



GATEWAY



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Living Dharma News
www.livingdharma.org

New on the website are the combined articles from our Jr.YBA members who went on the Japan tour this past summer. It's a little late, but it's because Taylor Saucedo's report (see page 4 in this issue) was delayed by some computer issues. But I think it was well worth waiting for.

Thanks also to Rev. Fred Brenion for his considerable help in responding to our website's e-mail this past year.

Gassho,
 Rev. Peter Hata

Selected E-mail

From: Sudhan Bhikkhu
 To: dharma@livingdharma.org
 Hello, I'm Sudhan Bhikkhu. My age is 48 years old. I live in Bangladesh. Now, I want to tell you that please give a invitation letter. Because, now the life of monks is very dangerous. Okay, now
Please see L.D. NEWS, con't on page 5

My Life With Buddhism

By Anthony Gutierrez

I would like to share my life and my view with you and how Buddhism came into my life. I was looking desperately for something—there had to be something else out there, a way of living my life where things would go my way. A life where I could get whatever I wanted and nothing could stop me.

Please see MY LIFE, con't on page 8



Anthony Gutierrez (3rd from left) and Gigi Frack (5th from left) pose with their spouses and Revs. Hata, Brenion, and Kawawata at the Goenki Kikyoshiki Ceremony



Above: Dr. Roy Takemura, President of the Board of Trustees, Rev. Peter Hata, and Mr. Johnny Martinez, President of the Board of Directors, pose at the November 11 Board Meeting.

Listening and Sharing Together

By Rev. Peter Hata

At WCBT's Board Meeting on November 11, 2012, I was informed by Board of Trustees President Dr. Roy Takemura that the board of Directors had officially voted me in as WCBT's new resident minister. I want to thank Rev. Ken and the Board for their support, and pledge that I will do my best to work for the benefit of our temple and sangha. Working together, we can continue the wonderful Shinshu tradition we have at WCBT of listening to and sharing the Dharma together.

Of course, most of the aspects of being a minister that I have had to learn these past 5 years—the Minister's Assistant Program, Tokudo training, Kyoshi training, and now, Kaikyoshi or resident minister training—have all presented me with new challenges. While, at least in my case, there has been no additional ordination ceremony required at the Honzan, this latest stage of my ministerial path seems the most challenging. It was certainly the least expected—I don't think any of

us anticipated Rev. Kawawata's being assigned to the Hawaii District. In any case, I mention this to ask for your patience as I continue to hopefully grow as your minister.

At the same time, like most Jodo Shinshu temples in America, we also face many challenges going forward in the 21st century. Shin Buddhism has been here for over 100 years and yet still is largely unknown outside of the Japanese-American community. Only if we face these issues together will we be able to find the necessary solutions.

Please see TOGETHER, con't on page 5

Temple Event Highlights:

- Dec. 2. Shotsuki/Bodhi Day Service
- Dec. 9. Mochitsuki
- Dec. 16. Year-End Service
- Jan.1, New Years Service
- Please See Temple News



T H E G A T E W A Y

DHARMA SCHOOL NEWS

NAD Shinran Shonin 750th Memorial Weekend

The recent 750th Memorial (Goenki) for Shinran Shonin held at the LA Higashi Betsuin was truly awesome and memorable. The culminating event was the memorial service itself which was filled with sutra chants, music played by the Kinnara Gagaku group, and ceremonial procedures carried out precisely, yet gracefully. I held my breath watching the Overseas District Abbot Choyu Otani, who slowly and deeply bowed three times after moving from the naijin to a special "worship stand," and then had to step out of his special footwear (resembling elevated getas) without any assistance. The deep bowing symbolized taking refuge in the Three Treasures.

Oddly enough, it occurred to me that many of the participants in the audience started out as young Dharma School students decades ago. Here we were, giving thanks to Shinran's teachings, still listening and learning after all these years...

So boys and girls, please come to Dharma School so Ms Pat Sato can show us how to make a beautiful scroll in Shinran Shonin's honor.

With Gassho,
Diane Hata



Kiku Craft Fair '12



Quote of the Month

On the one hand, we must be content with the present because it is the result of the past. On the other hand, we must awaken the mind of effort-making and study in the present because it is the course of the future.

-Rev. Manshi Kiyozawa



T H E G A T E W A Y

T E M P L E N E W S

Shotsuki/Bodhi Day Service

Our Shotsuki Service and Bodhi Day Service will be held on Sunday, December 2, at 10 AM. Our speaker will be Rev. Kenjun Kawawata which will be his last message at WCBT before leaving for Hawaii (or more precisely, before leaving for the Royal Vista Country Club for his Farewell Luncheon!).

Mochitsuki

WCBT's annual Mochitsuki will be held on Sunday, December 9. Beginning at 7:00AM, the special *mochi* rice, which will be distributed earlier to be washed and soaked the night before, will be steamed until it is ready to be poked and pounded and eventually molded into smooth *mochi* shapes. Some are filled with sweet bean *an* and others are made into the traditional New Years symbolic offering, *okasane*. The Jrs will be serving their delicious breakfast and are asking everyone to bring a \$5 toy for the toy drive. Come and enjoy the breakfast and join us in this annual tradition.

Year-end Service

Our Year-end Service, Oseibo gift presentation and potluck dinner will be held on Sunday, December 16 at 4:00 PM. Entertainment will be provided by the Dharma School, Jr. YBA, and Dhar-

matones. If you have a talent you'd like to share, please contact Diane Hata or Rev. Peter.

The potluck assignments are as follows: If your last name begins with A-K, please bring a main dish and a salad; L-N, bring a main dish and rice dish; O-Y, bring a main dish and a dessert.

Please join us for a fun evening of entertainment and feasting on the delicious potluck spread from the West Covina Temple members.

New Years Day Service

A special service to commemorate the new year will be held Sunday, January 1, 2013, at 10:00 AM. Following the service, Jeanne Kawawata will be serving her delicious *Oshiruko* so please let Rev. Peter know if you're planning to attend.

Eitaikyo & General Meeting

WCBT Eitaikyo will be held on Sunday, January 20 at 10 a.m. followed by the General Meeting. A fundraising luncheon will be provided by the Jr. YBA. Join us for our yearly service and meeting and stay to support our Jrs!



