The following are some of the interesting statistics for our site. They show what kinds of information our visitors are interested in.

Most popular pages visited (in January 2012):
Common Misconceptions About Buddhism
Steve Jobs Commencement Address
Little Buddha Review
Buddhism in Movies and Songs
What is Buddhism?
Links Page
What is Amida?
Help Our Earth
7 Years in Tibet/Kundun review
The Tannisho
Buddhism 101
Brief History of Shin Buddhism video
Three Gathas video
Soka Gakkai Success
Women in Buddhism
Steve Jobs: Connecting the Dots

Top search phrases (in January 2012)
dharmawhat is buddhismamida buddhatannishoshin buddhismwhy did steve jobs drop out of collegelittle buddhabohow to help the earthmisanation amida buddhareligion in the 21st centuryfind a buddhist temple songs about buddhism buddhism moviesdo all buddhists believe in reincarnation

Gassho,
Peter Hata

Right Action is the Nembutsu
by Bishop Kō Yasuhara, Chief Administrator

The person who truly attains the mind of true entrusting While saying the Name of Amida Constantly has the thought of repaying the debt of gratitude to the Buddha Ingrained deep within his heart.

The sutra declares that those who are born through chanting the Name While doubting the inconceivable working of the Vow Will spend five hundred years Vainly living in a palace without the Dharma. –Shinran Shōnin, Hymns of the Pure Land

I would like to say a few words to the members of the denomination to welcome this New Year while reverently reflecting on the two verses from Shinran Shōnin’s hymns above.

This year is significant in that it is a time for those of us who were able to encounter the 750th Memorial Service for Shinran Shōnin to begin anew our journey.

Please see RIGHT ACTION, con’t on page 4
Congratulations to Year of the Dragon people…it is your year! With your good health and energy, we will be able to do our best in 2012. In a blink of an eye, the Dharma School finds itself preparing already for Valentine’s Day. The residents of the Atria Retirement Home in Covina will be looking forward to our cheery centerpieces which we will bring in person on February 12th, immediately following the Sunday service. The service will be a “Pet Memorial” dedicated to all of those creatures who have made families so happy in the past.

The Dharma School staff would like to thank Mr. Ed Moreno who sent a box of lovely “washi” paper to us. He was kind enough to sense that we’re always looking for materials to make our special projects with our students!

With Gassho,
Diane Hata

Quote of the Month
When the Buddha spoke of Right View, he was referring to a view that isn’t frozen. Right view is fluid and flexible, constantly in motion. It’s an awareness of how this moment has come to be.

-Steve Hagen
Family Retreat

Our annual Family Retreat will be held on the weekend of February 17-19 at the Newport Beach Higashi Honganji. This year’s theme will be “Why Me? Why Not!” with our special speaker Rinban Ito leading us in the discussion. Fees for retreat weekend are $35 for adults and $10 for children. This includes all activities, food and lodging for those who choose to stay at the temple. Those who choose to stay at a motel will do so at their own expense.

Plan for an early start on Saturday with meditation, breakfast, stimulating discussions, fun activities, too much food and quality time with sangha friends. Sunday, the final day, goes quickly since we are finished by 1:00 PM. Sign-ups are at the Service. See Rev Ken for more info.

Pet Memorial Service

A special service will be held on February 12 at 10:00 AM to remember our animal friends. Everyone who has lost a pet is invited to pay tribute to them on this special day.

Spring Ohigan Service

Spring Ohigan will be observed on March 18 at 4:30 PM. A complimentary otoki dinner will follow the service.

Oldies Dance XXXXI

“Don’t Walk...Run to Oldies XXXXI!” is set for Saturday March 24. Steve Kikuchi & High Resolution will provide our favorite hits from the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s. The dance begins at 8:00 PM and will end at 12:00 AM with lots of good fun in between. Presale tickets are $12 or $15 at the door. For info and song requests, call Joanie at (626) 284-8192 or Roy at (909) 973-2580.

Your Toban chairs will contact you about work shifts and assignments. Plan to come by the center about 6 PM to help with the set-up. Donations are welcome for raffle prizes and drinks. Sign-up sheets for drinks will be at the Sunday service.

