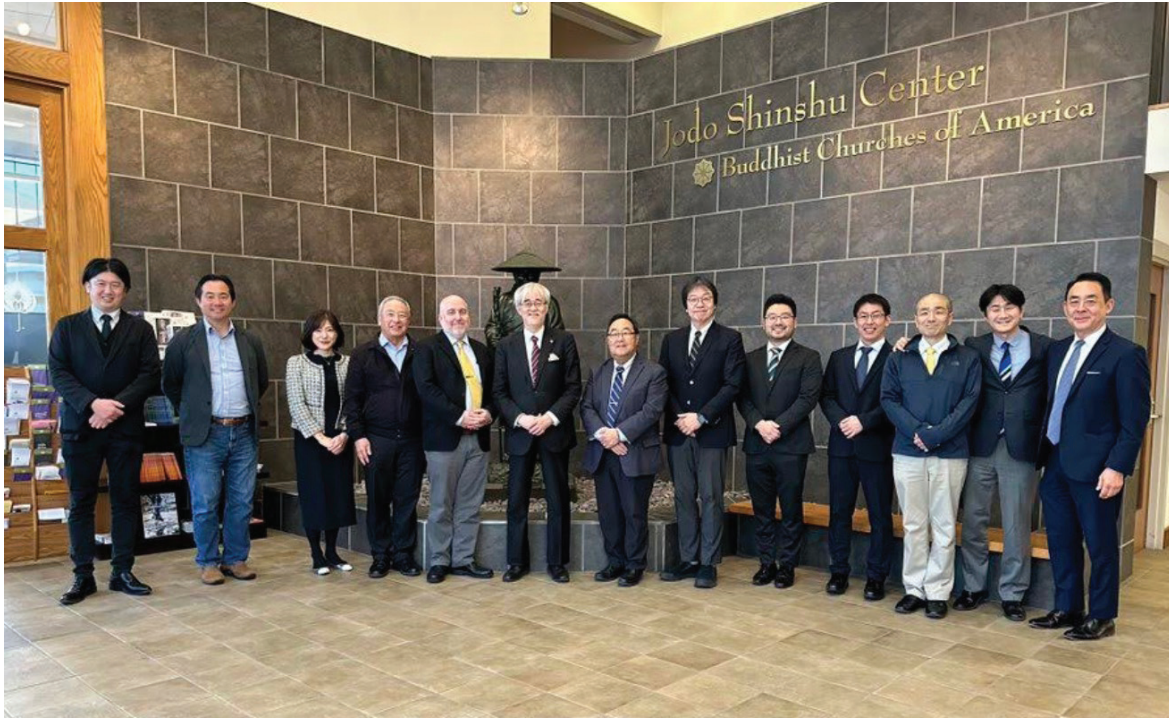
the BCA. As we have 2025 well underway, it is important that we continue to push conversations that seek to find new perspectives on important topics for the future of BCA. I initiated the provocative discussion on "Who Is a BCA member" in the October 2024 issue of the Wheel of Dharma. I hope to continue to revisit this topic and create a platform for everyone to provide input into the discussion in 2025.

Leadership is a second major topic that is key to our future. What is necessary to put in place a program to identify and encourage new leadership at both the local temple level and the national level? This topic is a session at this year's Temple Leaders Workshop. It will also be one of the National Council Meeting workshops on Saturday, Feb. 22.

Lots of questions and experience-sharing from a diverse group of current leaders is the first step. This data gathering will inform strategies that can be initiated to address this need. Part of this discussion is also one about how we can keep youth engaged at temples and churches beyond Jr. YBA. What is the value of BCA youth programs in creating community and connections so that youth want to stay engaged? If we can "crack this nut," we will have set the groundwork for generations of future leaders.

My third challenge topic is how best to use the assets of BCA to generate new revenue sources that support annual operational expenses. A related topic is how ongoing fundraising can set up sustainable revenue sources that support ongoing operations.