GATEWAY Staff

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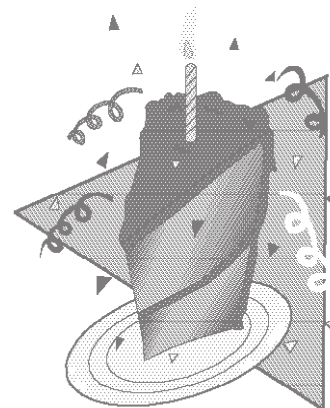
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West Covina Buddhist Temple Mission Statement:
In the spirit of universal brotherhood, West Covina Buddhist Temple provides the opportunity for all to listen to and share the Teachings of the Buddha in order that we may awaken to our true selves, living our lives fully and dynamically.

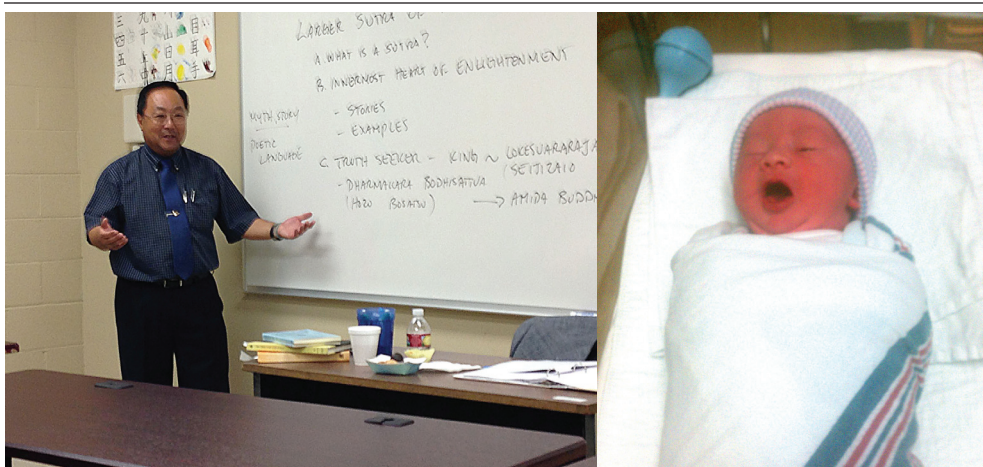
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December Birthdays

Allison Haraguchi, Kyle Kagawa, Chris Nakano, Denise Underwood, Larry Oshima, Susan Iwama, Johnny Martinez, Sandra Nakano, Jonathan Ogino, Kristin Dubble, Merry Jitosh, Jessica Saucedo, Taylor Saucedo, Marvin Bernstein, Katrena Sakaue, Brandon Kwan, Brett Miyamoto, Julie Griffith, Jack Wear, Sean Underwood, Richard Kagawa, Stephanie Akune



Above left: Rev. Marvin Harada, the intrepid Orange County Buddhist Church minister and Center for Buddhist Education co-director, took time from his hectic statewide commuting to deliver two informative lectures for our West Covina Buddhist Study Center on the Larger Sutra; above right: congratulations to Anthony and Monic Gutierrez for the birth of Josiah Gutierrez!



T H E G A T E W A Y

Hoshidan Tour 2012

By Taylor Saucedo

“America jin desu,” the Japanese translation of “I’m from America,” became my catchphrase during my stay in Japan back in July. It was my excuse to make mistakes, or the mask I used to hide my embarrassment whenever I obviously didn’t know what I was doing. But the more I opened my eyes to the Japanese culture and to Buddha’s teachings, the more my dependence on an “excuse” became unnecessary. I have always struggled with overcoming my biggest fear, disappointing those around me. But the hospitality and kindness from the Japanese allowed me to open up, relax my mind, and not allow my fear of disappointment hold me back from new adventures.

My first lesson to fit in with the Japanese was to walk fast. Our group from West Covina got some practice when we spent hours chasing our speedy Senseis around LAX; it was as if Reverend Ito and Reverend Bansaka were preparing us for the real challenge awaiting us in Japan. Kyoto and Okinawa thought it could slow us down with its waves of sticky hot air, but we somehow managed to keep a decent pace with the locals. Once we passed that first cultural roadblock, everything else just became another exciting challenge. Performing our daily chores, trying to get by on level-one Japanese, taking public baths, and going to the bathroom in what looked like a hole in the ground were some of the challenges I’m oddly most proud to talk about. At the Honzan, we would prepare for meals as a Sangha, eat as a Sangha, and clean as a Sangha. The fascinating aspect of this was that everyone just followed these steps

instinctively. People automatically tried to help one another, in almost every scenario, and I never once heard anyone complain about all the chores we had to do. If anything, we saw events like our little polishing party and dusting races as play time. And when one of our American habits would show, like repeatedly being too loud at the dinner table, someone would kindly ask us to settle down. But in America, I feel we’re

rassment, and I just went along with my bath not thinking of anything other than how relaxed I was. Who knew I could feel so refreshed in a place that I was dreading just moments before. I saw that experience as my first real breakthrough in realizing that fear would hold me back in life, but there was much more to come.

The fear that haunted me on the way to Okinawa wasn’t the mutant spiders, but it was leaving the group to spend a day with my family. Both my grandparents’ relatives live in a fishing village on the South end of the island, and they were all practically strangers to me. Thoughts of badly representing myself and my family back home were starting to consume me as we got closer to the airport. Then before I knew it I was hugging my Aunt Fujiko. Thankfully we both knew



Above: Taylor poses with, as she puts it, “My big, loving Okinawan family!”

more forceful and aggressive whenever we’re bothered, so I was more than happy to return my respect back to the Japanese.

