



WHEEL OF DHARMA

Official Publication of the Buddhist Churches of America



Roy Imura congratulates Fresno Betsuin ultramarathoner David Thull moments after Thull completed a 200-mile run from the Fresno Betsuin to the Sacramento Betsuin on Nov. 23. Thull's run raised funds for Imura's grandson, Nathan, who is battling leukemia, and the nonprofit supporting the Imura family. Nathan is shown in between his grandfather and Thull, while his father Aaron and mother Doreen look on. Below, Thull and wife Alisha pose with the celebratory cake. (Courtesy of Sandra Kataoka-Fong)

Mission Completed: '200 Miles of Compassion'

Fresno Member Raises \$44K for Sacramento Teen With Leukemia, NorCal Nonprofit

By Jon Kawamoto
Wheel of Dharma Editor

Fresno Betsuin ultramarathoner David Thull completed a 200-mile run from Fresno to Sacramento on Nov. 23, an inspirational effort that raised over \$44,000 for a 13-year-old Sacramento Betsuin member fighting leukemia.

Thull's journey, which began Nov. 20, encountered setbacks, including the chilly and rainy bomb cyclone that drenched Northern California. And he had to forgo his initial plans to visit



Northern California BCA temples in Florin, Lodi, Stockton and Walnut Grove.

But Thull persevered and kept his eyes on the goal — the finish line at the Buddhist Church of Sacramento.

His long-distance run also benefited Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer, the Northern California nonprofit supporting the Imura family. The GoFundMe drive was officially called "200 Miles of Compassion." The Sacramento Betsuin will keep the GoFundMe campaign open

Continued on Page 10

New Year's Greeting From Gomonshu Kojun Ohtani

Happy New Year! At the beginning of the New Year, I would like to extend my warm regards to you all.

As in previous years, many people throughout the world have been affected by natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, and forest fires. I would like to offer my deepest condolences to all who have perished in those calamities. I would also like to express my sympathies to those who are still coping with the dire situations. It is my sincere hope that all who have been affected



Monshu Kojun Ohtani

Continued on Page 6

Post-Election Realization: 'We've Been Here Before'

Editor's note: Sydney Shiroyama, a Minister's Assistant at the Palo Alto Buddhist Temple, wrote this article for the PABT newsletter. The Wheel of Dharma is reprinting it with her permission.

By Sydney Shiroyama
Palo Alto Buddhist Temple



Sydney Shiroyama

On the 11th day of every month, the Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice group has an event called "Peaceful Presence." This event features speakers and rituals from various faith traditions on topics related to peace and justice.

Continued on Page 14

Dharma Forward Funds New BCA Audiobook

By Carl Yanari
Palo Alto Buddhist Temple

Did you ever want to read a book, but didn't have time to read? Are you tired of listening to the same playlists and podcasts during your commute? Would you like to listen to the Dharma on a day other than Sunday? We may have an answer for you.

There is a growing demand for audiobooks today as people have less time to read a book. Audiobooks allow people to mul-

FYI

To order the "Crossing Over" audiobook, go to: bit.ly/3ZlptC1

titask. Audiobooks also allow the visually impaired access to books they wouldn't normally have. Audiobooks also add texture to a story as the text is brought to life by the narrator.

Frequently, audiobook selec-

Continued on Page 13



The Midwest Buddhist Temple celebrated its 80th anniversary on Nov. 10 in Chicago. See story on Page 5. (Courtesy of Joy Fujishima Zavala)



BISHOP'S MESSAGE

Gratitude for Our Past – and a Vision for Our Future



By Rev. Marvin Harada
Bishop of the BCA

This year, we will culminate the BCA's 125-year anniversary.

During the past year, we had so many meaningful events and observances, such as the commemorative service on Sept. 1 at our historical first church in the BCA, the Buddhist Church of San Francisco. We were able to have a video message from Rev. Yoshiki Sonoda, the great-grandson of our first BCA minister, Rev. Shuye Sonoda. We had a dynamic and meaningful service led by our BCA ministers, and a Dharma message by Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto. The service was followed by a fun and amazing telethon, conceived by Koichi Mizushima and

Michiko Inanaga, that raised \$50,000 for our BCA.

Nearly every district in our BCA has had its own commemorative 125th anniversary service and I have been fortunate to have participated in those services.

the Southern District conference in San Diego.

In observing our anniversary celebrations, we are truly grateful for our past, for our pioneering ministers and members who established, built and supported our BCA

will continue and we might fade away into the sunset.

Or we can look to our future with a sense of vision, a sense of aspiration, a sense of conviction to do our part, to "make" our future possible, to "make" the fulfillment of our vision possible.

I see a future in which many will come to discover our unique tradition of Shin Buddhism, a path of gratitude, a path of listening to the Dharma, a path of deep self-introspection, a path of being a part of a warm and embracing Sangha, a path of being engaged with our community and with the struggles of all human beings.

We can be like a turtle and recede into our shell, or we can be like a bird in flight, sustained by the winds of our predecessors, but moving forward into the future with earnest energy.

We hear this stated often, but more than ever, our future depends on us right now. We can grow our sanghas. There are many who are searching for a teaching that resonates with them, for a Sangha that accepts and embraces them, for a place to call their spiritual home.

In 2025, I would like to focus on our future and our vision for the future. How do we see our churches, temples, and the BCA 125 years from now? We could have a bleak and negative view and think that our membership decline will continue, and we might fade away into the sunset. Or we can look to our future with a sense of vision, a sense of aspiration, a sense of conviction to do our part, to "make" our future possible, to "make" the fulfillment of our vision possible.

We have had unique and innovative events such as the Techno Hoyo service that was mesmerizing with its lights, sounds and dynamic beat. We were also moved by the musical theater expression of our 125-year history by the Grateful Crane Ensemble at the National Council Meeting in Sacramento, at the FBWA conference in San Jose and at

churches, temples and sanghas for these past 125 years. All of you today are a vital part of that, as we look to the future.

In 2025, I would like to focus on our future and our vision for the future. How do we see our churches, temples and the BCA 125 years from now? We could have a bleak and negative view and think that our membership decline

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Holidays, Rituals and the Nembutsu



By Rev. Nariaki Hayashi
Tri-State/Denver Buddhist Temple

There are many different kinds of holidays that we celebrate throughout the year.

For example, there are the national holidays such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January, Memorial Day in May, Thanksgiving in November, and so on.

We also have international holidays such as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, International Women's Day, World Day of Social Justice, etc.

There are also daily holidays. Some are steeped in tradition while others may be wacky, unique or otherwise simply different holidays.

For example, we have a holiday called "National Underwear Day" on Aug. 5 which is the day when you have to wear your favorite underwear.

We also have "Left Handers Day" on Aug. 13 when the lefties celebrate their own special day and complain about the world that is mainly built for right-handed people.

It is said that right-handed people operate in the left side of the brain and the left-handed people use the right side

so only left-handed people are in their "right mind." On this holiday, the left handers certainly earn their right to have a day dedicated to them.

Finally, there are religious holidays such as Easter, Ramadan, Hanukkah, Hanamatsuri, etc.

In this way, there are a lot of holidays that are celebrated throughout the world. Their reason, time, and the way they celebrate may differ from culture to culture, religion to religion, but what is common among most holidays is that they are celebrated annually. Therefore, celebrating holidays is a custom for most of us.

The holidays provide us a moment to take a break, but some of them also allow us to come together to feel the interconnectedness. When holidays have a strong tradition of doing certain things, you know many others are probably doing

it as well. Even if you are far away from your parents, children or friends you know they are doing the same thing and so you are connected to them.

This is true of any religious rituals as well. In the case of the Jewish people, when they celebrate Pesach, they are connected to all other Jewish people throughout the world. When Muslims pray to Mecca, at that point, they are connected to all other Muslims everywhere.

Such a religious ritual in our tradition of Shin Buddhism is the Nembutsu, reciting Namu Amida Butsu, which is the name of Amida Buddha, the Buddha central to Pure Land Buddhism.

When we recite the Nembutsu simultaneously and blend our voices together

Continued on Page 8

Ministerial Assignments

The Office of the BCA Bishop has made the following ministerial assignments:

Rev. Yushi Mukojima, Resident Minister of the Mountain View Buddhist Temple, was appointed as Supervising Minister for the Monterey Peninsula Buddhist Temple, Buddhist Temple of Salinas and Watsonville Buddhist Temple, effective July 1, 2024.

Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji, Resident Minister of the Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church and Dean of the IBS, has gone from 50% Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church minister and 50% IBS to 25% SACBC and 75% IBS after his appointment as Dean at IBS.

Rev. Landon Yamaoka will serve as a part-time Kyoshi minister at the Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church and will train under Rev. Dr. Miyaji on conducting funerals and memorials at SACBC.

Rev. Melissa Opel was granted Kaikyoshi status by the Hongwanji-ha on Oct. 17, 2024. Rev. Opel will be appointed Kaikyoshi of the Buddhist Church of San Francisco, effective Dec. 1, 2024.

Rev. Henry Adams, Supervising Minister of the Buddhist Church of San Francisco, concluded this assignment on Nov. 30, 2024.



Wheel
of Dharma

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

BCA National Headquarters
1710 Octavia Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
Tel: (415) 776-5600
Fax: (415) 771-6293

www.BuddhistChurchesOfAmerica.org
Email: WODeditor@bcahq.org

Wheel of Dharma (USPS 017-700) is published monthly by Buddhist Churches of America, 1710 Octavia St., San Francisco, CA 94109-4341. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WHEEL OF DHARMA, 1710 Octavia St., San Francisco, CA 94109-4341. Subscription free to BCA temple members; \$12.00 annual subscription for nonmembers.

Submission Guidelines: Articles should be around 500 words, typed, double-spaced in Microsoft Word. The editors may ask for longer articles, or split in multiple parts at the editors' discretion. Documents should be sent as an email attachment to WODeditor@bcahq.org. Please include the article's author or contact, temple, and suggested title. Images, preferably in color, must be submitted as 300 dpi JPEG or TIFF in separate attachments and never embedded in a Word document. PDF is not preferred. The editors reserve the right to crop images and to edit articles. Articles and news releases are reviewed for publication on the 10th of every month.

Change of address and subscription cancellations: Individuals may mail, email, fax or phone in change of address requests and subscription cancellations to the BCA National Headquarters at the address above. Please include the following: Subscriber's name (as written on current subscription); address currently being used; New address and/or name changes; requested action (e.g. change of address, name, subscription cancellation, etc.); phone and/or email of person requesting the change; date of request. Please allow up to 8 weeks for changes to take effect. BCA local temples should send update requests as usual.

WHEEL OF DHARMA POLICY

HARDCOPY PUBLICATION LICENSE: Authors who submit articles for publication in the Wheel of Dharma ("WOD") thereby grant WOD a royalty-free non-exclusive paid up license, worldwide, in perpetuity and in all media (the "License") to use, edit, and republish the article(s) and to grant sublicenses to any third party to do so on the same terms. WOD grants third parties an identical License to republish its articles so long as the article(s) is republished in its entirety, without edit, providing credit to the WOD and the Buddhist Churches of America.