Within this "big picture"



Ryukoku University officials and BCA and Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) leaders pose for a group photo in January at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, California. The meeting, facilitated by Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara, was held to discuss goals and topics for the partnership of Ryukoku University with the BCA and IBS. (Courtesy of Ryukoku University)

of better utilization of existing assets and future cash provided through fundraising is the possibility of a more sustainable business model for the BCA that can rely less on temple dues assessments. The answer is not an easy one, but is one that can offer new ways to provide a sustainable and flourishing future for the BCA.

### Strategic Partnerships

January offered the opportunity to affirm strategic partnerships with two key institutions: Ryukoku Uni-

versity and the Institute of Buddhist Studies. We can take for granted the importance of these strategic partnerships, so the opportunity to focus on each within a day of each other was particularly opportune.

A recommitment to the future partnership of the BCA and Ryukoku University and of IBS with Ryukoku took place in a meeting with Ryukoku University leadership at the Jodo Shinshu Center facilitated by Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara.

Ryukoku University Presi-

dent Takashi Irisawa discussed the goals of Ryukoku within the context of the world today where a Jodo Shinshu approach to social justice can help to make a better world for all.

Exchange programs were highlighted as an important way to facilitate cross-cultural and cross-national divides. A commitment to renew both student and faculty exchanges was made by all parties.

President Irisawa and Vice President Dr. Hiroyuki Daimon will be stepping down as of April 2025, so it was an opportunity to recommit to the BCA/IBS-Ryukoku partnership to set the path going forward with new leadership.

In addition to myself, the BCA was represented by Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada and President-elect Glenn Inanaga

with Rev. Michael Endo also helping to make the meeting a success.

President Dr. Scott Mitchell and Dean Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji represented IBS. The meeting culminated in a wonderful Italian dinner hosted by BCA where casual conversation and great wines helped nurture relationships that will portend a strong partnership going into the future.

Following the Ryukoku University summit, IBS held its opening session on the update to the IBS Strategic Plan. Airtime was given to both faculty as well as ex-officio members of the Board of Trustees to articulate their hopes and wishes for the future of IBS.

The discussion offered a platform to explore the historic context of the IBS-BCA relationship; BCA's seminary needs to bring new ministers to find places within the BCA; the future opportunities for academic research and teaching that brings "heart" and "mind" together; and a teaching culture that seeks to equip every student with tools that allow them to pursue their careers with a deep sense of how Shin Buddhism can help the world.

Facilitated by Tom Hayashi, Ph.D. from the Center for Volunteer & Nonprofit Leadership, the daylong discussion, which was followed by a Board of Trustees session, set the groundwork for a robust Strategic Plan update that will continue this spring.

In conclusion, let us remind ourselves of our 2025 BCA Theme, "Gratitude for Our Past and a Vision for Our Future." It is with this theme that we can express our deepest gratitude for all those who have led us to this moment in history while holding the strategic conversations that will move us toward our vision for the future.

## Sacramento 125th

Continued from Page 5

a temple member battling leukemia, and Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer, a Sacramento nonprofit that offered support and comfort to the Imura family during their long hours at the hospital.

With the anniversary banquet just hours away, a group gathered at the temple to await Thull's arrival following his three-and-a-half-day journey, some of it through the pouring rain. Among the

first to greet him were Nathan and his family, parents Aaron and Doreen Imura, younger brother Max, and grandfather Roy Imura, who gave Thull the biggest hug.

"This is about bringing the community together and helping Nathan and his family," said Thull, standing in the church parking lot. "That's what we talk about when we come to the temple — trying to be a better person."

Thull was still in high spirits when he and his wife Alesha arrived at the anniversary celebration as guests of honor.

Who could have imagined a more heartwarming conclusion to the 125th anniversary banquet and celebration! And of course, thank you to the countless temple volunteers and community supporters who brought this momentous event to life.

It was a magical night, said Karen Adachi, finishing her term as President of the Buddhist Church of Sacramento. An anniversary that's sure to be remembered for many things but especially, genuine expressions of Compassion. Culture. Community.