Baby News

Belated congratulations to Laurie, Billy, and Andy Kobayashi who welcomed their new son and little brother Tyler Kaito on July 22. Congratulations to Claire and Arne Hansen for becoming grandparents again!

Stacy and Tanner Logue gave birth to daughter Jayden Sayori on December 15. Congratulations to big brother Chase and Grandma Lillian and the whole family!

Cherry Blossom Festival

Mark your calendars on March 31 for the annual Cherry Blossom Festival sponsored by the Center and the City of West Covina.

GATEWAY Staff

Layout & Editing: Peter Hata, Hisako Koga, Rev. Kenjun Kawawata
Contributors: Frederick Brenion, Diane Hata, Merry Jitosho, Tor Ormseth, Joanie Martinez
Circulation: Mary Hatakeyama
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.
The Temple’s mailing address is:
West Covina Buddhist Temple
P. O. Box 1616
West Covina, CA 91793
(626) 913-0622
Website: www.livingdharma.org
E-Mail: dharma@livingdharma.org
on the path based on what we have learned from that event.

Last year, with the occurrence of the massive earthquake, amidst deep sorrow and fear over the collapse of the daily lives that we had until then taken for granted, we have been forced to reevaluate what is truly important, what can truly serve as the basis for our lives. That questioning has allowed us to see clearly the extent to which encounters and connections among people serve as supports essential to life even in a time that can be symbolized in the word “individualism” and provided a critical opportunity to rediscover ourselves, who had lost sight of what is important, in the light of the teachings.

The teaching of the nembutsu, which takes the shinjin endowed by the Tathāgata as its center, has been transmitted between people, in what might be called the “space” created through their encounters. In that sense, this term “space” means something that transcends the individual. We are nurtured through such spaces and from them we receive the opportunity to move forward. For us, the most familiar of spaces are the ones in which we live our daily lives. The current age is one in which myriad dangers appear in our living space regularly, and one where it is necessary to recover spaces in which people can truly be at peace.

Shinran Shōnin expresses the intention to take the nembutsu as the foundation for his life with the words, “right action is the nembutsu.” Namu Amida Butsu is the basis for our lives, that which truly makes our lives possible, and the concrete expression of that nembutsu is taught to be shinjin. The suffering in our daily lives springs fundamentally from our wish to recover a space where we can be at ease. Therefore we must see the significance of the fact that the Pure Land is expressed as a place, and also reconsider the meaning that the spaces of our home altars and temples hold for us, all the more.

The Dōbōkai Movement, which is entering into its fifty-first year, is a movement which aspires that each one of us becomes a person who lives out shinjin and that our homes and temples recover their significance as spaces for listening to the Dharma. As we welcome this New Year, I hope that we can share a space where we might intimately encounter the words of Shinran Shōnin and together humbly take up the aspiration expressed within them.

In this way, in saying the Name, all of the darkness of sentient beings’ ignorance is cleared away and all of their aspirations are fulfilled. Calling the Name is the most excellent, truly wondrous, right act. The right act is the nembutsu. The nembutsu is Namu Amida Butsu. Namu Amida Butsu is right thinking. This should be known.

(From the chapter on practice in the Kyōgyōshinshō)

L.D. NEWS, con’t from page 1

Selected Email
To: dharma@livingdharma.org
From = miko
Subject = monk
Message = Hi i just want to be a monk...I'm from Indonesia. How can I become a monk? Thank you.