My next huge culture shock was the public baths. All that ran through my mind at the time was “People are going to be looking at me! I’m from America, they’ll understand if I avoid it.” Well I must have looked ridiculous trying to stretch that tiny excuse for a towel across my entire body, but after watching how casual it was for the locals it clicked in my head that there was nothing to be afraid of. Nobody was going to judge me, so surprisingly, nothing was awkward. I lost all sense of embar-

enough of the other person’s language to carry on a conversation, but I had no clue what to expect from the rest of the family. Then I arrived at a house filled with people who I trusted were my family, and I was treated like a princess. It never occurred to me that I have connections across the Pacific Ocean that would take care of me even though I’m basically a stranger to them. It’s not easy to sit in the middle of a room where you feel like everyone sees you as an outsider. But my family welcomed me with open arms, and their smiles and immense amounts of hospitality were able to immediately make me feel

Please see HOSHIDAN, con’t on page 5



T H E G A T E W A Y

HOSHIDAN, con't from page 4

comfortable. After meeting the family I was taken shopping, sightseeing, boating, and then we ended the day with a festival brightened up by the biggest fireworks I had ever seen. With every burst of color that hit the sky, I stopped and just began to reflect on my trip so far. I began to think that when my cousins grow up I can give them a place to stay in America, and it just makes me happy that from one brief visit we've been completely reconnected. Even if it may be scary, I can always rely on my family to welcome me without any hesitations. Then looking even broader, I now have connections with the relationships I made on this trip in general. All of those who took care of us at the temple will always be welcoming to us, and the members in our tour group will remain great long term friends. We have made a family out of our tour group. Despite the fact we may go years at a time without speaking to each other, I know that family connection will always be there, just as my family connection in Okinawa stayed strong after all these years.

I can stuff my suitcase with as many souvenirs and pictures as possible to remind myself of this experience, but the personal growth and my replenished way of living my life is my favorite thing that I brought back to America. Now I don't need an excuse; I don't let fear get in the way from always living in the present moment. I've noticed myself become a stronger, more genuine and considerate person after this journey, so in times of stress or sadness I know that I can always refer to memories and what I've learned from them to push me forward. And no matter what I encounter throughout the rest of my life, I will be living for happiness in myself and for those around me.

TOGETHER, con't from page 1

However, while the challenges we face are significant, I also know that WCBT has a very energetic and enthusiastic sangha. For this reason, I eagerly anticipate listening and sharing with all of you as we move forward together.

L.D. NEWS, con't from page 1

please listen to what I say. Some days ago here has been very incredible event. Many others Muslim peoples has damaged our temples. After all 10-15 temples and many others images of Buddha also has been destroyed. Besides, they killed monks. At present, this country is very dangerous for us. On the other hand, we are completely helpless. Please as soon as possible give me a invitation letter for going your country. Please help me as soon as possible. I trust you and I hope you must give a invitation letter. Kindly accept my request and accept with some proofs of destroyed. Please immediately send a invitation letter in my E-mail. Oh yes, send me your mobile / phone number. Sudhan

Dear Sudhan,

It is with sorrow that I hear about your plight in Bangladesh. The current status of Buddhists in many countries is very disheartening. I regret to say, that after examining our procedures for doing "invitational letters" that I am unable to comply with your wishes, as I would have to be able to personally guarantee you accommodations and funds for your visiting here, which I am unable to do. May I suggest rather that you contact our embassy, or consulate offices for information of other procedures for emigration. You may also wish to check the same from other countries too, as each country has different standards of accepting emigrants. I hope you and your loved ones will find safety and peace, remembering that true inner peace is found in taking refuge in the Three Treasures of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Above all, remember the teachings of the Buddha who said, "For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule." Sincerely, Rev. Fred

From = Chris Becker

Subject = Sunday 7th

Message = I was wondering what kind of service you are having this Sunday. I am new to Buddhism and am not familiar with the "shotsuki" service. Is it open to anyone and would it benefit a person new to Buddhism?

Dear Chris,

Thanks for visiting our Living Dharma Website. As to your question, Shotsuki services, usually the first Sunday of the month, are the same as regular Sunday Services, except that there is also an opportunity in the service for families who've lost loved ones in that month (in previous years) to offer incense in their memory. In Buddhism, memorial services are not necessarily viewed in a negative light, but as an opportunity for those of us still living to appreciate this life.

All our services are open to and would benefit anyone, so you are welcome to come.

Best Wishes,

Rev. Peter Hata

From = Ashlee

Subject = What Is Amida Buddha? page
Message = I plan on citing your "What Is Amida Buddha?" page by Dr. Nobuo Haneda in a paper for a class, but I cannot find a copyright date on the page. I was wondering if someone knew the date or could find out for me? Thanks so much!

Dear Ashlee,

Thanks for visiting our Living Dharma Website. As to your question, I don't know the original copyright as this essay was published quite a while ago (more than 10 years ago) in the Maida Center's monthly newsletter. However, if you are using Chicago-style footnotes/bibliography, you can simply use this: Haneda, Nobuo. "What Is Amida?," accessed at <http://www.livingdharma.org/LivingDharma>.

Articles/WhatIsAmida-Haneda.html.

Optionally, you can add "accessed on [month, day, year]"

Or, you can use this listing, which does have an official copyright, for your bibliography. "What is Amida?," as well as most of Haneda-sensei's essays in the Living Dharma Library, can be purchased in his recent anthology/book, Dharma Breeze: Essays on Shin Buddhism:

Haneda, Nobuo. Dharma Breeze: Essays on Shin Buddhism (Berkeley, CA: Maida Center of Buddhism, 2007).

Best Wishes,

Rev. Peter Hata

Please see L.D. NEWS, con't on page 6



T H E G A T E W A Y

L.D. NEWS, con't from page 5

From: "Ashlee"
 To: "The Living Dharma Website"
 <dharma@livingdharma.org>
 Subject: Re: What Is Amida Buddha?
 page
 Thank you so much!!

From = Caleb Cook
 Subject = assistance please
 Message = To whom it may concern: Hi,
 I am a theology student and am currently
 attending a World Religions class. The
 class has been assigned to research a ma-
 jor world religion and have an adherent
 answer questions which will represent
 the religion correctly. These questions will
 be the basis of the paper. I have com-
 piled 16 questions which can represent
 Buddhism in a correct fashion. I would
 greatly appreciate any help anyone can
 give me in completing my assignment.
 I will furnish these questions here if
 anyone is interested in completing them
 and representing the religion correctly in
 a masters course paper.
 Please introduce yourself and the role you
 play in this tradition (Religion). Would
 you please tell me, what is this Religion's
 approach to the following?