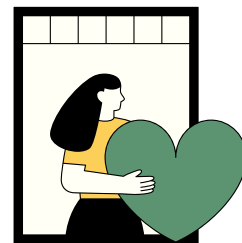
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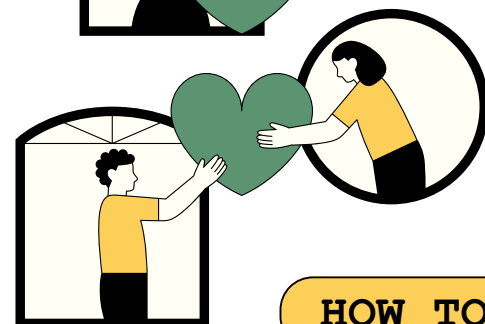
## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRE RELIEF



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# 今月の法話

## 「絵から感じる仏の教え」

フレズノ別院 開教使 中田和朗

よしあしの文字をもしらぬひとはみな  
まことのこころなりけるを  
善悪の字しりがおほ  
おおそらごとのかたちなり

―「正像末和讃」



Rev. Kaz Nakata

赤子として生を受けた当時の私たちは、目もよく見えず、言葉も話せず、考えることもままならないながら、自由を謳歌していた。

その赤子をあやす人は、なんと素直な澄んだ目を持った赤子だろうと、目を細くして微笑んだだろう。私も子供が生まれた際、その目を細めたあやす人であった。開教使として渡米し、22年経った今、改めて親鸞聖人のご和讃を深く読み返してみると、先に挙げた「正像末和讃」の一節に呼びかけられているのを感じずにはいられない。

そういえば、最近、近くのものを見るのに眼鏡を外したり、「あれ、なんていうんだっけ?」と話す言葉を忘れ、忘れた言葉を思い出すこと自体を忘れるに至り、自分の人生が折り返しを過ぎたことを感じさせられる。そういった時間の過ごし方も、日々を大切に生きるという教えが少しずつ身につけてきた証拠かもしれない。

仏さまの教えを学ばば学ばば、仏さまの心からだんだんと遠ざかっているのではないかと、内省し研鑽しているつもりでも、どこかに学んできたこと自体を振り所としていた自分があるような気がして、開教使としても念仏者としてもまだまだ半人前だなぁと思いつつ、今回のお話を書かせていただいている次第です。

さて、昨年3月に縁があつて、中加教区開教使の肩書からフレズノ別院開教使への肩書変更がありました。着任早々、2026年に迎えるフレズノ別院125周年

記念の計画策定に加わり、活発な開教活動を開始しました。その計画については、また縁があれば書かせていただこうかと思えます。それとは別に、フレズノ別院開教使としての最初の大きなプロジェクトの一つが、2022年に完成した本堂の壁に仏教壁画をはめ込むというものでした。

2021年、建設中の本堂の正面玄関側に16枚、左右にそれぞれ16枚、反対側正面に16枚程度の壁画をはめるスペースが設けられ、私自身、正面と左右の壁合わせて48枚の壁画のデザインを担当することとなりました。正面から見て、正面玄関ドアを挟んで左右の2枚の壁画は仏法の象徴である法輪と、浄土真宗本願寺派の宗派紋である下り藤を選定しました。もともとは玄関から左回りにお釈迦様の一生、右回りに親鸞聖人の一生を表した壁画を考えていましたが、お釈迦様の最後の壁画を涅槃の情景にすると、本堂の方角上、涅槃像のお釈迦様が南枕で東を向いて横になられる姿を壁画にするか、北枕のままお釈迦様の後頭部を描いた壁画にしなければならぬということが分かり、急遽、右回りをお釈迦様、左回りを親鸞聖人と変更を加えることで、お釈迦様が北枕で正面西を向いて横たわっている姿の壁画の設置が可能となりました。