Dear Miko,
I wish I knew more about you to answer your important question. But there are questions I would like to ask that might help you make a good decision. That question is “Why?” Why do you want to be a monk? What are you looking for? What is driving you? Being a monk could be a great thing for you, or it could be a disaster. What is your motivation for wanting this? If you are doing this to escape your family, school, a situation you are in, or to avoid facing something in yourself, that would be a mistake. You see, Miko, many people run to the monastery hoping to leave the world behind them, instead they bring the world with them. When they arrive they find that not only their world, but the world that made all the monks you’re with, is also there. Buddhism is not about deserting the world, it is about facing the world and dealing with the world, and you face it by facing yourself. You need to do a lot of self-exploration right now. You need to talk with your family and friends to help you to see yourself. And of course, you ought to visit a monastery and talk to the abbot about why you want to do this, and seek guidance as to whether being a monk is right for you. I know that there are monasteries in Indonesia. Many of them reflect the practices of different schools of Buddhism. Take time to explore them. Go on a retreat and see how the monks live. Look for what will challenge you to grow and mature, and not to escape. But do remember this: It is not necessary to be a monk in order to live a fully Buddhist life. You may find that being a layperson is the best way to explore and live the Buddha-nature within you. Whether as monk or layperson be assured that as long as you are open to the teachings of the Dharma, listening to the Dharma in your daily experiences, you will grow. Remember this also, which is a teaching of my own school of Jodo Shinshu: Do not rely on your own self-power or efforts, but rely on the other-power of the Dharma shown in the infinite light of Buddha Wisdom and the infinite life of Buddha Compassion, which has always accepted you as you are, even from the very beginning. It is this strength that will carry you through your life-explorations.

Sincerely,
Rev. Frederick Brenion

Subject = Other faiths
Message = I am a 48 yr.old African American women that has practiced Christianity for the last 15 years. After becoming disenfranchised with the teachings and the lifestyles of the teachers I started researching Buddhism. I am very interested in what I have found to be the answer to my suffering. The concern that I have is that you do not see African American women practicing and I feel that I would not be welcomed walking into a temple or group of Buddhist.

Dear Jacqueline,
Thanks for visiting our Living Dharma Website and for raising a key issue for Buddhism in America, particularly those traditions with strong ties to a specific ethnicity.

Please see L.D. NEWS, con’t on page 5
Regarding your concern, the reason for the predominance of certain ethnicities over others in Buddhist Sanghas has nothing to do with the teachings of Buddhism itself. It's due in large part to a complex web of historical and geographical coincidences. Buddhism arose 2,500 years ago in northern India, and wherever it has migrated to, over time, the ethnicity of its Sanghas (and its clergy) has changed to reflect that of the host country. Perhaps if the Buddha had been African, I'd be e-mailing your temple and expressing my concern being an Asian American. But another factor of course, is that since we are human, whether we know it or not, we all have prejudices and dualistic/judgmental tendencies. Therefore, changes in a Sangha's ethnicity generally do not come without some tension and conflict. And such changes tend to take time. But change like this is inevitable in America. Around the beginning of the 20th century, our particular tradition, Shin Buddhism, began to migrate to America, brought along with the first wave of Japanese immigrants. It's taken quite a while, but now that Shin Buddhism has been in America about 100 years (maybe 3 or 4 generations), we are gradually starting to see a more diverse Sangha. In fact, the Berkeley Buddhist Temple currently has a female African-American Minister's Assistant, and in Brooklyn, New York for a while there was an African-American Shin priest (but I believe he recently needed to curtail his activities due to poor health). Also, some Buddhist traditions, such as Soka Gakkai, are more ethnically diverse in America than others. Basically, all religious traditions that encounter a new culture and have an ideal of sharing a precious teaching or truth with others—including Shin Buddhism—need to change or face inevitably shrinking and disappearing. Actually, the reason a teaching is deemed precious in the first place is because it transcends the normal everyday world of human relativity (i.e., ego) and is trying to awaken us to the greater reality beyond our limited view.

I'm not saying it would be easy to be the first African American in a Buddhist Sangha, but I would encourage you to seek out a Sangha. There could be those individuals that might resist changes, but in a sense, this in itself would not necessarily be a reason to leave that Sangha. Because of such human-caused difficulties, we have the opportunity to see deeper into the causes of our suffering and hopefully practice compassion. If you do find a Sangha, whatever happens, if the Buddhism taught there is authentic—though you may have to realistically be a little patient—you will be welcome.

Best Wishes,
Peter Hata

From: Jacqueline Sneed
Subject: Re: Other faiths
To: The Living Dharma Website <dharma@livingdharma.org>
Thanks for your reply. I do plan to continue seeking the teachings of Buddhism regardless of the obstacles that I might face.

From = Celin Garcia
Subject = from Judaism to Buddhism
Message = Understanding and incorporating “the four noble truths” as an early student I am experiencing difficulties living in the present moment also my meditations are still very clouded. Any suggestions will be kindly appreciated.