ONLINE PUBLICATION LICENSE: Authors who submit articles for publication in the Wheel of Dharma online ("WOD") thereby grant WOD a royalty-free non-exclusive paid up license, worldwide, in perpetuity and in all media (the "License") to use, edit, and republish the article(s) and to grant sublicenses to any third party to do so on the same terms. WOD grants third parties an identical License to republish only the first three paragraphs of any article, without edit, providing credit to the WOD and the Buddhist Churches of America, including a hyperlink to the article in WOD.

Editor:

Jon Kawamoto

Editor, Japanese Section:

Rev. Ryuta Furumoto

Print Production:

Jeffrey Kimoto



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year!

明けましておめでとうございます。
 去年色々お世話になり、今年もどうぞよろしく
 お願いいたします。

*Akemashite omedetoh gozaimasu.
 Kyonen, iriro osewani nari; kotoshi mo douzo
 yoroshiku onegai itashimasu.*

By **Steven Terusaki**
 BCA President

125-year history of the Buddhist Churches of America and captures the fundamental aspect of our Shin Buddhist practice of “Living a Life of Gratitude.”

Happy New Year!
 I wanted to start this article with traditional Japanese New Year's greetings — My congratulations on the opening of this new year, offering my deepest appreciation for all the support that was received last year while looking forward in this new year with deepest gratitude and appreciation for continuing support.

For this article, I am repurposing my 2025 greeting that was published in the 2025 BCA Calendar. If you haven't received your calendar at your local temple or church, and if it's not available, please let BCA know. This year's calendar celebrates each of the BCA temples and sanghas with pictures that capture the vibrancy of our national organization. I quote from my calendar message:

The BCA theme for 2025 is “Gratitude for Our Past and a Vision for Our Future.” It is so apt at this point in the



BCA President Steven Terusaki and BCA Minister Emeritus Rev. Dr. Kenji Akahoshi are all smiles at the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) 75th anniversary on Nov. 16 at the BCA's Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, California. (Courtesy of Mark Shigenaga).

“Let us welcome 2025 with gratitude for the life we live as Shin Buddhists. We share the unique teachings of Shinran Shonin and the infinite wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha. What more might we cherish?”

The year 2025 culminates the 125th year of the Buddhist

Churches of America. As we look to the past, we are grateful for all the causes and conditions that have allowed the BCA to have persevered despite the challenges and hurdles that were forced upon our BCA leaders. We are deeply indebted to those ministers and lay leaders whose

conviction and dedication to the Dharma have been the source of strength for our Shin Buddhist tradition. Through their efforts, tens of thousands of Jodo Shinshu followers and many beyond our sanghas have heard the Nembutsu teachings and have found comfort in the sustaining power of Amida Buddha's wisdom and compassion.

The year 2025 is also the year in which we look forward to the future of the BCA and Shin Buddhism in the United States and throughout the Western world. We sit at the unique nexus where Shin Buddhist values and principles offer America an option to the divisive and hateful rhetoric heightened in the 2024 election cycle. Our Jodo Shinshu tradition offers an alternative: an inclusive and compassionate approach to discourse bringing equanimity and understanding to a community that embraces everyone.

In 2025, let us look to our

Continued on Page 13

How to Donate Directly From an IRA

Editor's note: The Wheel of Dharma is reprinting this article, which appeared in the Buddhist Church of San Francisco newsletter in November 2024. Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) can be used for charitable contributions to qualified nonprofits like the BCA. For more information, contact Michiko Inanaga at minanaga@bcqh.org



By **Gary Kitahata**
 Buddhist Church of San Francisco

can reduce your tax bill by donating a portion of your RMD directly to nonprofits as Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs). One Buddhist Church of San Francisco (BCSF) donor recently made a significant gift by directing his brokerage firm to donate directly to BCSF from his IRA. BCSF donors also used QCDs for annual BCSF membership and Oseibo donations.

The downside to using QCDs for charitable gifts is that you cannot claim the donations as charitable deductions. However, this may not be a concern if you take the standard deduction like the vast majority of taxpayers, instead of claiming itemized deductions.

The current deadline for making your first RMD is April 1 of the year following your 73rd birthday. This is the legal deadline, but for most people, it is best to take your first RMD in the calendar year of your 73rd birthday rather than waiting until the allowable April 1 deadline of the next calendar year.

Delaying your first RMD to the calendar year after your 73rd birthday may put you in the position of having to take two RMDs in the same tax year, given that Dec. 31 is the deadline for your second and all subsequent RMDs.

Keeping track of RMD payment deadlines is important because failure to withdraw the required RMD by the due date means the

I was born in the middle of the Baby Boom, the period after World War II between 1946 and 1964.

Boomers of my age must comply with a federal law that requires a certain level of mandatory withdrawals from tax-deferred retirement accounts like IRAs, starting at age 73. These withdrawals are called Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) and are counted as taxable income.

If you plan to make charitable contributions, you

Continued on Page 4



Approximately 100 Jr. YBA members from throughout California and Oregon attended the Central California Jr. YBA's 64th annual conference at the Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple on Nov. 9. (Courtesy of Glenn Nakamichi)

CC Jr. YBA Hosts 64th Conference

By **Izumi Ryan**
 and **Jackson Hashimoto**
 Central California Jr.
 YBA Conference Co-chairs

On Nov. 9, the Central California (CC) Jr. YBA hosted the 64th annual conference at the Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple.

The CC Jr. YBA conferences are a fun opportunity for eighth-through-12th-grade Jodo Shinshu Buddhists from around the BCA to connect and learn through Buddhism.

Ninety-seven delegates and 13 CC Jr. YBA members and two CC Jr. YBA alums from Fresno and Reedley participated in this year's conference.

Delegates came from Berkeley Ohtani, Berkeley Sangha, Mountain View, Oregon, Oxnard, Palo Alto,

Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Sentshin in Los Angeles and Stockton.

This year's theme was “BEND: Balance Every New Day,” inspired by Nickelodeon's animated series “Avatar: The Last Airbender.” We chose this theme because practicing balance from managing responsibilities to relationships can help to maximize fulfillment in everyday life.

Our conference consisted of morning service and the keynote presentation, followed by a group picture taken by Nakamichi Photography, an icebreaker for groups to get to know each other, workshops, lunch and a talent show, closing remarks, shaved ice, dinner, slideshow, dessert and a dance.

We were honored to have Center for Buddhist Edu-

cation Youth Coordinator Koichi Mizushima as our keynote speaker this year. He gave an amazing talk on how maintaining balance in life can come from having a flexible perspective.

With the help of Sangha members and parents from Reedley and Fresno temples, we designed four workshops aligned with the theme. Our onigiri workshop involved participants creating onigiri based on taste and creativity with a variety of traditional and nontraditional fillings.

We included a tai chi workshop as a way to illustrate how balancing daily life can be different for everyone. For example, it can be balancing or stretching one's perspective mentally, and or physically.

In addition, we included

Continued on Page 13



Keiro members of the Placer Buddhist Church were honored with a Nov. 10 party. It was the first Keiro celebration at Placer since 2018 because of the pandemic. (Courtesy of Hiroshi Matsuda)

Placer Honors Keiro Members With Party

Event Is Held for 39 People After Six-Year Hiatus

By Claudia Nakata and Linda Dickerson
Placer Buddhist Church

After a six-year hiatus, Placer Buddhist Church (PBC) honored its Keiro members with a Nov. 10 party filled with good friends, good food and wonderful entertainment.

The previous Keiro celebration was held in 2018 before the pandemic.

The weather was perfect. Keiro members were greeted with a corsage or boutonniere before they entered the Hon-do.

Minister's Assistant Koichi Mizushima from the Buddhist Church of Sacra-

mento officiated the November Shutsuki Hoyo service, reminding us how connected we all are in this busy world.

Before the service ended, the 39 Keiro members posed for a photo in front of the Onaijin. It was heartwarming to see our seniors greeting each other as they moved into position, as some members hadn't seen each other in years.

Following the service, guests picked up name tags to hold their seats at a table. Bar service was available and champagne and apple cider were provided. Nob Nimura led the room in a toast. Allan Yamashiro introduced each Keiro member by name, with the audience clapping and cheering. Each Keiro member also received a special manju package and many enjoyed having their individual and family photos taken by Hiro-

shi Matsuda.

While everyone enjoyed the delicious buffet provided by Jing Jing Chinese in Rocklin, we were treated to a wonderful show featuring Mizushima, his daughter Ellie and his father Henry. This talented trio delighted the crowd with their songs, offered in both English and Japanese.

Attendees reported how much they enjoyed the party. It took some coaxing and logistics to get so many Keiro members to attend, and the efforts were well worth it.

The decision to bring back this Keiro Kai party was accomplished with an enthusiastic committee. With much gratitude, it was an honor to celebrate our oldest church members who volunteered countless hours to make Placer Buddhist Church what it is today.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the BCA Music Committee started a periodic newsletter in January 2023?

The latest December 2024 Music Committee newsletter features articles about Midwest

Buddhist Temple taiko history and musicians, the Northwest District Buddhist Convention and new gatha compositions.

Find it online on the BCA Music webpage: www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/music

Kitahata

Continued from Page 3

amount not withdrawn is subject to a 25% excise tax (can be lowered to a 10% excise tax if RMD is withdrawn correctly within two years).

It is important to consult with your accountant or financial adviser about making charitable gifts from IRAs

because tax rules change constantly and can be difficult to understand.

Rules differ for account holders and their beneficiaries regarding withdrawals from traditional IRAs, SIMPLE, SEP, Roth, 401(k) and 403(b) accounts. For example, RMDs from 401(k) or 403(b) accounts can be Qualified Charitable Distributions only if the funds are rolled over from

these accounts to an IRA.

Gary Kitahata is a BCSF member and a BCA Endowment Foundation (BCAEF) board member who enjoys managing his retirement portfolio. He has no formal training in personal finance and firmly cautions readers to check with their own professional advisers to determine the best course of action for their situation.

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>



WINTER PACIFIC SEMINAR

Southern District Ministers Association
Center for Buddhist Education

Title

Issues In Jodo Shinshu
Heterodoxy
浄土真宗における異安心

Presenters

Rev Marvin Harada
Rev Dr Takashi Miyaji
Rev Dr Mutsumi Wondra
Rev Kiyonobu Kuwahara

Individual Reg

<https://tinyurl.com/WPSindividual>

Group Reg

<https://tinyurl.com/WPSgroupreg>

Reg \$30 Bento \$15

When

Jan 25, 2025
9am - 1pm

Where

-Orange County
Buddhist Church
909 S Dale Ave,
Anaheim, CA 94804

-YOUTUBE LIVE

Questions?

cbe@bcahq.org

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>



Midwest Buddhist Temple (MBT) members fill the temple's Social Hall for the 80th anniversary celebration on Nov. 10. Below, at left, Dharma School students give a speech about the temple's history. Below center engraved ohashi are given as commemorative gifts. Below right, MBT Board of Trustees President Jason Matsumoto was among the inspirational speakers. (Photos courtesy of Joy Fujishima Zavala)



Midwest Buddhist Temple Celebrates 80th Anniversary

By Joy Fujishima Zavala
Midwest Buddhist Temple

In early 2024, the Midwest Buddhist Temple (MBT) Events Committee was given the task of planning for the 125th BCA and 80th MBT anniversaries.

The scheduled main event was the celebration that was held on Sunday, Nov. 10. The menu and program were the culmination of ideas discussed during our meetings (many on Zoom). Our theme was “Gratitude for MBT Sangha — Past and Present.”