Dear Caleb,
 I will try to do my best to answer your ques-
 tions. My name is Frederick. I was recently
 ordained as a minister in the Jodo Shinshu
 tradition. Jodo Shinshu is the largest Buddhist
 sect in Japan and has been in existence for
 close to 800 years. If you wish to know a bit
 more about this school of Buddhism you may
 wish to consult the Afterward in Houston
 Smith's recent book, "Buddhism." I am a
 native-born American. I became a Buddhist
 later in my life. I describe my personal story
 as something akin to "The Ugly Duckling,"
 in that I tried to live, believe, and think as one
 thing and then discovered that at heart I was
 another. My role is to present the Dharma to
 help meet the needs of others. In answering
 your questions I hope I will meet your needs.
 Before I begin I must say that I am intrigued
 and puzzled by your opening statement. You
 can actually represent a major world religion
 correctly with just 16 questions?! According
 to our teachings, Buddha was asked a consid-
 erable number of questions which he refused to

answer. They were all metaphysical questions,
 much like many of yours. In fact there were 14
 questions. You've added two more it seems!
 Buddha's often said that if he answered in
 the affirmative, or in the denial, he would be
 confirming his listeners in one error or its op-
 posite. At one occasion he made it clear that he
 was not here to answer the vain imaginings of
 the "wise" but to address himself to one thing,
 and one thing only: Suffering and its ending.
 That's it. In many respects I look at a number
 of your questions and I think of the Buddha's
 famous story of the man who was shot by a
 poisoned arrow. The man began to ask ques-
 tions he thought were important, such as who
 make the arrow, what kind is it, and so on.
 That information would help him on know-
 ing who did this so he could seek revenge. The
 problem is that he has a poison arrow in him
 and it needs to be removed and an antidote
 applied. Of course he did not want that to hap-
 pen till he got his answers. He will die with
 his head filled with the wrong knowledge. So
 let's begin.

1) What is the purpose of life?

Of all the questions you could have asked
 about Buddhism, why did you ask that one?
 Do you feel that you must have a purpose?
 Is a purpose something given from outside of
 you, or would you be all right with mak-
 ing your own purpose? Personally I find
 the question a very odd one. The words flow
 together grammatically, but does it make any
 sense? It's like asking, "What is the color of
 freedom?" Freedom doesn't come in colors.
 To answer this question in some fashion
 would mean that you would have to "stand"
 outside of life. But to be outside of life is to be
 dead. Life is lived. In many ways Buddhism
 is not interested in purpose. It is interested
 in naturalness. When a child plays it is being
 totally natural. A child who plans on his play
 has introduced a falsity into its behavior. It is
 becoming "adult." Most of us find that to be
 a loss. We're interested in you simply being
 you. If we're interested in your purpose, why
 we're treating you then as a thing, an artifact,
 a construct. Why bother with getting to know
 you then? I have no desire to make use of you
 for my own purposes. That would be very
 wrong. You deserve better than that.

2) What, if anything, is wrong with the
 human condition?

3) What is the solution to this problem, or

is a solution necessary?

Another interesting questions! Have you
 thought instead of asking what is also right
 with the human condition? The fact that you
 can see something is wrong indicates you
 know something right as well. That would be
 worth exploring. Be that as it may, Buddhism
 does see problems with the human condition.
 It is spelled out in the Four Noble Truths. The
 First Truth recognizes that there is "dukka"
 often translated as suffering, discomfort,
 anxiety, dis-easement. The Second Truth asks
 where does this dukka come from? It comes
 from our cravings, our clutching at things,
 above all our clutching at our selves, our
 egoness. My self above all others. I often say
 that Christians have all the good swearwords,
 the only swearwords Buddhist have is "Me"
 and "Mine." Me, me, me. Mine, mine, mine."
 There lies my deepest problem. The Third
 noble truth announces that this illness of
 ours can be cured. There is hope to having a
 "Natural Driven Life." It is done by following
 the Fourth noble truth: The Eightfold path.
 It's first step is right understanding. Knowing
 who and what you are. What blinds us to un-
 derstanding is ignorance. We prefer to avoid
 seeing the reality of ourselves, so we "ignore."
 Is a solution necessary? Only if you want to
 truly live. Sadly, many prefer to live in their
 own ego-driven delusions.

4) Are these answers typical for a devotee
 to mainstream Buddhism or...

5) Have the answers been influenced by a
 particular school of thought?

6) Which one?

7) How will the school of thought to
 which you adhere differ from mainstream
 Buddhism?

In general, these answers are typical for
 mainstream Buddhism. There are obviously
 different schools of Buddhism, as there are
 within Christianity. Many of these differences
 are driven by the personal, cultural, and social
 needs as expressed throughout history and
 differing places. It might be best to understand
 Buddhism as a gigantic pharmacy filled with
 every kind of prescription to meet the par-
 ticular needs of the patient. You earlier make
 much of "correctness." And one must apply
 the correct medicine, but it must be adjusted
 for the right dosage, situation and so forth. Too
 much of the correct medicine can kill just as

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T H E G A T E W A Y

L.D. NEWS, con't from page 6

well. In Buddhism we talk about something being "upaya" or useful. Is this practice or technique useful to meet the person's needs? My own approach is flavored by the school of Buddhism I belong to called Jodo Shinshu. It is sometimes called the Buddhism of Pure Grace. When I first joined I realized I heard many of its teachings expressed in Alcoholics Anonymous, particularly the need to rely on one's "Other Power," and that we are accepted as we are without condition. It is a recognition that many of us are helpless in fighting our egos. That there is no practice on our own we can do, rather to rely on the help for the helpless. I wrote my thesis on this aspect.

8) How do the beliefs within this school of thought shape the religious rituals?

9) Would it be possible to hold the beliefs without participating in the rituals?

10) Would it be possible to participate in the rituals without holding the beliefs?

11) Moreover, how do these rituals enhance the religious experience of any devotee in this school of thought?

Our ritual is fairly simple. We gather to reflect on the Dharma. We chant a poem by our founder, Shinran Shonin, which gives a spiritualized history of our understanding of what is called Pure Land Buddhism. We recite the affirmation of taking refuge, in that we look upon ourselves as spiritual refugees who have lost everything and have found safety in the three treasures of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. We then listen to a Dharma talk about some aspect of the teachings that may have bearing on our lives. Afterwards we often have a discussion where we share about our problems or questions in the light of the Dharma. You make use of the word belief in your questions. Do you know what "believe" or "belief" actually means? Lief is an old Anglo-Saxon root word "to wish." When you say you believe in God, you are actually saying that you wish, you hope that there is a God. The difficulty is to move from "belief" to "knowledge", which in Latin happens to be "scientia" from which "science" comes.