お釈迦様といえば、前世を描いたジャータカ物語が有名ですが、今回はコンセプトとして、人間釈尊とその人生に影響を受けた人々というテーマで、浄土真宗でもよく知られている人物たちとの関係性を絡めて制作することになりました。また、お釈迦様の壁画の人物造形設定として、古代ガンダーラ美術を多く収録するペシヤワール博物館やインドのサンチー遺跡に残る古代仏教壁画を中心に本堂壁画の製作に取り掛かっています。



A mural for Fresno Betsuin Hondo

親鸞聖人の一生を壁画にするにあたり、本願寺三世覚如上人がまとめた本願寺聖人伝絵を参考デザインとして、親鸞聖人の一生を描かれた壁画を制作することになりました。その過程で、真宗大谷派と浄土真宗本願寺派の御絵伝に違いがあることを学ばせていた

きました。壁画制作には、地元フレズノに仏画などの製作ができる仏師がおらず、製作委員会が選定された地元の壁画アーティストに制作を依頼することになりました。

壁画アーティストとの初会合の際、親鸞聖人がいつこの国でお生まれになった人物か、法輪が仏教にとっていかに重要なシンボルであるのかを知らないと言き、果たしてこの人に仏教壁画制作ができるだろうか心配しておりましたが、何度かにわたって仏教の歴史と、親鸞聖人の一生とその教えのお話を聞いていただき、徐々に理解が深まったところで、壁画製作が開始されました。



A mural for Fresno Betsuin Hondo

壁画のほとんどとなる材料は、フレズノの気候に合わせて、暑さにも寒さにも強い特殊なコンクリートが採用されました。壁画制作の前段階として、壁画のデザイン画を作成します。御絵伝の中から壁画の枚数に収まる場面を選定し、それぞれの場面描写で特に強調する部分を選び、単色のコンクリート壁画にした際に判別が難しい色のグラデーション表現などを抜いたデザイン画をもとに、コンクリートの型抜き用のエポキシ製の金型を作り、それにコンクリートを流し込んで制作します。

現在のところ、親鸞聖人に関する壁画が4枚、お釈迦様に関する壁画が1枚完成しています。お釈迦様の生涯と親鸞聖人の生涯、それぞれの壁画がバランスよく出来るように、数枚ずつ交互に制作してもらう予定となっております。早ければ来年には完成するのではないかと楽しみにしています。

フレズノ別院では、日曜のダルマスクール以外にも、大人の仏教クラス、子供の仏教クラス、日本語法話会など、毎週浄土真宗の教えを文字を通して学ぶさまざまな勉強会が平日と週末に開催されています。しかし、仏教壁画プロジェクトは、頭で学ぶ教えだけではなく、お釈迦様の生涯を描いた古代仏教壁画を見ながら、よしあしの文字もしらない多くの古代の人たちが、文字を通して

学ぶ教えではなく、どのように仏さまの教えを仏教壁画に描かれた絵から感じていたのかを想像してほしいという願いと、中世の日本で大勢の念仏者が報恩講に詰めかけ、余間に掲げられた御絵伝の掛け軸に目を向けながら在りし日の親鸞聖人のお姿に思いを馳せた情景を、フレズノ別院の本堂壁画となった御絵伝を見ながら想像してほしいという願いを持って制作にいそしんでいます。

皆さまも、完成の暁にはぜひフレズノ別院本堂へお参りに来られることを楽しみにしています。合掌

### 訃報

渡辺博文名譽開教使(86)が1月6日に往生の素懐をこげられた。

渡辺師は1968年に開教使としてシールブルック仏教会に赴任され、1971年からソルトレイク仏教会に駐在された。1982年から96年までサンマテオ仏教会に駐在された後、96年から2004年までBCA総長を務められた。また、IBS(仏教研究所・仏教大学院)所長、メキシコ開教地の監督開教使を歴任され、2004年にBCAを退職された後は、南米開教区の総長を務められた。1月11日にプライベートの葬儀が営まれた。