We were very fortunate to have our Dharma School students participate in the celebration. They helped with decorating the tables with vases filled with flowers, napkins with ohashi (chopsticks), candles with battery lights and photographs from long ago to present. They also assisted with adding the engraved ohashi to origami covers and, on the day of the celebration, handed them out to all attendees. We hope these small gifts will bring back wonderful memories of

our celebration in the years to come.

Three of the older Dharma School students gave a speech about the amazing history of the Midwest Buddhist Temple. The Dharma School parents jumped in where needed, providing breaks for many who had been working.

Our extensive menu included a wide range from comfort food — okazu (meat and vegetarian versions) — to other typical Japanese fare, including onigiri, inari sushi, tofu, somen salad, tsukemono and rice, and raw veggies and dip. Sushi from Kamehachi was a special treat, and desserts were donated by many of the attendees.

We are so fortunate to have Allison Hagio as our very talented artist who created MBT's 80th anniversary logo. She said the inspiration for the “80” came from the screens on each side of the Onajin in the Hondo. T-shirts and tote bags with the beautiful logo are still available for sale.

Posing under a banner with our 80th anniversary logo, attendees had their photos taken

before lining up for food.

Inspiring speeches were given by Jennifer Toguri and Dharma School students and MBT's Board of Trustees President Jason Matsumoto. Rev. Todd Tsuchiya had people raise their hands if they were involved in the many events, groups and programs at MBT, showing how we have all participated and contributed in some way throughout the years.

And, as everyone enjoyed their meal and socialized, a slide show played on a loop. Another shorter slide show was shown near the end of our program as everyone enjoyed their desserts.

A message from Rev. Gyosho Kono — the nephew of MBT's founding minister, Rev. Gyodo Kono, and a minister at Sairinji Temple — was especially touching. As he spoke in Japanese, the translation in English appeared as subtitles. Thanks to Carl and Harumi Ichikawa for obtaining and providing the video and translation.

Over the last 80 years, we have had many ministers — 14 — who have served our

temple. We put the Sangha to the test with a game displaying photos of the ministers and having everyone try to match the pictures with their names. There was one clear winner, Carol Baba, who named all 14 ministers and even corrected a name (Rev. Masaaki was missing his last name — Yamamoto — which she filled in). Since Carol is the daughter of the late Amy Katahira, a Nisei and MBT pianist for many years, it was fitting that she probably knew many of them.

Also, four of our Dharma School students guessed them all correctly — although they may have had a peek at the photos on the wall by the north entrance. All five won gift cards, and we thank everyone who participated.

Another game had us guessing four gathas with one of our pianists, Christina Szabo, playing a few notes and slowly adding more. The list of gathas was on the screen and people yelled out the name of the song (like contestants do on the TV shows “Name That Tune” or “Beat Shazam”). If correct, everyone sang it with the words

appearing on the screen. It was fun to sing the songs most of us already knew from our Sunday School days.

We are grateful to everyone who helped to make the celebration a success. As Jason Matsumoto pointed out in his speech, there was an entire page full of names of those who helped in all aspects of our special event. Planning, arranging flowers, food, helping in the kitchen, sharing speeches, emceeing, making slide shows, program help, donating desserts, gift organization and distribution, and arranging historical photos were all important aspects of the celebration.

There are too many people to thank individually but we appreciated Grady Hutt's strong and commanding voice, making him a great choice as our emcee. We also thank Taryn Hutt's behind-the-scenes compilation of the slide shows with photos our members sent to her along with music accompaniment. This was tedious work with so many photos, but it was nice to

Continued on Page 13



Meet Dr. Paula Arai, IBS Eshinni and Kakushinni Professor

She Is Supporting, Encouraging Students to Pursue Non-Traditional, Creative Ways

By Rev. Gesshin Greenwood
Communications and
Admissions Director
Institute of Buddhist Studies

FYI

To donate to the IBS Eshinni and Kakushinni Chair, please visit: <https://www.shin-ibs.edu/eshinni/>. Check donations, made payable to the Institute of Buddhist Studies, can be sent to: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, Office of Development, 2140 Durant Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704.

I remember the first time I spoke at length with Dr. Paula Arai — it was at the retirement dinner this past year for Dr. Richard Payne, the former Dean of the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS).

By chance, she sat at my table, and after introductions and toasts, she began excitedly sharing a new project she was working on: inviting Buddhist women to create images of female Buddhas.

“Because all of the images are usually of men,” she explained. “And even when there are women, it’s so rare. How many images are there of Eshinni? Maybe two?”

Her excitement was contagious, and soon all the women at the table were sharing stories of their own practices and experiences as Buddhist women.

I’m not easily influenced, so I was surprised that when I got home that night, I started creating images of female Buddhas myself. Younger women, white American women who looked like me. It was as if Dr. Arai’s enthusiasm and sincerity had planted a seed in me and watered it enough to grow into something I had to express.

IBS is fortunate to have Dr. Arai as our current Eshinni and Kakushinni Professor of Women and Buddhist Studies, where she continues to touch and inspire students in the same way she inspired me. But what exactly is the Eshinni and Kakushinni Professor of Women and Buddhist Studies?

Most funding at universities and graduate schools come from endowments, which are essentially large investments made up of philanthropic gifts. Schools withdraw a small percentage each year to support faculty salaries and other expenses. A professorial

chair is a permanently funded position at a university or college, supported by the income from a dedicated endowment. The Eshinni and Kakushinni Professor of Women and Buddhist Studies is one such chair, funding the salary of Dr. Arai and other such expenses.

Established in November 2020 by IBS, with the BCA Federation of Buddhist Women’s Associations (FBWA) as founding donors, this professorial chair honors Eshinni and Kakushinni, pivotal female figures in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, and the wife and daughter of Shinran Shonin, respectively.

“Being the first steward of this chair, I am aware of the countless women who came before me. They planted seeds of liberation that enable us to enjoy the fruits of their commitments. For this, I am humbled and grateful beyond measure.”

— Dr. Paula Arai, IBS Eshinni and Kakushinni Professor of Women and Buddhist Studies

Our fundraising goal is \$3 million, which would generate enough annual income to support the professor’s salary, research and related expenses for the study of women and Buddhism at IBS. Currently part of the Dharma Forward campaign, the fund has raised over \$700,000 to date.

Dr. Arai has published the well-known books “Women Living Zen,” “Bringing Zen Home,” and “The Little Book of Zen Rituals.” A theme that



Dr. Paula Arai, the Eshinni and Kakushinni Professor of Women and Buddhist Studies at the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS), gives a speech at the IBS 75th anniversary on Nov. 16 at the BCA’s Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, California. (Courtesy of Mark Shigenaga).

runs through her research and practice is gratitude.

Reflecting on how the Eshinni and Kakushinni chair arose from a desire from the Jodo Shinshu community to study and amplify women’s

how Dr. Arai supports and encourages non-traditional and creative ways of doing scholarship.

Amy Shoemaker, a current Master of Divinity student at IBS said, “Professor Arai’s

Looking toward the future, Dr. Arai said she would like to continue encouraging students to “unlearn narrow narratives that do not include women, hone interpretive strategies that do include women, and explore methods that empower people to see the myriad ways that women engage the Dharma.”

She would also like to create “public-facing resources and activities that people can turn to learn more about women and Buddhism.”

Currently, Dr. Arai is initiating a project to highlight student work on women and Buddhism that will be available on the IBS website. She is also involved with her ongoing writing and scholarship.

Women have always played a crucial role in the protection and nourishment of the Buddha-Dharma. This important role is highlighted and supported by the Eshinni Kakushinni Chair, which allows us to fund Dr. Arai’s unique and powerful vision.

We ask for your support in generating sufficient funds to continue this important work.

voices, she said this chair “affirms the value of devoting decades of my life to researching the contributions and experiences of Buddhist women. Being the first steward of this chair, I am aware of the countless women who came before me. They planted seeds of liberation that enable us to enjoy the fruits of their commitments. For this, I am humbled and grateful beyond measure.”

Students also appreciate

Methods course, in addition to her own work on creatively imagining through narrative, introduced me to literature and creative writing as valid and important academic methodologies that can help us better understand and apply Buddhist teachings. This, along with her infectious enthusiasm and eager support, helped give me the confidence to pursue my interest in narratives and storytelling as part of my master’s thesis.”

Gomonshu

Continued from Page 1

will soon be able to return to normalcy.

In addition to the continuing Russian invasion of Ukraine that began in February 2022, armed conflict in the Middle East since October 2023 has intensified, putting a toll on civilians. As Buddhists, let us embrace the words of Sakya-muni Buddha that “Everyone

fears violence and is scared of death. In consideration of all life, do not kill and do not make others kill.”

We, as human beings who have received life in this world, shall have our human rights equally guaranteed regardless of reason, and must never have our lives threatened. However, in reality, conflicts and terrorist attacks have occurred everywhere in the world and for many people, their right to live and exist has been threat-

ened. As Buddhists as well as Nembutsu followers who aspire to achieve peace, we must keep seriously in our hearts the words of Sakya-muni Buddha as well as Shinran Shonin who aspired for a peaceful world in pursuing our endeavor of contributing toward world peace and security.

Through the Jodo Shinshu teaching, we are guided to appreciate Amida Buddha’s working that enables us to become aware of our true self. Being

caught up in our self-centered thinking and desires, we are unable to accept the Universal Truth of dependent origination and impermanence, and that is why we constantly suffer from our human desires.

Unable to leave us in such a state, Amida Buddha continuously works to lead us to the Dharma. By regarding each individual as a fellow traveler following the same path being guided and embraced by Amida Buddha, we are enabled to

respect and help each other while courageously coping with difficult social issues. Let us continue listening and appreciating Amida Buddha’s working as Buddhist followers while cherishing each and every day.

January 1, 2025

OHTANI Kojun
Monshu
Jodo Shinshu
Hongwanji-ha



‘Dial the Dharma’ for Enlightening Messages

800-817-7918

Press 1 for English, Press 2 for Japanese, Press 3 for Spanish





The in-person participants at the Eastern Buddhist League (EBL) Conference, held Oct. 18-21 at Ekoji Buddhist Temple in Fairfax Station, Virginia, pose for a photo. At far left, Tammy Wetzel, President of the BCA's Eastern District and a Minister's Assistant at Seabrook Buddhist Temple, enjoys a laugh with BCA Minister Emeritus Rev. Ron Miyamura. At left, a group of ministers look on at the conference. Shown, from left, are: Rev. Patti Nakai, the retired minister of the Buddhist Temple of Chicago; Rev. Todd Tsuchiya, Resident Minister of the Midwest Buddhist Temple; Rev. Kurt Rye, Kyokuchō of the Eastern District and Resident Minister of New York Buddhist Church and Supervising Minister of Ekoji and Seabrook temples; and Rev. Chiemi Onikura-Bly of the Twin Cities Buddhist Sangha. (Photos courtesy of Cheral Tsuchiya)

Eastern Buddhist League Conference Returns Oct. 18-21 at Ekoji

Event Draws 86 Participants After Five-Year Break

Editor's note: This article by Joy Fujishima Zavala first appeared in the Midwest Buddhist Temple's Bulletin monthly newsletter in December. The Wheel of Dharma is reprinting it with her permission.