And a lot of beliefs, wishes, may often conflict with what later becomes known. Witness the difficulties that many believers have with what science has ascertained. It is unfortunate that many would rewrite science to fit their wishes as opposed to accept what actually is. Now the next question I want to ask you is Buddhism

a "Belief" religion? No it is not. Unlike Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Buddhism does not have particular beliefs. You could actually be a Buddhist and not believe that the Buddha existed as an historical being. Rather what is important is whether the teaching stories attributed to Buddha conform to Reality and can be tested out. Buddha did not propound fanciful stories and myths about why there is evil or require belief in unascertainable transcendent events to which we could put the blame or solution to. Rather he simply pointed out the obvious that there is suffering, or discomfort in the world, that the origin of this discomfort lies in my own cravings. That I can be cured of these cravings, and that cure can be applied through the application of correct view and intention - which is the basis of Buddhist wisdom, the application of correct speech, action, and livelihood - which is the basis of Buddhist ethical conduct, and the application of correct effort, mindfulness, and concentration - which is the basis of Buddhist mental development. All this is in fact the Eightfold Noble Path. That's it. So... I don't believe in Buddhism. I know that Buddhism works. And it works because, more than "Belief" religions, it presents Reality as it is. Because it shows that my "be-liefs", my wishes, come from my cravings, and it cures me by moving me from beliefs to knowledge about myself which is correct view, and so on of what is. The "Belief Religions" promise peace of mind, but I only found that peace of mind when I moved from the cravings of my wishes to humbly accepting reality, the reality of myself.

To return to your questions. No, you can hold to our view of reality and not participate. It is not required. How could you require anything in a school of total grace? We do encourage attending because of the benefits one gets from fellowship and from simply listening to the Dharma. Yes, one can participate without assenting to our understanding of reality. In the same way, a judge might require a drunk driver to attend A.A. meetings. The driver may not buy into the program but he/she will hopefully learn something that might help later when he/she really hits bottom and is ready for help. For myself, the ritual enhances by simply reminding me of the daily truths I need to hear.

12) How does Buddhism shape the views topics ranging from politics, science, edu-

cation, and the arts?

13) In other words, how does this religion view its relationship to the broader culture at large?

Buddhism embraces culture, all cultures in their totality. In so doing we provide Buddhist critique on aspects that can be problematic. We embrace politics and encourage all to participate in their societies, particularly to help end suffering for those in need. Buddhists uphold peace, justice, and equality. We recognize and encourage diversity. We accept the understandings of science, knowing that science is forever a work in progress, that what we may know now may be contradicted tomorrow by a new discovery, a new understanding. What we seek is the growing of clarity and perspective. We encourage education, knowing that ignorance is our root problem. And art is to be pursued as it adds to the beauty of our lives.

14) Finally, what is truth?

15) What are the major truth claims in your school of thought in this religion?

16) How does this definition of truth effect daily decisions and interaction with others?

I really, really, really, hesitate on this one. Writing an encyclopedic length response would not be adequate. In general, Buddhist talk about two levels of truth, ultimate and conditional or provisional. I suppose it is generally understood that truth is a matter about propositions, how they conform to reality, and whether they hang together consistently. In many areas of our lives it is provisional - always subject to further review. Science is pretty much provisional. A new fact or discovery may cause everything we've thought before hand to be readjusted. This is to be expected. In ultimate truth we seek to pursue the deepest levels of reality, particularly the reality of ourselves. Here we often find that words struggle and fail. We approach the infinite and finding that we are finite we can only bow. I do not contain the infinite. It is the infinite that contains me. Humbled I am brought to bow again and again. If Buddhism has a message about truth for me it is that I cannot bow enough or low enough. In my school of Buddhism life is opened up through humility. Truth claims? They must always be tested and tested. Of course some things are pretty obvious. I do not have to continue

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T H E G A T E W A Y

MY LIFE, con't from page 1

I started reading some self-help books one of which was *The Secret*. This book is telling me that I can have anything I wanted, if I just focused on it and with positive thoughts things would go my way.

One day I was short on money, and I used a technique from the book, which was that by writing what I wanted on a paper and focusing on this, it would come to me just when I needed it. My family and I were living with my mom at the time and rent was due for the last month of her contract. So the day comes and I still have no money, so I say to myself the day isn't over its just starting maybe it will be here later. The day flies by and still no money. I couldn't understand, I've done everything the book said. That was a big wake up call. A big slap in the face. Life doesn't go the way we want it to.

So I'm still browsing around, being positive that I would find something that would change my life. I remember in the book the author mentioned Buddhist monks. I don't remember why she was referencing Buddhism but it caught my attention. Now by this time I was reading books on quantum physics, different dimensions, and things of that nature. I should also mention I really was never a religious person. Growing up my family was Catholic, then in my teen years they switched over to Christianity. So I was familiar somewhat with the ideas of Jesus and God. Well I started looking online for nearby Buddhist temples to visit and see what they had to offer. The searchlist pops up and I see livingdharma.org, I click the link see the location (West Covina, CA) and see dates and times for services.

I chose a Sunday and after work I visited there. The service ended and they asked me to stay for a discussion, so I stay. I start off by introducing myself and why I've come. From what I remember I tell them about how I believe everything has a connection with everything, this I what I've learned from reading quantum physics books. I don't remember the rest of the discussion but it ends on a good note and I'm

ready to come back next Sunday. The week passes by and the Sunday arrives, I get off work and make my way to the temple. I'm really excited to get to the discussion since I have no understanding yet of the meaning of the Three Treasures and the chanting. So the discussion comes up, I'm ready to impress them with my positive attitude and show off how life will go our way if we really focus on what we want and being positive.

Different questions and answers come up from various people there, but one answer struck me the hardest and left me speechless. It was from Rev. Peter Hata. What I remember most from his answer was, "Life doesn't go the way we want it to...it's like trying to swim against the current...instead, we should go with the flow of life." The discussion ends and I'm puzzled, my ego feels like a carpet was pulled from under its feet. Everything I've read says life can go our way, this must be true.. Right? I ask Rev. Peter one question, shaking as I feel totally exposed, "How do I know this Buddhism is right for me?" He says, "It might not be; there are other sects of Buddhism you should explore before choosing what's right for you. No one will be mad at you if you don't come anymore...it's all up to you. I say "OK" and make my way out to my car thinking this is not what I wanted to hear.