### ダイヤルザダルマとポッドキャストで聴聞

電話で聴聞ができるプログラム「ダイヤルザダルマ」がポッドキャストでも聞くことができるようになった。(800) 817-7918に電話すると、原田総長の声で音声ガイドが始まる。英語の法話を聞きたい人は1を、日本語は2、スペイン語は3を押すと、それぞれの言語で約5分間の法話を聴聞できる。英語は原田総長のメッセージ、日本語は日本語スピーカーの開教使によるメッセージ、スペイン語は英語のメッセージをスペイン語に訳したものになっている。法話は毎週水曜日午後11時更新される予定。

ポッドキャストで聴聞したい方は、BCAのウェブサイトに<https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/podcasts>やスマートフォンのポッドキャストアプリなどで聞くことができる。(ポッドキャストの使用方法が分からない方は、みなさんのお寺の開教使に聞いてみてください。)

# 法輪

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二〇二五年度  
教化標語  
「過去へ感謝、  
未来へ歩む」

### あの記事をもう一度!

法輪のバックナンバーがBCA  
ウェブサイトにて読めます。  
<http://buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/about-us/wheel-of-dharma>

## 総長メッセージ

### 思いやりと支援の気持ちで

米国仏教団総長 原田 マービン



Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada

1月上旬に、ロサンゼルス近郊で恐ろしい山火事が発生しました。その状況をテレビで目の当たりにし、目が離せない日々を過ごしてきました。命が失われ、数千もの家屋、オフィス、学校、教会、シナゴークが被害を受け、言葉では表せないほど悲惨な状況となりました。

この山火事はパサデナ仏教会の近くまで迫ってきましたが、幸いにも火災を免れることができました。けれども、パサデナ仏教会や他の南部教区のお寺の会員の中には、家を失った方々もおられました。

避難することを余儀なくされ、大切な自宅を失われた方は、たいへん悲しい思いをされたことでしょう。BCAを代表して、このたびの災害にあわれた皆さまに、心からのお見舞いを申し上げます。一日も早く平穏な日々を取り戻されることを念じています。

私は、家を失うとはどのようなことを考えました。私たちにとって家とは、安心と安全を与えてくれる場所です。旅行から戻ると、『オズの魔法使い』のドロシーが言うように、誰もが「やっぱり我が家が一番」と思います。家は快適で特別です。心地よいベッドで眠り、テレビの前でお気に入りの椅子やソファに座り、お気に入りのコーヒーカープやワイングラスで飲み物を飲みます。色あせて伸びてしまったけれど、リラックスできる古いTシャツやスウェットシャツを着て、愛用のスリッパを履きます。猫や犬などペットも家の中を自由に動き回ります。暖炉の上には大切な思い出の品が飾られ、廊

下や壁には家族写真が飾られています。子どもたちの幼少期から結婚式の写真、さらには孫やひ孫の写真まで飾られています。

そうした思い出や記念品を失うことは、自分の過去や歴史、そして人生の一部を失うことに等しいです。その悲しみは計り知れません。もし自分が家を失ったらと考えるとき、その感情を山火事の被害にあわれた方々の体験に重ね、より深く心が痛みます。

私たちが家やその中に詰まった人生の記憶を失った方に、どのような言葉をかければよいのでしょうか。

私の心に浮かぶのは、「七転八起」という日本のことわざです。大きな試練や損失、悲劇に直面しても、困難に思えても、再び立ち上がらなければならない、という意味です。

仏教は、私たちの人生が決して一人で成り立つものではないと教えています。毎日、無数の因縁によって支えられているのです。家族、友人、先生、同僚、隣人、見知らぬ人々、私たちが食べる食べ物、吸う空気、飲む水など、私たちの生活は常に「他者」によって支えられています。それは大きな悲劇に直面したときでも変わりません。私たちは決して一人ではないのです。無数の因縁が、乗り越えられないように思える困難の中でも私たちを支えてくれます。

数年前、コロラド州のロングモント仏教会を訪れたとき、会員の方が近隣の地域を案内してくださいました。コロラド州史上最悪の火災であるマーシャル火災によって広大な住宅地が焼失した地域に連れて行ってくれたのですが、そこでは数多くの家が再建されている光景を目にしました。壊滅的な被害を受けた地域が復興している様子を見て心強く感じました。しばらくすれば、ロサンゼルス近郊の山火事で被害にあった地域にも家々が再建され、復興していくことでしょう。