By Cheral Tsuchiya
Twin Cities Buddhist Sangha

After a five-year break because of the pandemic, the Eastern Buddhist League (EBL) Conference returned Oct. 18-21 at Ekoji Buddhist Temple in Fairfax Station, Virginia, with the theme of "Gratitude Is Timeless."

The EBL is a long-standing

tradition bringing together the following temples, sanghas and fellowships: New York Buddhist Church, Seabrook Buddhist Temple, Ekoji Buddhist Tem-

The weekend of deep meaning and illuminating learning, in the company of treasured Sangha friends, was a gift to each of us who attended.

ple, Midwest Buddhist Temple, Cleveland Buddhist Temple, Twin Cities Buddhist Sangha, Albany Buddhist Sangha, Toronto Buddhist Church, Buddhist Temple of Chicago and Manitoba Buddhist Temple.

Eighty-six participants joined both in person and virtually. It was wonderful to be back in the company of the greater EBL Sangha, to meet new Dharma friends and reconnect with

those we haven't seen in so long. The conference kicked off on Friday evening, Oct. 18, with a round of Bodhi Bingo and an introduction to the par-

ticipating ministers, Rev. Kurt Rye, Rev. Todd Tsuchiya, Rev. Chiemi Onikura-Bly, Rev. Patti Nakai and BCA Minister Emeritus Rev. Ron Miyamura. It was a casual opportunity to hang out, have fun and get ready for a weekend of Dharma learning.

On Saturday morning, attendees were treated to a delicious breakfast courtesy of the Ekoji kitchen. The Ekoji volunteers worked tirelessly all

weekend to keep us nourished and happy.

The opening service followed in the beautiful Ekoji hondo. With four ministers on the Onajin and a full house of participants, it was a joy to chant the Juseige together and hear a Dharma message from Rev. Miyamura, who discussed the historical highlights of the BCA.

This year's keynote speaker was Dr. Scott Mitchell, President of the Institute of Buddhist Studies. Rev. Tsuchiya and Rev. Miyamura led a discussion about Mitchell's recent book "The Making of American Buddhism."

The afternoon session was a presentation about gratitude by BCA Minister Emeritus Rev. Dr. Kenji Akahoshi, who said that we should all be mindful of what we receive

and not so much on what we achieve. In this way, we can lead a life of gratitude, he said.

Sunday began with a butsudan making session. Twenty-two conference participants now have their own home butsudan.

We then returned to the Hondo for the closing service, done "Ekoji Style." It was a great experience for all of us to try some new practices and experience the Dharma in a different way. Rev. Patti Nakai offered a Dharma message summarizing what we learned over the weekend.

Looking back, the weekend of deep meaning and illuminating learning, in the company of treasured Sangha friends, was a gift to each of us who attended. Stay tuned for information on future EBL conferences.



'Dial the Dharma' for Enlightening Messages

800-817-7918

Press 1 for English, Press 2 for Japanese, Press 3 for Spanish





The Positive Benefits of Longevity From the Sangha

Editor's note: This article by Teresa Shimogawa, a Minister's Assistant at the Orange County Buddhist Church, first appeared in the EVERYDAY BUDDHIST blog at everydaybuddhist.org and is being reprinted with her permission.



By Teresa Shimogawa
Orange County Buddhist Church

I recently discovered the documentary “Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones” on Netflix. It made me think about the importance of Sangha as Shin Buddhists and the significant benefits we receive from it.

Blue Zones are geographic areas with lower rates of chronic diseases and longer life expectancy. They are clusters of the world's oldest people and they include places such as Okinawa in Japan, Sardinia in Italy, Ikaria in Greece, Nicoya in Costa Rica, and Loma Linda in Southern California.

Author Dan Buettner traveled to each of the Blue Zones highlighted in the documentary, seeking commonalities that could be used to reverse engineer a formula for longevity. He found similarities such as a heavily plant-based diet, low stress, lots of natural

movement, an emphasis on family, socializing, faith-based communities and people knowing their purpose in life.

I immediately thought that Buddhism — in particular, our practice of Shin Buddhism — fits the bill for the benefits of faith-based communities. We call them sanghas. I think the Sangha, which is one of the Three Treasures in Buddhism, is the biggest asset to gain by being a practicing Buddhist. I have to admit that it took me a while to see this.

According to Nobuo Haneda in his book “Dharma Breeze,” the “Sangha is the most important treasure. Becoming a member of the Sangha, of a living tradition, is the most important thing in Buddhism.” In fact, he says becoming a part of the Sangha is actually our “liberation.”

I think there are a lot of people who like Buddhist concepts, but don't feel the need to attend services on a regular basis or become a member.

In January 2024, Pew released research that revealed the largest religious group in the United States — at 28% — is now people who marked “none.”

The group has grown from 16% in 2007. In my research, I came across a New York Times article dated Jan. 4, 1976, by Kenneth A. Briggs that reported 40% of American adults regularly attended church and that young adults' attendance had stabilized since the turbulent times of the 1960s. Times have really changed!

If people who shy away from religion are anything like I used to be, they're probably thinking they can handle life on their own. They don't

need anything, or that maybe their spirituality has nothing to do with community. This individualist attitude is pervasive in American culture.

But Blue Zones tell us that faith-based communities are important to our well-being.

Azusa Pacific University shared research in 2018 about people who attend faith-based services at least four times a month adding four to 14 years to their life expectancy. Several other academic institutions released similar data.

A Sangha, like any other human organization, has its politics. You don't love everyone you come across.

You will encounter bossy people, mean people and maybe even people who interpret the teachings in ways you don't agree with. But, this is a practice that offers space. You can ask questions. You can think for yourself. You come as you are. This is not the norm in most other religions.

Eventually, you find your people. The ones who inspire

attending services. But the day that I started feeling like it was home, that felt like another type of liberation.

I'm likely preaching to the choir here since you all received a newsletter and took the time to read this, but maybe you also find it a bit of a chore to attend services. Or perhaps you know someone who likes the ideas of Buddhism, but doesn't feel like they have to commit to anything. Maybe your kids don't know why you drag

I was a reluctant Sangha member. A Sangha, like any other human organization, has its politics. You don't love everyone you come across Eventually, you find your people. The ones who inspire you. Teach you. People who root for you, and you root for them. There is a camaraderie. It's a place of being seen, where you exist in a web with others, and even if it's only on Sundays or whenever you happen to attend a function or a service, you know you are not alone. You are held up by the Sangha. This is what I think Blue Zones is talking about. The importance of having a space to be our authentic selves in a community and how much that does for our well-being. I felt like an outsider for a long time when I began regularly attending services. But the day that I started feeling like it was home, that felt like another type of liberation.

The religious denomination does not matter. This is due to the fact that tending to one's spirituality reduces cardiovascular disease, depression, stress, suicide, and has many other health benefits.

Nobuo Haneda wrote that the “Pure Land is a symbol of the Sangha ... a place where we can have true friends.” He also describes it as a “place where people are seriously seeking the Dharma.” He said, “by receiving power from the Pure Land, from the Sangha, we can sprout and eventually bear fruit.”

I was a reluctant Sangha

you. Teach you. People who root for you, and you root for them. There is a camaraderie. It's a place of being seen, where you exist in a web with others, and even if it's only on Sundays or whenever you happen to attend a function or a service, you know you are not alone. You are held up by the Sangha.

This is what I think Blue Zones is talking about. The importance of having a space to be our authentic selves in a community and how much that does for our well-being. I felt like an outsider for a long time when I began regularly

them to services. Maybe your kids grow up one day, and they wonder why they should bother continuing to practice.

We can think of a million scenarios where we might think it's easier to handle spirituality on our own and we don't need anyone or anything. But the science is there. Humans are inherently social beings. Our survival over the course of human history depended on it.

In a world that has become increasingly anxious, depressed, lonely, and disconnected, one has to wonder: Is the Sangha the secret sauce?

Rev. Hayashi

Continued from Page 2

as we gather, we can feel our interconnectedness because we are doing the same thing, in the same room, at the same time.

Of course, even when we can't gather together, we can still recite the Nembutsu in our everyday lives.

When I do so, it makes me think of how my parents are probably doing so in Japan, how my friends in this tradition might be doing and how the many people throughout the world who find joy in the Nembutsu are reciting it as

well.

For me, the Nembutsu provides my interconnection with these people — and with the world — and so I can feel comforted. I know I am essentially not alone.

all the time.

In fact, I recited only at Sunday services. I think I felt inhibited and awkward reciting the Nembutsu in my everyday life and it was not particularly meaningful to me.

When we recite the Nembutsu simultaneously and blend our voices together as we gather, we can feel our interconnectedness because we are doing the same thing, in the same room, at the same time.

This is actually a new feeling that has come to me over time. Just because I became a minister did not actually mean that I will automatically and naturally recite the Nembutsu

I cannot explain how but somehow over time the Nembutsu became part of my life. Today I am becoming more comfortable reciting the Nembutsu in my everyday life and

even if it does not immediately give us comfort or fill us with a deep sense of gratitude. That is something that will come with time. For example, we feel comfort and gratitude

towards our parents, teachers and friends because we have been calling on their names for innumerable times. Someone who has not or who refused to call their parents, teachers and friends names might not get a sense of gratitude towards them. Therefore, it is through the experience of our continuous recitation that gradually brings a sense of gratitude and joy.

“Thus, it is important to recite the Nembutsu not only at Sunday services but also in your everyday life. For it is by persisting in this practice that we come to understand how it can bring us comfort, joy and a sense of gratitude.”



‘Dial the Dharma’ for Enlightening Messages

800-817-7918

Press 1 for English, Press 2 for Japanese, Press 3 for Spanish





YBICSE Provides Youth With Opportunities to Explore Jodo Shinshu

The Young Buddhist International Cultural Study Exchange (YBICSE) program provides an opportunity for youth representatives from throughout the world to gather and explore the historical and cultural heritage of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha tradition.

Together with members from the Hawaii, Canada and South America overseas districts, participants gather at the Hongwanji in Kyoto and participate in joint activities with Japanese youth and deepen their cultural and spiritual appreciation of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha tradition.

The Hongwanji youth exchange includes tours of historical sites related to the history of the Hongwanji and the life of Shinran Shonin, as well as lectures on general and Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and the history of the Hongwanji.

The group will also visit the Hiroshima Peace Park and museum for an overnight stay.

The YBICSE was held July 4-9 with 2 1/2 days free time in Tokyo for the BCA group. The group returned to the United States on July 12.

The Jodo Shinshu International Office (JSIO) is now in charge of the YBICSE program. The 2025 program will be held in early July.

An application form will be sent to all BCA temple ministers and presidents, who check with eligible youth in the temples to apply.

Following are articles by two members of the 2024 YBICSE group — Kate Inge of the Tacoma Buddhist Temple and Hailey La Monte of the San Mateo Buddhist Temple. The Wheel of Dharma thanks Inge and La Monte for submitting articles about their impressions and experiences.



Students participating in the Young Buddhist International Cultural Study Exchange (YBICSE) program held July 4-9 in Japan pose at San Francisco International Airport prior to departing for Japan. Shown, from left, are: Jocelyn Matsubayashi of Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church; Kate Inge of Tacoma Buddhist Temple; Caoilinn Hardy of Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple; Ellie Mizushima of Buddhist Church of Sacramento; Hailey LaMonte of San Mateo Buddhist Temple; and Brian Koichi Mizushima, Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) Youth Coordinator. (Courtesy of Rev. Michael Endo)

Inge: ‘Feeling of Gratitude and Thankfulness Came Forward’

By Kate Inge

Tacoma Buddhist Temple

My experience in Young Buddhist International Cultural Study Exchange (YBICSE) has given me a new perspective on my personal and communal relationships with Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.