I wanted him to tell me that he had the answers to all that I was looking for. So I go home and I make up my mind, I'm gonna see what this has to offer so I start coming to temple every Sunday. I start buying books on Buddhism, learning about the Buddha and trying to deepen my understanding hoping to impress the three reverends, (Rev. Kawawata, Rev. Peter Hata and Rev. Frederick Brenion). Every discussion I try to ask questions to try to help understand what I'm reading and even try throwing in my two cents on other people's questions hoping for praise by them, but I get no responses. Not what my ego was looking for.

I start learning about the ego and

how it blinds us from realizing the truth that Buddha was showing us, the ego is something we make up. It's almost like your ego is an actor and this life is its movie set. I start learning of Shinran Shonin and Amida Buddha, I start going to classes every other Tuesday to deepen my understanding of my life, and free myself of ego. While I'm at work on breaks I try to meditate and calm my mind. I'm thinking I am going to rid myself of ego and become a Buddha. Well I'm doing all these practices and to me it's working, I must be free of my ego, I'm going to become a Buddha.

Then one day a coworker says something to me and he gets a rise out of me I yell back at him trying to embarrass him and make myself feel above him, I notice this and just stop. Everything I've been practicing goes down the drain in one instant. I don't understand what went wrong, why this happened. I thought I was free from my ego. I've failed again to try to get what I want, to control my life. It was like a slap in the face from reality to wake up already.

I attend the following Sunday service and at the end of the discussion I share with Rev. Peter how I failed to become free from my ego. I remember telling him "I feel like a fake Buddhist." Then he responds "That's a good realization," and in my head I'm like "What? How can that be?" But now, from what I've learned all the way up to this day, it was. It showed me my true self, my true colors. It's all about me, me, me; that's my ego speaking. Now I see how easily the ego can take over and that depending on causes and conditions I am capable of doing anything. This is one truth that we should all see, it helps me see that I am a helpless being influenced by everything that occurs in my life.

Finally, one of the most important things that the dharma has taught me is the truth of impermanence. Things are always changing; no matter what they are never the same. We can never stay young forever and we all must come face to face with old age and death. So I am still no Buddha, and I will probably never be; I'm a person full of greed,



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anger and ignorance always thinking about myself. But now that I see these things in myself, there is room for understanding and compassion that I can show to others. In the end I believe I have found meaning in my life. Thanks for listening.

I would like to thank Rev. Ken Kawawata, Rev. Peter Hata, Rev. Frederick Brenion and my Sangha at WCBT, for all the teachings you've shared with me and for being such a great influence in my life and hopefully on my path to buddhahood.

Namu Amida Butsu,
Anthony Gutierrez

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ously recheck that 2 + 2 = 4. But I do have to remind myself over and over that I am subject to impermanence, that there is nothing in me that is truly of me. All that I am I have gained from others. Every atom in me has a history far older than I am, born in the fires of the Big Bang, and spewed out by Supernova's long since gone. My ego may want to sing a different tune, but understanding this allows me to take a different tack of compassion towards others, not insisting on my own way, but to consider the needs of others. This perhaps is the heart of Buddhism's gift to me, to be open to others, even as I have been opened. There is more I could, and should say, but I think this must suffice for now.

Thank you, Caleb. I do not doubt that I have not risen to the level of correctness that you require. But that I think is on the level of provisional truth. Ultimate truth confounds all our questions and answers. That is a joy that Buddhism provides for me. Let me wish you well on your project.

*Sincerely, and respectfully,
Rev. Frederick*

From: Caleb Cook

To: "'The Living Dharma Website''

<dharma@livingdharma.org>

Subject: RE: assistance please

Frederick,

Thank you so much for your reply. I have read your in-depth responses and enjoyed reading them as it gives me more knowledge into this aspect of Buddhism. This will definitely help me in my project.

Have a blessed day,
Caleb

From = Rayyan

Subject = Buddhism in Society

Message = Hello, I have a question. I've recently become more and more interested in Buddhist teachings; however, I've found that they are difficult to practice as thoroughly as I'd like in the society I live in. In particular, it is difficult to do things like let go of ego and desire, as they are essential to survival in most cultures. I feel that ego and desire are poisons, and I hate seeing myself fall prey to them, but I also feel helpless to stop it.

1) I'm only seventeen - I depend on my parents for food and shelter and attend high school like most kids. Therefore, I'm surrounded by temptations. What sort of things can I do to help myself be stronger than those temptations?

2) I'm playing with the idea of becoming a bhikkhuni at some point in the future.

Can anyone start to become a bhikkhuni?

3) Where can I go to get bhikkhuni training?

Thank you,
Rayyan

Dear Rayyan,

Thank you for an email packed with solid questions and issues. You are an exceptional seventeen year-old with a strong inquiring mind. You deserve solid answers. Let's begin. You are right. It is hard to practice as one would like, not just in your society, but in any and all societies. The reason is because you are the practice. You are your life's project. That's pretty heady when you think about it. I will let you in on a bit of a secret though. A good part of Buddhist practice is to help you realize how impossible this can be to do. You find it hard to let go of your ego because it is your ego that is trying to let go. You want to let go of desire, but you can only proceed on the basis of having a desire to let go of desire. Do you see the problem here? It's because you are the problem, just as I am my own problem. We're also the solution too. How we solve this is part of our life's experiences. But I'll give you a few hints. We don't solve it alone, we're all interconnected, how could we ever be alone? We don't solve it on our own power, we find we

have to rely on a power that is beyond our self. You might call it Life living you. The heart of living is Change. Everything changes all the time. You can embrace change and see yourself, and everyone anew every moment. Think of yourself as like a kaleidoscope. I think it is such a true Buddhist toy! Every turn brings a new design, never to be repeated. However if there is a pattern you really like, your impulse is to keep it just the way it is. But then you are no longer being a kaleidoscope. You are no longer growing. That is the great misunderstanding that everyone has about their ego, that it is fixed, and never changes, and they don't want to let it go. That's the real poison. The secret is to appreciate that pattern, and then let it go, and embrace the next as it emerges. The problem of the ego is that it wants to keep everything the same way. It gets scared of change. It gets scared of moving onwards. It gets scared of interacting in the larger patterns around us.