私たちの支援の思いが被害に会われた方々に届き、再び起きあがる力になることを念じています。

## 東部地区大会、5年ぶりの対面での開催



Eastern District Conference at Ekoji

10月18日から3日間、バージニア州の恵光寺にて、東部地区大会が開催された。2019年にミネソタ州ツインシティ仏教会での開催を最後に、コロナ禍ではオンラインでのみ開催されてきたが、今回は5年ぶりの対面でもオンラインでも参加ができるハイブリッド形式で行われた。

この東部地区大会の歴史は、1946年にさかのぼる。ミシシッピ川よりも東側に位置する北米開教区の寺院、サンガ6ヶ寺を中心に、大谷派のシカゴ仏教会、カナダ開教区よりトロント仏教会なども参加して毎年開催されてきた。今年のテーマは「感謝は時を超えて」。基調講演にIBS仏教学院のプレゼンント、スコット・ミッチェル師を迎え、昨年出版された『The Making of American Buddhism』(アメリカ仏教の形成)をもとに、アメリカにおける仏教の歴史、特に北米の日系人の歴史と浄土真宗の発展について講演があり、多くの質問もある中、浄土真宗の教えも取り上げてこられた先達方のご苦労を偲んだ。また赤星引退開教使による「感謝」についてのワークショップ、宮村ロン引退開教使、中井パティ引退開教使による法話を各勤行の後にいただいた。恵光寺の東部では最も有名な和太鼓のグループ、念太鼓についてのプレゼンテー

ション、宿泊先のホテルではブックディスプレイ等も行われ深夜遅くまで話に花が咲いた。また、仏壇ワークショップでは、事前に準備された仏壇キットを組み立てて、自分仕様の自宅用の仏壇作成を楽しんだ。

対面参加が約70名、オンライン参加を含めると約100名の参加者があり、絆を深め再会を誓った。東部地区大会は、今後も北米開教区の他地区やカナダ開教区の仏教会などにも幅広く声をかけ、80年の歴史あるイベントを守ることで同意。今後も多くの参加者が期待される。(記事、ツインシティサンガ、ブライ鬼倉千永美開教使補)

## LA近郊の山火事の被災者への寄付

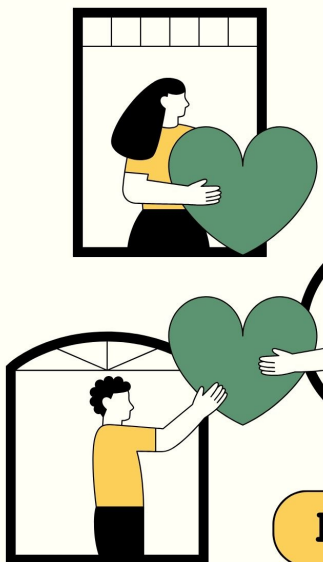
1月初旬にロサンゼルス近郊で発生した山火事により、多くの住宅や建物が被害を受けました。火災の影響を受けた地域には、パサデナ仏教会やウエストロサンゼルス仏教会の会員も含まれており、中には自宅を失い支援を必要としている方々もおられます。

この状況を受け、BCAソーシャルウェルフェアコミッティーは、BCAの寺院や会員が被災者を支援できるように、寄付を募っています。支援を希望される方は、BCAのウェブサイト (<https://bca.kindful.com/>) にアクセスし、「Disaster Relief (Southern California Wildfire Relief)」を選択すると、寄付を行うことができます。皆さまの温かいご支援をようしくお願いいたします。

## 南カリフォルニア山火事災害基金

米国仏教団社会福祉委員会

山火事の被害を受けた方々を支援し、南部教区の寺院会員と地域支援活動をサポートしましょう!



HOW TO HELP!

GO TO [BCA.KINDFUL.COM](https://bca.kindful.com/) AND SELECT "SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRE RELIEF"