In our lessons and talks, we were reminded that Jodo Shinshu Buddhism is the foundation of our spiritual journey, and while the teachings are relatively formless, it is up to us to give it its shape.

Through this understanding, we are given opportunities to express our practice in ways that are meaningful to us. This experience has allowed me to explore what practicing Bud-

dism looks like for me, and I was able to observe and hear the expressions of others.

While my experience in Buddhism is mainly through the Sangha, this chance to get a global perspective on Buddhist practice had me thinking of the ways I can integrate it more independently in my life.

Additionally, this trip has allowed me to compare and contrast between western and eastern expressions of our religion.

The deep and rich traditions in Japan were humbling and profound, leaving me speechless. Seeing the graceful rituals I only observe a slice of back home reminded me of the small point in time I represent in this historical religion.

While with YBICSE, I often

thought of my temple at home, and an overwhelming feeling of gratitude and thankfulness I didn't expect came forward.

home temple, teaching me how to chant and giving me the religious foundation to connect with those around me.

lifetime.

Additionally, this trip allowed me to find a greater appreciation for the western

While with YBICSE, I often thought of my temple at home, and an overwhelming feeling of gratitude and thankfulness I didn't expect came forward. As I sat in that first morning service, the unrelenting heat already swirling around us and the wasan beginning — the only thing I felt was gratitude. While we chanted, I was tearful as I thought about my home temple, teaching me how to chant and giving me the religious foundation to connect with those around me.

As I sat in that first morning service, the unrelenting heat already swirling around us and the wasan beginning — the only thing I felt was gratitude.

While we chanted, I was tearful as I thought about my

My eyes still sting when I think about the beauty of the preserved setting of the Hongwanji-ha and how lucky I am to be given the opportunity to participate in something like this during my youth and

interpretation of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. The strong emphasis on community and Sangha I now see has influenced me in innumerable ways.

Continued on Page 13

La Monte: ‘I Felt Connected to Something Truly Larger Than Myself’

By Hailey La Monte

San Mateo Buddhist Temple

The Young Buddhist International Cultural Study Exchange (YBICSE) program served multiple fulfilling purposes to me.

First, this was my first time traveling internationally. My family does not travel often and this trip provided an opportunity I wouldn't get otherwise.

Traveling to another country is an experience I felt like I was missing compared to my peers, but honestly, I did not have much ambition to travel by myself. Felt like a hassle. I had always understood that traveling to another country is a worthwhile experience that can't be replicated, but now that I have experienced Japan, I understand why so many

people devote themselves to travel.

Second, YBICSE helped me to deeply connect with my Japanese heritage. I am half-Japanese, and despite ear-

Being in these spaces that are hundreds of years old really emphasized that I am only the most recent in a long lineage of Buddhists. I felt connected to something truly larger than myself, something that reaches far into the past and I am actively carrying into the future. It was both profoundly humbling and empowering.

nest attempts, I did not learn the language. My Japanese mom was raised very American and I have been trying to work backwards my entire life to reconnect with my Japanese side. Being immersed in the

culture 24/7 and noticing the differences in food, buildings, manners, and trying to keep up with each new thing and really try to behave in a Japanese manner was very eye-opening

and fulfilling.

We were taken to Osaka castle and Hiroshima Peace Park, important places for Japan's history and cultural memory. Everywhere we went, I tried to exercise my feeble

Nihongo, not really learning much fluency but still trying to use what skills I had. The entire experience was affirming to say the least.

And, last and most impactfully, YBICSE strengthened my connection to Buddhism.

While at the Hongwanji-ha, we participated in morning service at the main halls, toured the Shoin chambers and Flying Cloud Pavilion, and I took part in a confirmation ceremony to receive my Buddhist name.

Additionally, we were taken to Mount Hiei, Shinran Shonin's mausoleum, and attended the memorial service for the war dead at Hiroshima Betsuin.

Being in these spaces that are hundreds of years old really emphasized that I am only the most recent in a long lineage of Buddhists. I felt connected to something truly larger

than myself, something that reaches far into the past and I am actively carrying into the future. It was both profoundly humbling and empowering.

All these feelings were greatly enhanced by being around other Buddhist youth from Hawaii, Canada and Brazil. Experiencing all this with people my age, all of us foreigners discovering what Jodo Shinshu looks like in Japan together and connecting via this shared identity was truly unique.

On a less serious note, being on an international trip with a group of 20 or so peers is just plain fun. Real friendships were formed and I enjoyed every second of time we spent together.

Thank you to the Hongwanji-ha staff for organizing such an amazing trip that I will never forget.



Well-wishers gather at the Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple on Nov. 20, the starting point for David Thull's 200-mile run to the Buddhist Church of Sacramento. In second row at left, friends of Thull pose in front of the RV that served as his temporary second home. In second row at right, Thull checks his phone to see his path to Sacramento in the early morning hours. Below left, Sacramento Betsuin members Sandy Kataoka-Fong, Robert Tanaka, Karen Adachi and Brian Koichi Mizushima pose for a photo with Thull at a stop. Below right, Thull is shown next to Nathan Imura and the Imura family near Lodi. Shown, from left, are father Aaron Imura, mother Doreen Imura, Nathan Imura and David Thull. In front is Nathan's younger brother, Max. (Photos courtesy of Sandra Kataoka-Fong and Karen Adachi)



200 Miles

Continued from Page 1

through January.

As Thull crossed the finish line at 2 p.m. on Nov. 23, he was greeted by the Imura family, Sacramento Betsuin Sangha members, friends and an official from Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer.

Minutes after crossing the finish line, Roy Imura — Nathan's grandfather — reached out to Thull to shake his hand before the two men embraced for several seconds. Asked how he felt after

completing his long run, Thull said taking breaks at night really helped. He said the entire run ended up taking more time than he had anticipated. "But that's not what it's about — it was about helping Nathan and his family," he

told the crowd of well-wishers at the Sacramento Betsuin. "That's, to me, what we talk about every time we come to the temple. It's about trying

to be a better person and it's community, the Sangha. The more we can do that in everyday life, the better everyone's life would be."

Nathan, who was beaming with his family members, stood next to Thull and said: "From Fresno to Sacramento — that's crazy. It's unbelievable."

Thull said it was "really neat to see how many people who weren't even temple members donated and how many people took interest." He credited his wife, Alisha, and friends who supported him along his journey.

Nathan's father, Aaron Imura, then introduced Amanda Kimble from Mama



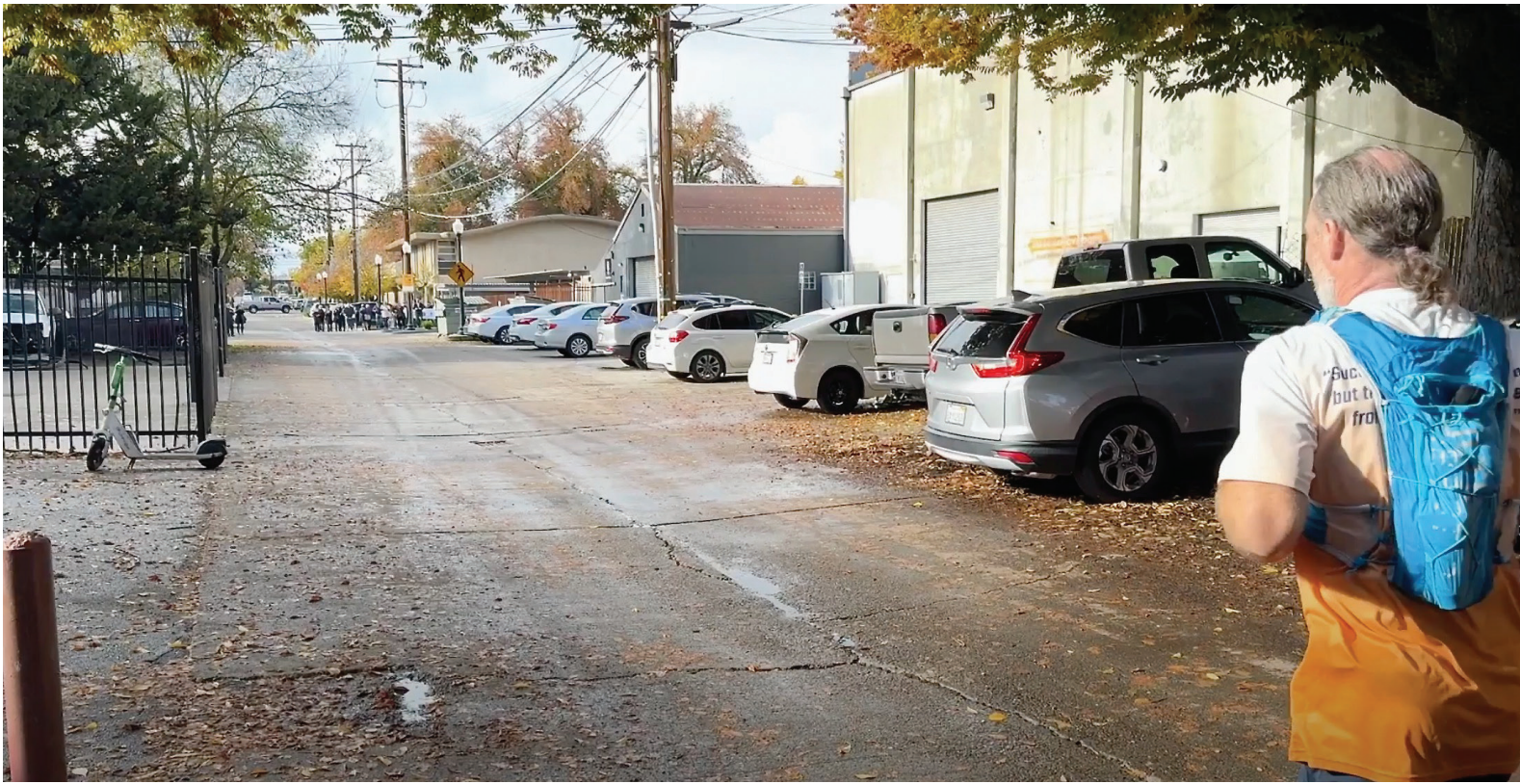
FYI

To view David Thull's arrival at the Buddhist Church of Sacramento, go to: www.buddhistchurch.org/news/200-miles-of-compassion-mission-accomplished

To donate, either see the QR code with this article or go to the GoFundMe link at: www.gofundme.com/f/200-miles-of-compassion

For more information about Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer, go to: www.mbfcc.org/

Continued on Page 11



David Thull is within sight of the finish line at the Sacramento Betsuin. In second row at left, the Imura family holds the finish line sign for Thull. In second row at right, Roy Imura, Nathan's grandfather, and Thull silently embrace after the run. Below left, Thull poses with Nathan and Amanda Kimble of Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer. Below middle, the Sacramento Betsuin held an official check presentation service on Nov. 26 in the Hondo to both the Imura family and to Monica Padilla of Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer. Shown, from left, are Sharon Ito, Sandra Kataoka-Fong, Padilla and Brian Koichi Mizushima. Below right, Nathan is shown on Dec. 12 at UCSF Children's Benioff Hospital celebrating his "Rebirthday," the day he received stem cells for the bone marrow transplant. (Photos courtesy of Sandra Kataoka-Fong, Karen Adachi and Aaron Imura)



200 Miles

Continued from Page 10

Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer. She thanked all those who donated and supported Thull and the fundraiser.