This brings us to your next issue, temptation. You are seventeen. That is a wonderful age. When I was seventeen I found the world to begin opening itself up to me. I was drifting unknowingly, and then I discovered such books that opened the human dimension to me, such as Les Miserables, The Bridge of San Luis Rey, and The Lord of the Rings. I hope you'll read these and more! I thought I had no friends, and then I found others who were excited about the same things I was. I think I heard the phrase often, "What! You too!" I thought I would never find love, and yet it was waiting for me just a little further ahead. After many adventures I have been married to her for 37 years now. Of course, there are temptations. For teens, there are the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and sex. I know there is great peer pressure to be like others. The desire to be accepted. But the hardest thing, and the most importance, is to accept yourself and that it is alright to be different, it is alright to be you. You have every right to say "No, this is not for me" to whatever you feel or know to be wrong for you. Yes, you might get teased, or put upon, and it will hurt. This too is part of life's lessons. Ultimately, you have to please yourself, follow what you believe is the right thing for you to do. Only you can live your life. It is easy to say, but hard to go through, but you will develop strength of character. There is an old saying, Virtue is its own



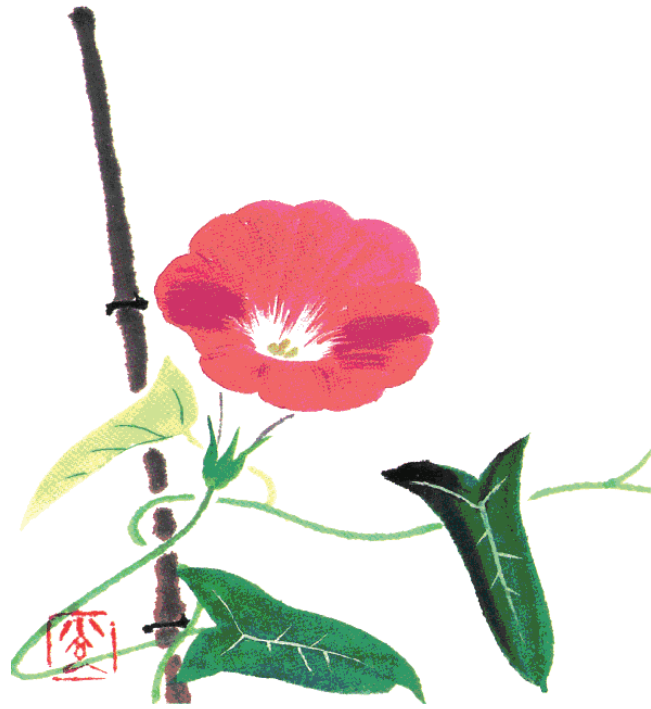
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reward. Believe me, it's true. Of all the things I hold most sacred, the greatest is to follow your conscience, never violate it. Those have been the moments I've always regretted when I have done so. Learn then from the mistakes of others. And if you make mistakes, then learn from that as well. However, along with temptation is also opportunity. Opportunity to explore and develop yourself. Do not let fear of temptation scare you from real growth. And if you have doubts, and you will, remember you have an incredible support team. I think you know who they are. They are your parents. As well as good teachers and counselors too. They will remember what it was like to be seventeen with all its hopes and fears. You can talk with them. They are on your side. Give them a chance to grow with you. It's one of the greatest pleasures of being a parent or a teacher. Don't deny them that.

By the way, I want to recommend a very good book for you. It's called *Buddha in Your Backpack: Everyday Buddhism for Teens* by Franz Metcalf. An excellent help for young people to understand how Buddhism might help give Teens a better perspective on their life issues and situations. Which leads me to the following.

I want to touch on your desire to be a bhikkhuni, a Buddhist nun. In all sincerity, I recommend you not to. Not at this point in your life. You are at a stage where the world is opening up to you. You have so much more to learn, see, and do. I am hoping that college is part of that future. You've got what it takes. But my main concern is that because of your concern about temptations that you want to run away and hide. Some people use the fear of temptation to avoid the risks of opportunity, and with it the fear of rejection or failure. This is the worst reason for embracing this option. No honest group would or should accept you if that is your underlying reason, and they will figure this out. Further, most good groups are going to want you to have a good education and skills that you can bring to them. I understand that there is a certain "romance" to monasticism that many young people have. I felt it too. The thought of being in a place of meditation or prayer, striving for new spiritual heights, is a powerful thought. The problem is that there is more to being a nun than meets the eye. First you have to live with other nuns who have their own set of problems and issues



-- who will have the same thoughts about you too. You will have a boss to answer to -- an abbess, or a head of a temple. There's the daily work. Temples don't clean or operate themselves. There's kitchen duty, laundry duty, bathroom duty, garden duty. Most temples are not self-sufficient, so there is the never ending pleading for monies, donations, and fund raising, etc. If you thought society is filled with distractions, so is a temple. And that is a point I really want to get into with you. If you want to be a nun in order to avoid the distractions of the world you will find that you will have brought the world with you anyway. There's no escaping it. A fundamental Buddhist insight is that your mind is the world. The bottom line is you've got to go in with the right reasons or this will be one of the greatest mistakes you could ever make. What would be wiser is if you were to visit a regular temple sangha where you could be involved with other lay people, learn with a sensei, and experience living the Dharma in your daily life. My own school of Buddhism, Jodo Shinshu, or Shin Buddhism, while being non-monastic, provides this opportunity for lay people.

One final point. I gather from your email that you are experimenting with Buddhism, and are not a formal Buddhist. That's very o.k. You don't have to be a Buddhist to make use of Buddhist techniques and teachings, or

to make use of a temple. Many people from other religious traditions, such as Christian, Jewish, and Muslim, have found great help and advice from our teachings. We too also benefit from the learning and sharing from others. Use whatever you find useful, discard the rest. Our goal is not to seek out converts but to help you to be the best person you can be in whatever tradition you are in. What I hope you will do is to seek out what we call the Dharma within your own traditions. It will be there. Study it, apply it, and live it within your context. At the heart of all our differing traditions is to live life compassionately, guided with wisdom. Again, share with your parents, share with your teachers, or counselors, concerning your deeply felt problems, issues, and interests. Be open to them for guidance, ready to listen and learn. You are seventeen, a wonderful age as you begin to reach out into the adult world. There is so much more for you to learn, enjoy, and to ponder first. You are in the process of great changes. I promise you, your perspectives will change as you change. Allow yourself to grow, to deepen. Continue your studies, treasure your family, treasure what life brings. As you explore life, you will be exploring what it means to be Rayyan!