Dear Celin,
Thanks for visiting our Living Dharma Website. Even though we don’t practice sitting meditation in Shin Buddhism, I think your experiences with your practice are quite common to Buddhists, and maybe not just to beginners. But if the objective in practicing meditation is to achieve a perfectly clear, calm state of mind, one where you find yourself living absolutely in the moment, every moment—in other words, where you attain some kind of idyllic peace—that may be possible for some very skilled at meditation, but the founder of our tradition, Shinran Shonin, was not able to achieve this even after 20 years of hard practice. He did attain nirvana or awakening, but he understood it to have been accomplished solely through a power beyond himself. This power has various names, such as Amida Buddha, and can also be called the power of the Dharma. Paradoxically, it was only when Shinran, deeply seeing his limitations, gave up his self-efforts and took refuge in this greater power, that he was able to attain nirvana.

What is also radical about Shinran’s teaching is that, even after attaining nirvana (which he often termed “the one thought-moment” or instantaneous awakening), he still acknowledged his human imperfections. Actually, in juxtaposing his own efforts against those of the power of the Dharma, he humbly saw the limitations of his self-power even more clearly. To Shinran then, a buddha was not a person who had rid themselves of their ego problems; it was a person who simply was awake to their true, human nature. As Shinran wrote in his poem, the Shoshinge:

When the one thought-moment of joy arises,
Nirvana is attained without severing blind passions.
To Shinran, there is no nirvana without blind passions and thus, what is most important is not trying to become a “perfect” person; rather, it is attaining a humble attitude through being deeply self-aware of one’s own flaws and limitations, of their “blind passions.”

However, while this self-insight is negative, it also has a positive aspect. As we see in Shinran’s life, a dynamic creativity and compassionate wish to share the Dharma with others are the natural result. It is in fact the negative insight that then opens the door to the infinite life beyond the self. Therefore, considering Shinran’s example, your clouded meditations may not be an impediment to your practice. From a Shin Buddhist perspective, they might actually be your best “teacher” since they point to the true reality of your mind. Acknowledging the true nature of the self is not only the first step on the path of Buddhism, it is the entire path of Buddhism; it is seeing things as they really are.

I sincerely hope you continue your practice. Thank you for a great question.
Best Wishes,
Peter Hata

From = Cole
Subject = join?
Message = How can I join your temple?
Thanks, Cole.
Dear Cole,
Thanks for asking! There are many ways of participating and being a member. Informally you can just show up, participate in the services and events, and interact. Becoming a formal member is a sign of greater commitment and involvement, such as helping out financially, helping out in temple activities, and so on. Spiritually you may wish to seek out Kikyoshiki (confirmation) in which you formally take refuge in the Three Treasures of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and to the teachings of our school of Buddhism, Jodo Shinshu. So think about it! Come in and talk with us when you feel ready. There will be no pressure from our part. Everything is geared to the degree that you wish to engage in. Thanks again for asking and for desiring to join our temple. You are our future!
Sincerely,
Frederick Brenion

To: dharma@livingdharma.org
Please let me know when the next oldies dance will be. Thank you.

Gus Soto
Dear Gus,
Thanks for visiting our Living Dharma Website. As to your question, the next Oldies Dance should be on the last Saturday of March, 2012, which would be March 24. But I’ve also added your e-mail to our Oldies Dance list and you should automatically receive a reminder a few weeks before the dance with a flyer and all info.
Best Wishes,
Peter Hata
West Covina Buddhist Temple
Family Retreat

“Why Me? Why Not!”
(Buddhism in Our Daily Life)
Lecturer: Bishop Noriaki Ito

Date: Feb. 18 (Sat.)-19 (Sun.), 2012
Place: Newport Beach Higashi Honganji
254 Victoria St.
Costa Mesa, CA 92627
Fee: $35.00
Contact: (626) 913-0622

Schedule

Day 1, February 18th
9:00 am Opening Service
9:30 am Lecture
11:30 am Lunch Setup
12:00 pm Lunch
1:00 pm Outing to the Beach
5:00 pm Seiza
5:15 pm Evening Service
6:00 pm Dinner
7:30 pm Free Time
9:00 pm End of the Day