"I think what David did is really emblematic of the journey that the family is on," Kimble said. "It's not always easy to train for this and what you need is community to surround you and support you and love you. Nathan, your little brother, mom, dad, grandpa, as long as you're all here in it together, it's what will bring you through this."

"You're going to go on and do great things and we will all really enjoy watching you become a man," Kimble told Nathan.

Thull initially raised the idea of running from Fresno to Sacramento to commemorate the Sacramento Betsuin's 125th anniversary. (Later that same night on Nov. 23, Thull and his wife attended the Sacramento Betsuin's 125th anniversary banquet.)

The temple's 125th Anniversary Committee decided to raise funds for a cause and chose the Imura family and asked the family to select a charitable organization as the co-beneficiary of the fundraiser.

The Imura family chose Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer, a nonprofit organization supporting Northern California families with children up to 21 years old who are currently undergoing treatment for childhood

cancer.

Brian Koichi Mizushima, Sandy Kataoka-Fong, Karen Adachi and Bobby Tanaka were among the Sacramento Betsuin members to join Thull, his wife, and others as "pacers" who ran, walked or rode alongside Thull on his journey.

While the plan was to make stops at various Northern California temples, the inclement weather was a factor in Thull's decision to continue straight to Sacramento after reaching his first stop at the Modesto Fleet Feet.

The Sacramento Betsuin would like to give a heartfelt thank you to the Florin, Lodi, Stockton and Walnut Grove temples. The Sangha members at the temples provided unwavering support for

Thull, lifting his spirits.

Half of the funds raised will help the Imura family cover medical expenses and other services needed for Nathan's road to recovery.

Nathan received a Hospital Survival Wagon from Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer during a hospital stay at UC Davis Children's Hospital. The items included in the wagon are essential items to care for a child during hos-

pital stays, clinic visits and for care at home.

As a result of Thull's run, Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer will be able to purchase 15 to 20 care wagons for future families in need of support with its half of the donations.

"This milestone is a testament to what can be achieved when compassion, teamwork

Continued on Page 13



Scenes From Rev. Dennis Shinseki's Retirement Dinner, Golf Tourney



The Monterey Peninsula Buddhist Temple held a retirement dinner for Rev. Dennis Hosei Shinseki and wife Jane Hamada at a local Japanese restaurant in Seaside on May 5. At Rev. Shinseki's request, any retirement events for him also had to be a fundraiser. Ichi Riki restaurant hosted a fundraiser and donated 10% of its receipts for the day. In addition, the Buddhist Church of Salinas held a June 9 retirement celebration at the temple. (Courtesy of Linda Kadani)



A golf tournament for Rev. Shinseki's retirement was held June 10 at the Crazy Horse Golf Course in Salinas and was organized by Melvin Aoki and George Gatanaga. Approximately 60 golfers played for cash prizes for the closest to the pin, accurate drive, low gross and low net four-man best ball. Far left, the crowd of well-wishers at the golf tournament gather in honor of Rev. Shinseki. Left, Rev. Shinseki addresses the crowd. (Courtesy of Jane Hamada)



The participants at the golf tournament posed for photos with Rev. Shinseki. Shown, above left, are: Frank Usuki, Dave Tokiwa, Rev. Shinseki, Troy Shinseki, Bryan Quan and George Gatanaga in the background. Above right are Chris Shinseki, Rev. Shinseki, Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada and Rev. Michael Endo. Left is a golf ball with the special inscription thanking Rev. Shinseki, who served 36 years as a Kaikyoshi minister. The golf balls were a gift to the golfers from Rev. Shinseki and his wife Jane Hamada in appreciation to everyone who attended. "I have been able to survive as a minister all these years thanks to the support and kindness of many members and friends," Rev. Shinseki said. "My family, especially my wife Jane, have been supportive and encouraging throughout the years. I have been very fortunate to have been able to serve in the Buddhist Churches of America all these years. I will cherish the memories and the friendships that I have made over the years. I thank all the ministers and members of the BCA and wish for them all continued success and good health." (Courtesy of Jane Hamada)



President's Message

Continued from Page 3

future where Shin Buddhism is a flourishing Buddhist tradition in the United States, sharing the Nembutsu teachings through an engaging ministry where inclusive communities cultivate peace, understanding and compassion for everyone.

Current Initiatives to Start 2025

As I look forward to 2025, I will continue to bring forth issues and initiatives for BCA leadership to discuss and implement. As reported in the December National Board Meeting, I have five current initiatives moving forward in 2025:

Implementing a Policy Governance approach that places responsibility and authority for operations of the BCA to BCA staff under the leadership of Executive Director Gayle Noguchi. The Executive Limitations portion of that Policy Governance approach continues as a work-in-progress.

Updating the 2006 BCA Strategic Plan with an updated Mission and Vision Statement. The update is to be a living document that will be adjusted based on future

conditions; developed with specific goals and timeframes for accomplishing these goals to support the strategic initiatives defined in the proposed update framework. The National Board approved the strategic plan update framework at its Dec. 7 meeting. That framework will be presented at the 2025 National Council Meeting for ratification.

The Zaidan Fund offers new opportunities to return to its historical roots while providing future ongoing funds to support the growth of Shin Buddhism in America. Over the past nine years, the fund's corpus has grown to over \$1 million. It is now time to put in place an updated policy governing how the fund is to continue to grow while determining monies that are available to support the growth of Shin Buddhism in America. A resolution passed at the December National Board meeting with this updated policy. It now awaits ratification at the upcoming National Council Meeting.

Defining Membership in the BCA. As introduced in the October edition of the Wheel of Dharma, the definition of a "member" of the BCA is critical to how we address "declining" membership. Is "declining" an

accurate statement or is it in how our temples and churches define a "paid" member. The conversation is just beginning. It will require a broad consensus of what it means to be part of a "Sangha." Inherent in this effort of defining a "member" is the distinction between being part of a "Sangha" and the census number reported by temples to the BCA. This effort complements the initiative by the Bishop in his report in which discusses effective websites, Buddhist education programs, marketing our BCA and local temples better, and initiating meditation or other new programs are all ways to begin to grow our temples. The main point is for each of our local churches and temples to begin to initiate something that might add to the growth of their membership.

Making a commitment to complete the **Dharma Forward campaign** by successfully achieving the target of \$15 million by the end of 2025. In addition, discussions are occurring that address an ongoing fundraising program to meet BCA future needs that come out of the BCA Strategic Plan Update.

Each of these initiatives offer new opportunities and new ways to think about BCA's

future.

IMOP Reflections

This past fall, I was honored to participate as a lecturer in the International Ministers Orientation Program (IMOP).

The three IMOP ministers were Rev. Kensho Hashimoto from Chigasaki City, Kanagawa-ken; Rev. Yuki Himeji also from Chigasaki City, originally from Akita-ken; and Rev. Keiya Yasutake from Kitakyushu, Fukuoka-ken.

Rev. Yasutake is working on his doctorate at Ryukoku University. Both Rev. Hashimoto and Rev. Himeji have generational connections to Kaikyoshi ministers both for the BCA (Salinas) and for the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

Seeing their youthful interest and energy in continuing their family tradition of overseas ministry work was inspiring. I only hope that I was able to provide them with a few nuggets of wisdom as I spoke on "Working with an American Sangha." To each of them, *ご苦労様でした* "gokurosamadeshita" for all their hard work and study that went into the program.

Although Rev. Hashimoto is already a Kaikyoshi-ho for the Toronto Buddhist Church, I hope the others will consider

an assignment with the BCA to work with our BCA ministers in the not too distant future to spread the Dharma and help build our American sanghas. *また、会いましょう* "mata, aimashou!" Let's meet again.

Gratitude for our Past and a Vision for our Future

Finally, thank you to all the readers of the Wheel of Dharma for your interest in this column. I hope I can keep you as avid readers so that each month you will quickly turn to Page 3 to see what new compelling discussion I have brought forth. It is gratifying to hear from each and every one of you when asked if you've read the most recent Wheel of Dharma and the answer is a resounding "yes!"

As we start the new year, let us remind ourselves of our 2025 BCA theme, "Gratitude for Our Past and a Vision for Our Future." Let us live everyday with gratitude for all that has allowed us to be here today; and with hope and aspiration for a future where Shin Buddhism is interwoven into the spiritual life of America, ensuring that the Nembutsu teachings are to be heard for generations to come.

Namo Amida Butsu

Audiobook

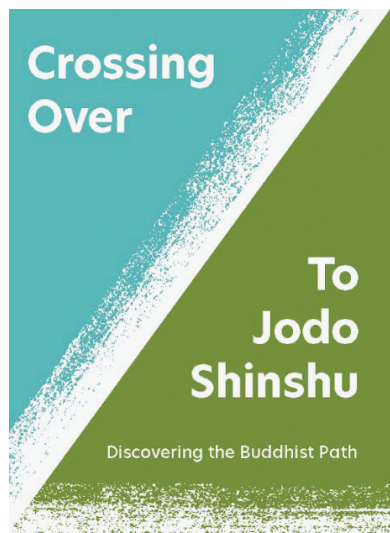
Continued from Page 1

tions are limited to bestsellers and popular books. Many self-help and spiritual books are available. However, few are about Buddhism and fewer still are about Jodo Shinshu.

Realizing this void, the BCA's Dharma Forward campaign has funded a project to turn an existing book, "Crossing Over to Jodo Shinshu," into an audio format.

With the help of Jim Polard, a Minister's Assistant at the Orange County Buddhist Church, as the producer, and Stephanie Doi, of the Buddhist Church of Stockton, as the narrator, "Crossing Over" was released at the beginning of October on Amazon's audiobook and podcast site Audible. In addition, a Kindle version was also created.

With the help of additional Dharma Forward funds, Polard plans to produce more audio versions of existing Jodo Shinshu books in the coming



months. We intend this to be an ongoing project to provide audio resources of the Dharma to a wider audience.

Audiobooks are not for everyone, but sharing the Dharma in a variety of ways will help to increase awareness of the Nembutsu path and reach as many people as possible.

To support this or programs like it, please visit: bca.kindful.com For additional information contact Michiko Inanaga at minanaga@bcahq.org

MBT 80th

Continued from Page 5

see such a wide range — from the early days with the Issei to the present with our newest members.

We also thank everyone for attending this significant event. It was so nice to see members and friends of all ages, and it may have been a coincidence that there were around 125 attendees (to go along with the

BCA's 125th anniversary). The celebration was reminiscent of events from long ago with so many Issei, Nisei and Sansei attending. And we hope there will be many more years of fun events with many participants.

Our elderly members, including the Nisei, have become fewer in numbers, and we appreciate all of their years of hard work, dedication and participation. They have set an example for us to continue on with their energy and enthusiasm.

Inge

Continued from Page 9

I now realize I wouldn't have wanted to be brought up any differently.

I feel so lucky that the Hongwanji has given us a space to explore these differences with other global youth. I am so grateful for the way we can all connect behind one commonality, and are one Sangha, even if we students didn't know

each other before. This trip has allowed me to form a deeper relationship with Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, but also with like-minded young Buddhists — an opportunity I didn't get often prior to this trip.