Sincerely,
Frederick



T H E G A T E W A Y

世間は虚仮なり。
唯仏のみ是れ真なり。

ここに挙げたのは聖徳太子の有名な言葉です。太子の死後、妃の橘大郎女（おおいらつめ）は太子を偲んで天寿国繡帳（てんじゅこくしゅうちょう）を作りました。この言葉は、大郎女が太子から聞いたものとして繡帳に織り込ませたものです。それは太子の仏教理解の深さを示すものとして、しばしば引用されてきました。

太子の生きた時代は、日本にとっては大きな激動期でした。太子が14歳の時には蘇我・物部両氏の戦いが起こり、その結果、政治の主導権は蘇我馬子に移りました。やがて推古天皇が即位すると、太子は摂政に任命され、中国をモデルとした新しい国家組織を作ろうと励みました。冠位十二階の制定や、十七条憲法の発布も、その一環として行われたものです。また、仏教に深く帰依し、寺院を建立するなどして、その発展に大きく寄与しました。

しかし、晩年の太子は政治的活動にほとんど関わることがなくなったといわれています。そのことを歴史家の家永三郎氏は、この時期太子は仏教の理解を深め、政治に対する関心が薄れたのではないかと推測しています。この二つのことは深く関係していると思われます。様々な改革を押し進めるなかで、太子と周囲の人々との間には、常に政策上の衝突が起こっていたのでしょう。自分の方針の正しさを信じて、よい国を作ろうとする努力でも、それはいつでも対立の種になるのが政治の常だと太子は痛感したのでしょう。その経験が太子に「世間は虚仮なり」と言わせたのです。そしてこのような対立は、自己の正当性を主張し、それに執着（しゅうじゃく）することから生まれ、自己への執着が続く限り消滅しないことを、仏教から学び取ったので

しょう。太子は自己執着から解放された世界こそ、私の真実の世界であることに目覚めたのです。

すべての対立を超えた理想の国家を作ろうとした太子は、自己への執着からの解放を説く仏教の教えに根ざした政治を行おうとしました。今日、自国の立場を絶対化し、それに反するものをすべて悪とする国家的エゴにもとづいた政策が、世界を不安に陥れています。そのような状況において、太子の仏教理解に学ぶところは多いのではないのでしょうか。

（大谷大学、今日の言葉より）



お寺ニュース

英語祥月法要／成道会法要

12月2日午前10時より英語祥月法要並びに積尊成道会法要をお勤め致します。法話は前駐在開教使河和田賢淳氏です。また法要後東本願寺ハワイ開教区に転任された河和田開教使の送別昼食会が午前11時半よりロイヤルビスタゴルフ場のレストランにて行われます。

12月法話会祥月法要・忘年会

今年も余す所ひと月となりました。12月の法話会・祥月法要は6日（木）午後7時よりセンターにてお勤めいたします。ご法話には伊東憲昭輪番をお招きしております。また法要後例年の如く忘年会を催します。一年を振り返りつつ皆様と楽しい時間を過ごしたいと思ひます。法話会とお寺でお刺身が用意されます。皆様方にはご自慢のお

料理やデザートをお持ちくださるようお願い申し上げます。またご自慢の歌や踊りもご用意ください。また歌や隠し芸ももって来てください。

餅つき

今年のお餅つきは12月9日（日）午前7時より行われます。200ポンドの餅米をつきますのでお手伝い宜しくお願いいたします。なお、餅米は12月2日に皆様にもって帰って頂き一昼夜水につけた後当日持って来ていただきます。みんなで美味しいお餅をつきましょう。当日は仏教青年会による朝食もごぞいます。

年末法要

お寺の年末法要ならびに年末プログラムは12月16日（日）午後4時よりお勤めいたします。法要後はダルマスクールのこどもたちのスキットや演奏や歌などがあります。持ち寄り料理で行われます。名字のAからKまでの方にメインデッシュとサラダ、LからNまでの方にメインデッシュとごはん、OからYまでの方にメインデッシュとデザートをお持ちくださるようお願い申し上げます。皆様お誘いの上こちらの忘年会もご参加ください。



12月祥月法要
法話会／忘年会

12月6日
午後7時半

法話：伊東憲昭輪番

East San Gabriel Valley
Japanese Community Center, Inc.

West Covina Buddhist Temple
1203 W. Puente Avenue, West Covina, CA 91790
P.O. Box 1616, West Covina, CA 91793

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GATEWAY

December 2012 - - Vol. XLVI No. 12

December

- 2 8:30 am Board Meeting
- 2 10:00 am Shotsuki/Bodhi Day Service
- 2 11:30 am Farewell Luncheon for Rev. Kawawata
- 6 7:30 pm Howakai Japanese Service
- 9 7:00 am Mochitsuki
- 11 10:00 am Bonbu Class
- 16 4:00 pm Year-end Service

12月行事予定

- 2日 午前8時半 理事会
- 2日 午前10時 祥月法要/成道会法要
- 2日 午前11時半 河和田開教使送別昼食会
- 6日 午後7時半 法話会/忘年会
- 9日 午前7時 餅つき
- 16日 午後4時 年末法要

January 2013

- 1 10:00 am New Year's Day Service
- 3 7:30 pm Howakai Japanese Service
- 6 8:30 am Board Meeting
- 6 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 8 10:00 am Bonbu Class
- 13 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 20 10:00 am Eitaikyo Service/General Meeting
- 22 10:00 am Bonbu Class
- 27 10:00 am Sunday Service

2013年1月行事予定

- 1日 午前10時 修正会法要
- 3日 午後7時半 法話会
- 6日 午前8時半 理事会
- 6日 午前10時 祥月法要
- 13日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
- 20日 午前10時 永代経法要/総会新年会
- 27日 午前10時 日曜礼拝

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あなたを

生きている

宗祖親鸞聖人750回御遠忌テーマ