Day 2, February 19th
7:00 am Wake-Up
7:30 am Seiza
7:45 am Morning Service (Hondo)
8:30 am Breakfast
9:30 am Summary
10:30 am Sunday Service
11:00 am Discussion & Lunch
12:30 pm Clean-up
1:30 pm End of the Retreat

Bishop Noriaki Ito was born in 1948 in Kumamoto, Japan and came to the United States at the age of 6. He received his elementary and secondary education in East Los Angeles, graduating from Roosevelt High School. He enrolled at Occidental College and graduated with a degree in Religious Studies in 1971. He then spent four years in Kyoto, Japan where he received his M.A. from Otani University. While there, he received his ordination and ministerial training. He has been serving at the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles since 1975 with a six-year assignment as resident minister of the West Covina Higashi Honganji between 1987 and 1993. He assumed the position of Rinban of the Los Angeles Betsuin in 1993 and Bishop of the Higashi Honganji North America District in late 2010.
ウエストコビナ東本願寺
ファミリーリトリート

“お経のお話し”
(暮らしの中の仏教)

お話しいたします
河和田賢淳開教使

月 日: 2012年2月18日19日
場 所: ニューポートビーチ東本願寺
254 Victoria St.
Costa Mesa, CA 92627
参加費: $35.00
連絡先: (626) 913-0622

ウエストコビナ東本願寺では毎年家族リトリートをプレジデンスディーの週末に開催しております。今年はニューポートビーチ東本願寺をお借りして開催いたします。内容は講義、座談、ビーチでの野外活動などで家族一緒にお楽しみいただけるプログラムが組まれております。お寺に宿泊される参加者はモーテル、ホテルにも宿泊可能です。日常をはなれ仏法にただ耳を傾けるよい機会です。どうぞお誘いの上ご参加ください。詳しくはウエストコビナ東本願寺河和田開教使までお尋ねください。

(626) 913−062
お寺ニュース

ペット追悼法要

来る2月12日（日）午前10時よりペット追悼法要を勤めます。法要では日曜学校のこども達が向きペットの写真や絵などを持つおり追悼会を執り行い、動物のいのちからいのちの尊さ、他のいのちと共にいきること学びます。皆様もご一緒に参りください。

お寺家族リトリート

センター桜祭り

来る3月31日センターの桜祭りが開催されます。今年もお寺は、この桜祭りに照り焼きチキンとお寿司をもって参加致します。この行事をもって寺の基金募集並びに地元への宣伝も兼ねて行うことができると思います。つきましては皆様にお寿司の協力をお願い申し上げます。巻寿司でもお稲荷さんでも結構です。当日朝午前11時までにお寺に届けていただければ幸いです。ご協力お願い申し上げます。
February
2 7:30 pm Howakai Japanese Service
5 8:30 am Board Meeting
5 10:00 am Shotsuki Service/Nirvana Day Service
12 10:00 am Sunday Service/Pets Memorial Service
14 10:00 am Bonbu Class
17-19 WCBT Family Retreat
19 No Sunday Service
26 10:00 am Sunday Service
28 10:00 am Bonbu Class

March
1 7:30 pm Howakai Japanese Service
4 8:30 am Board Meeting
4 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
11 10:00 am Sunday Service
13 10:00 am Bonbu Class
18 4:30 pm Ohigan Service
24 8:00 pm Oldies Dance
25 10:00 am Sunday Service
27 10:00 am Bonbu Class
31 10:00 am Cherry Blossom Festival

2月行事予定
2日 午後7時半 法話会
5日 午前8時半 理事会
5日 午前10時 祥月法要
12日 午前10時 日曜礼拝 ベット追悼法要
14日 午後 1時 同信会 (座談会)
17日 - 19日 家族リトリート
19日 日曜礼拝はありません
26日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
28日 午後 1時 同信会 (座談会)

3月行事予定
1日 午後7時半 法話会
4日 午前8時半 理事会
4日 午前10時 祥月法要
11日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
13日 午前10時 宝剣会
18日 午後4時半 お彼岸法要
24日 午後 8時 ダンス基金募集
25日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
31日 午後12時 センター桜まつり

仏法には
明日ということは
あるまじき
蓮如上人