Finally, during our tour of Mount Hiei, Rev. Hideaki Saito translated for us that, "There is no 'calling' in life, as there are many paths we are able to take. But given this, we should do the best we can in whatever we do.

That is the Buddhist way."

I hope to take this message and the many other lessons from this YBICSE trip into my life and allow them to lead the path of my spiritual journey.

Whether it is in my new nursing career, my personal intentions and choices, or how I give back to my temple, I feel inspired moving forward as a Buddhist and am curious to see what shapes I give to my own Buddhist practice.

200 Miles

Continued from Page 11

and community come together," the Sacramento Betsuin said in a statement on the GoFundMe fundraiser. "Thank you to everyone who donated, cheered and believed in this mission. Together, we made a difference!"

The Sacramento Betsuin held an official check presentation service on Nov.

26 in the Hondo to both the Imura family and to Monica Padilla of Mama Bears Fighting Childhood Cancer.

Nathan was admitted to UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in San Francisco on Nov. 29 and received stem cells on Dec. 12 for the bone marrow transplant, according to Aaron Imura, who is the stem cell donor. Instead of extracting the bone marrow from Aaron Imura, the stem cells will regenerate the bone marrow

within Nathan.

Dec. 12 is now called Nathan's "Rebirthday," the day he received stem cells for the bone marrow transplant. He will now have his actual birthday and a birthday for his blood, Aaron Imura said.

Nathan's recovery in the hospital will take an additional eight weeks and, if all goes well, will be followed by a close stay near the hospital for another four months, according to Aaron Imura.

CC Jr. YBA

Continued from Page 3

a discussion workshop to encourage delegates to share and hopefully learn from each other's perspectives on how the theme relates to Buddhism in their everyday life.

For our team building

workshop, our leader challenged delegates to work with each other and collaborate based on their personality styles.

In this year's talent show, we had several strong entries who all incorporated their unique interpretations of balance into their performances wonderfully.

On behalf of the CC Jr.

YBA, we would like to thank everyone who attended this year's conference and helped to make the experience possible! We hope everyone had a fun time meeting new people and getting a chance to catch up with old friends. We look forward to seeing everyone again and new faces next year and at other events.



Shiroyama

Continued from Page 1

The Palo Alto Buddhist Temple is a participating congregation, and I have attended some events in the past. It's been so nice to meet different faith leaders in our neighborhood and listen to their wisdom. Each time, I am reminded of how close our values align, even though it comes from a different religious practice.

'Peaceful Presence'

The "Peaceful Presence" on Nov. 11 was held at the First Congregational Church of Palo Alto, a Christian church just up Louis Road. The theme was, "Serving and Praying for our Nation." As Rev. Dr. Eileen Altman opened the event, she shared a song by Holly Near, written in the wake of gay rights activist Harvey Milk's assassination in 1978 in San Francisco.

frustration and despair.

When I learn about Shinran and the seven philosophers who shaped his thought, I realize that they also worried about the moral capacity of humans.

Shan-tao (613-681) talked about a concept of "Deep awareness of human nature" and wrote, "We are really sinful, ordinary beings, fettered to Birth-and-Death, continuously drowning and transmigrating since innumerable kalpas ago, and have no means of emancipation."

Honen Shonin (1133-1212) believed he lived in a time of decline; where human capacity was weak, and the practices of Buddhism were difficult to undertake.

In "The Collected Works of Shinran," there is a collection of 16 hymns called, "Guto-ku's Hymns of Lament and Reflection," which reflect his disappointment and grief he felt in reaction to the negative

and I cannot see the light; Nevertheless, great compassion is untiring and illuminates me always."

I understand this point theoretically, but the abstract quality of Amida Buddha makes it hard for me to accept. When we are told in these moments to, "say the Nembutsu" or "focus on what you're grateful for," this advice sometimes feels idealistic. I want my actions to be impactful, measurable, and righteous. I want to make the world better. I want people to stop killing each other and the planet. I feel guilty when I'm passive. How privileged am I to have this luxury of not needing to fight back to survive?

In a culture that positions people as winners and losers, it's easy to feel this way. When I speak to people on my "side" with "like minds," we intentionally or unintentionally prop each other up. It feels good to feel better, smarter

Shinran helps remind me of the reality and danger of my own faults. I'm slowly learning that critical self-reflection and a deep understanding of our bonbu nature helps us awaken to reality. This kind of internal work is not passive. Rather, it's challenging and necessary, and sometimes it takes a lifetime to grasp.

The song opens with the verse:

*"We are a gentle, angry people,
And we are singing,
singing for our lives."*

Each verse repeats twice, and then the first line changes to:

*"We are a justice-seeking people ...
We are young and old together ...*

*We are a land of many colors ...
We are gay and straight together ...*

*We are a gentle,
loving people ..."*

I've been to very few non-Buddhist services and that was the first time I'd been to that church. Still, as I sat in the pews, singing alongside people of different religions who I've never met, it all felt familiar. I was overcome with a realization — we've been here before.

Of course, much has changed since 1978, and we have new sets of challenges. However, the feeling of hope, pain, anger and perseverance that the song conveyed are hauntingly relevant almost 50 years later.

I don't know whether this realization made me feel better or worse. There is something deeply unsettling about feeling like there's been a lack of progress; that we're still dealing with the same intolerance. There's also a strange comfort in realizing that others have grappled with issues that I care about. Our ancestors have been here before — with their anger,

behavior of monks of the major temples.

It includes the following hymn:

*"Each of us, in outward bearing,
Makes a show of being wise,
good, and dedicated;
But so great are our greed,
anger, perversity, and deceit,
That we are filled with forms
of malice and cunning."*

These writings might sound a little harsh, but they resonate with my feelings lately. As I am inundated with news of constant violence, intolerance and fear in the world, I question the moral capacity of people — especially those in power who seem to be the cause of so much suffering. Shinran and his teachers expressed a sense of hopelessness and despair.

Many before us believed their time in history was the worst it could ever get, and here we are, wondering how we could become any more divided.

Finding Hope

Despite the nihilistic vibes, even these seemingly cynical philosophers were able to find hope.

As much as we see mentions of the faults of human nature, there is as much optimism in the salvation of Amida Buddha. In the "Shoshinge," Shinran wrote:

*"The person burdened
with extreme evil should
simply say the Name:
Although I too am
within Amida's grasp
Passions obstruct my eyes*

and more moral than others. It makes me feel like I know what other people need. Turns out, the more I puff myself up, the harder it is to hear those who I've distanced myself from. And without my ability to listen, they become the people who need protection from me.

Lessons From Shinran

Shinran helps remind me of the reality and danger of my own faults. I'm slowly learning that critical self-reflection and a deep understanding of our bonbu nature helps us awaken to reality. This kind of internal work is not passive. Rather, it's challenging and necessary, and sometimes it takes a lifetime to grasp.

It's difficult to understand that our narrow perspective is just one of many. That we are inextricably linked with everything and everyone around us. That the oppression of others affects us, too. That our actions affect others in good ways and bad. And amidst the pain and suffering of this world, despite our own evil nature, we are uplifted and embraced by wisdom and compassion.

As we circumambulate this saha world of suffering, history repeats itself and we realize we've been here before. The good news is that there are so many teachers to listen to. We are singing for our lives, alongside generations of angry, gentle, loving people. Like brilliant stars in a dark sky, "great compassion is untiring and illuminates me always."

\$15
get your women of the BCA shirt today @ bcabookstore.org

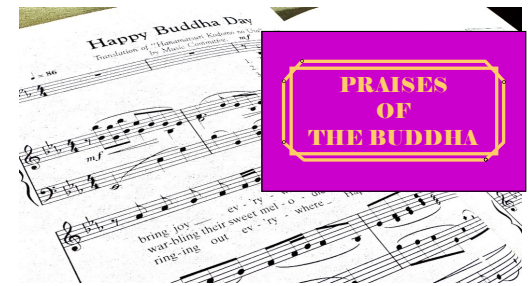


Hawaii's New Gatha Book! PRAISES OF THE BUDDHA (5th edition)

A commemorative project of Hawaii's joyful Triple Celebration, this edition offers:

- WONDERFUL ORIGINAL GATHAS BY OUR HAWAII COMPOSERS
- ENGLISH VERSIONS OF FAMILIAR JAPANESE GATHAS
- OUR FAVORITES FROM EARLIER EDITIONS

Let music from this volume enhance the joy of hearing the Teachings!



You are invited to submit orders for personal copies

You may see a Table of Contents by contacting the Bookstore at 808-522-9202 (hqbooks@honpahi.org)

ORDER BOOKS AT THE **PRESALE PRICE OF \$15 PER** HARDBACK COPY DURING PRESALE **DECEMBER 1, 2024** UNTIL **JANUARY 31, 2025**. AFTER JANUARY 31, 2025, THE **REGULAR PRICE WILL BE HIGHER**. (A shipping charge will apply)

Order directly from Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii Bookstore: telephone 808-522-9202, email (hqbooks@honpahi.org).

The Online BCA Bookstore Has Moved!
BCABOOKSTORE.ORG
SAME STOREFRONT, NEW LINK 😊
www.bcabookstore.org

BCA
Life of Gratitude
BUDDHIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA



'Dial the Dharma' for Enlightening Messages

800-817-7918

Press 1 for English, Press 2 for Japanese, Press 3 for Spanish



今月の法話

「邪魔者と歩む道」



Rev. Katsuya Kusunoki and family

シアトル別院
輪番 楠 活也

新年あけましておめでとございます。シアトル別院は、昨年、火事から始まりました。まだ、火事からの復興の途中で、年明けから長い間、お寺が使えませんでした。昨年9月からようやく体育館でサンデーサービスを勤めることができるようになりました。2025年は、お寺の工事が完了し、再び、本堂でみなさんのお参りで喜ぶことを楽しみにしていきます。

シアトル別院は、Nikkei Manory In Facility Care Homeに月2回、第一、第三木曜日に法話会を開催しています。私も毎月一回は、お参りさせていただいております。ある木曜日、その日は私の当番で、Nikkei Manoryにお参りさせていただきました。その日の午後は予定が入っていませんでしたので、お参りの後、ゆっくりできるなどのんびり構えていました。すなわち、Nikkei Manoryに行く直前に妻が、「私、結ちゃん（息子）の迎えに行けそうにないから、お願いね。」

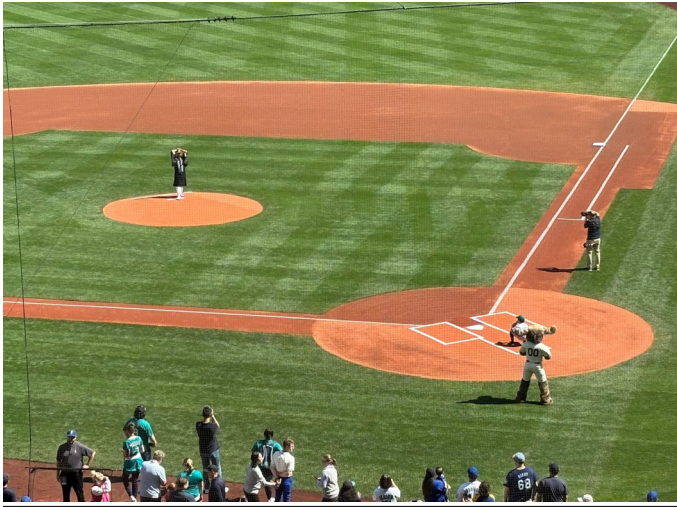
しかもその日は、妻がほかの子供も面倒を見る予定の日で、遅れていくわけにもいきません。のんびりできるなど思っていたのが、急転、一気に忙しくなっていました。息子が生まれる前は、自分の予定だけ考えていればよかったのですが、息子が生まれてからはしばしば息子の予定に合わせて自分の予定を変更しなければいけないことが出てきます。正直、面倒だな、と思うこともありますが、これも子育ての醍醐味の一つですね。

子どもの影響で、自分の今後の人生をどうするか大きく悩まれた方がおられます。それは、お釈迦様です。お釈迦様は、29歳で家を出て（出家）、悟りを求めてこ

修行されました。これは人生における一大イベントです。朝一、夕一に決心されたわけではないでしょう。長い年数をかけて出家するかどうかを考えたはず。その考えているさなか、赤ちゃんが誕生しました。お釈迦様は自分の息子に「ラーフラ」という名前を付けました。「ラーフラ」とは、邪魔なもの、という意味だそうです。

悟りを目指し修行をするというのは、簡単なことではありません。すべてを捨てて、その一点に集中しなければなりません。ですから、求道者は、家を出て、家族を捨て、山や僧院にこもり修行し、悟りを目指します。しかし、そこにかわいい赤ちゃんが誕生してしまいました。お釈迦様も、抱っこしたい、一緒に遊びたい、いろんなことを教えてあげたい、子供の成長を見届けたいと親心が芽生えたことでしょう。その子供への愛情は、悟りを目指す上では迷いであり、邪魔な存在です。「ラーフラ」という名前からは、お釈迦様の子に対する愛情と悟りへの向け求道する真摯な思いとの葛藤が込められているように思います。

仏説無量寿経では、阿弥陀仏のお働きを十二の光に例えて教えてくださっています。そのうちの二つは無礙光というのがあります。無礙光というのは、何物にも妨げられない光という意味です。無礙光が示してくださる通り、阿弥陀という仏様のお働きは、どんな障害物があったとしても念仏者のもとに届いて下さいます。太陽の光は、屋根や壁によって遮られますが、悟りへ向けた道を歩むに当たり、障害となるものは何でしょうか。それは、子供、家族、お金などに対する私の執着です。貪欲、瞋恚、愚痴、と言われる三毒の煩悩です。執着や煩悩は、悟りへ進むのを躊躇させたり、脇道へ



Rev. Kusunoki threw the ceremonial first pitch to his son Yuiya

そらせたりします。ですから私たちは、なかなか悟りへ向けて歩みを進めることができません。どの方向へ、どう進んでいいのかもわからなくなってしまいます。そんな私たちへ、極楽浄土というゴールに向けて、お念仏の道を歩みなさいと、行き先と方向をはっきりと示してくださいているのが阿弥陀という仏様です。その行き先と方向（道）を光をもって私たちに示してくださいます。阿弥陀仏の無礙光のおはたらきは、私たちの執着や三毒の煩悩も妨げにならず、届いてくださいます。私の煩悩の壁を打ち破って私を照らし、進むべき道を示してくださいます。

私には、子供がいます。家族もあります。とてもではありませんが、お釈迦さまや出家者のように子供や家族を家に残し修行の道を選ぶ、というのは私にはできません。人として、この人間社会の中で、煩惱に惑う生き方しかできないのが私です。阿弥陀という仏様は、そんな私にも、歩むことができる道があると、示してくださいます。「大丈夫、子供と一緒に念仏を称えて、この道を歩んできなさい。一緒にお浄土に生まれておいで。そしていっしょにお悟りを開いたらいいですよ。」と家族や子供とともに悟りへ歩むことができるお念仏の道を準備してくださいました。仏教徒の最終目標は悟りを得て、仏になることです。その悟りへと歩みを進めるときに、愛情や欲望は邪魔な存在です。私にとって子供は、そして子供にとって私は、お互いに悟りへの道を妨げる存在であるのかもしれない。お念仏の道は、そういう存在の者同士、邪魔者同士も、手を取り合い、歩むことができるお念仏の道です。無礙光のおはたらきは、邪魔な存在を消し去るのではなく、邪魔な存在となるものもそのまま丸抱えで受け止めてくださいます。障りが障りでなく、ともに歩む法の友となってくださいます。ですから、お念仏の道は、凡夫が凡夫のままお浄土へ、そして、お悟りへ向けて歩ませてくださいることができる道です。子供や家族とともに歩むことができる仏道があることに感謝です。そういう思いを込めて称えさせていただくのが南無阿弥陀仏のお念仏です。

昨年の夏は、シアトルマリナーズの試合で始球式をさせていただきました。息子がキャッチャーとして私の投げ球を受けてくれました。どんどん成長していく息子を見るのが、今の私の楽しみです。春になり、天気が良くなると息子と外でキャッチボールをするのを待ち遠しく思

ます。いつか大谷翔平選手のようになってくれるんじゃないかとひそかに期待しています。まさに子煩悩、親ばか丸出しです。太陽の光の下でキャッチボールができる日を指折の数えながら、阿弥陀様の、無礙光を味合わせていただいている今日この頃です。

合掌

報恩講

報恩講は、浄土真宗において最も大切な法要で、BCAの各寺院では、親鸞聖人の祥月命日を前後して行われます。親鸞聖人は1263年1月16日にご往生されました。この報恩講は、親鸞聖人が私たちに念仏の教えを伝えてくださったことに対する感謝（報恩）の気持ちを込めて営まれる法要です。なお、いくつかの寺院では、旧暦に合わせて11月28日頃に報恩講をおつとめしています。京都の西本願寺では、日本時間の1月9日から16日まで報恩講の法要や法話がインターネットで中継されますので、西本願寺のウェブサイトをご覧ください。
<https://www.hongwanji-kyoto/>
また、皆さんのお寺の報恩講にお参りしましょう。



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時に更新される予定。

ポッドキャストで聴聞したい方は、BCAのウェブサイト <https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/podcasts> やスマートフォン用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。)

ご門主年頭のご挨拶

年頭の辞

新しい年のはじめにあたり、ご挨拶申し上げます。
昨年も世界各地で地震や洪水、山火事など様々な災害が起こり、多くの方が被災されました。災害によってお亡くなりになられたすべての方々に謹んで哀悼の意を表しますとともに、被災された皆さまに心よりお見舞い申し上げます。皆さまが一日も早く、日常の生活を取り戻されますことを願っております。

また、2022年2月に始まったロシア連邦によるウクライナ侵攻はいまだに続いており、2023年10月以来の中東における武力衝突でも多くの犠牲者が出ています。私たちは仏教徒として、「すべての者は暴力におびえ、すべての者は死をおそれる。己が身にひきくらべて、殺してはならぬ。殺さしめてはならぬ。」（『ダンマパダ』第129偈）というお釈迦様のお言葉を大切にいたしましょう。

この世に生を受けた私たちは、いかなる理由があろうとも等しく人権が保障され、命が脅かされるようなことがあってはなりません。しかし、現実には世界各地で紛争やテロが勃発し、また貧困や政治的・宗教的な対立により、生存の権利が脅かされている人々が数多くおられます。平和主義を掲げる仏教徒であり念仏者である私たちは、お釈迦様のお言葉を深く心に刻み、世の安穏を願われた親鸞聖人のお心を体して、国際社会の平和と安全に大きく貢献することが求められています。

浄土真宗のみ教えをいただく私たちは、阿弥陀さまのおはたらきによって、自分自身の真実の姿を知らされます。それは、自身の思いや欲望にとらわれ、お釈迦様が明らかにされた諸行無常や諸法無我といったこの世界の真実を、そのままに受け入れることができずに悩み苦しむ凡夫の姿です。

しかし、そのような私を救いの目当てとして阿弥陀様ははたらき続けて下さっています。私たちは等しく阿弥陀様から願われた者同士、互いに敬い合い助け合って、困難な社会の課題にも果敢に取り組んでいくことができます。本年も、阿弥陀さまのおはたらきを聞き、仏教徒として一日一日を大切に歩んでまいりましょう。

2025年1月1日

浄土真宗本願寺派
門主 大谷光淳



2025年 1月号

発行所
米国仏教団
Buddhist Churches of America
1710 Octavia Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
電話(415) 776-5600
FAX(415) 771-6293
Email: info@bcahq.org
for WOD: WODeditor@bcahq.org

二〇二五年度
教化標語
「過去へ感謝、
未来へ歩む」

総長メッセージ

過去へ感謝、未来へ歩む

米国仏教団総長 原田 マービン



Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada

昨年、2024年はBCA125周年を記念した多くの法要や行事を行いました。その中でも、9月1日にBCAの最初の寺院、サンフランシスコ仏教会で執り行われた記念法要が最も印象に残っています。この法要では、BCAの初代開教使である園田宗恵師の曾孫、園田香樹師からのビデオメッセージをいただきました。また、BCAの僧侶たちによる厳かで活気ある法要が行われ、松本デイビッド師による法話がありました。その後、水島広一さんと稲永道子さんが企画してくれた楽しく素晴らしいテレソンが開催され、50,000ドルの募金が集まりました。

また、BCAの各教区で125周年記念法要が行われ、私もそれらの法要に参加するご縁に恵まれました。さらに、斬新で創意工夫に満ちたイベントも開催されました。例えば、光や音、そしてダイナミックなビートで魅了した「テクノ法要」や、BCAの125年の歴史を表現した感動的なミュージカルが挙げられます。この「グレートフル・クレーン」によるミュージカルは、 sacramentでの総会、サンノゼでのFBWAカンファレンス、サンディエゴでの南部教区カンファレンスで上演されました。

これらの記念行事を通じてBCAの寺院やサンガを設立し、125年間にわたり支えてくださった過去の開教使や会員の皆さまに心から感謝の気持ちを伝えられたように思います。そして125年の歴史の一員として重要な役割を果たして下さっている、今日の開教使や会員の皆さまとともに、未来にむけて歩みを進めていきたいと考えています。

2025年は、未来への展望に焦点を当てましょう。みなさんは今から125年後の寺院、そしてBCAはどのようになっていると思いますでしょうか？会員数の減少が続ぎ、消えていくかもしれないと悲観的に考えることもできます。

反対に、未来に対してビジョン、希望、そして確信を持ち、私たち自身の手で未来を切り開き、そのビジョンを実現する道を模索することもできます。

私は、感謝の道、ダルマに耳を傾ける道、深い自己内省の道、温かく包み込むサンガの一員となる道、そして地域社会やすべての人々の困難に向き合う道として、浄土真宗という私たちのユニークな伝統を多くの方が発見する未来を見ています。

私たちは、甲羅にこもるカメのようになることもできますが、前に進む鳥のようになることもできます。先人たちの風に支えられながら、未来に向かって力強く飛翔する姿を目指しましょう。

こういった未来へのビジョンは何度も聞いているかもしれませんが、今ほどその重要性を感じる時はありません。私たちの未来は、今の私たちの行動にかかっています。サンガを成長させることは可能です。今、多くの方が、心に響く教え、受け入れてくれるサンガ、そして精神的な拠り所となる場所を探し求めています。