I’d like to thank Mr. Fred Brenion for all his help this past year in replying to the website’s e-mail. Recently, he and I had an interesting discussion about the ins and outs of Buddhist e-mail responding. I think we might have different “survival strategies,” but ultimately we agreed that, while it is often a challenge to respond in a way that we are satisfied with, we do enjoy the challenge. Reading or interpreting someone’s question and trying to respond to it in a meaningful, personal way is an example of the Mahayana Buddhist path of studying and sharing the Dharma together with others.

Many thanks also to layout staff Hisako Koga and Rev. Kawawata, to Diane Hata and Richard Kagawa for their monthly reports, and to Mary Hatakeyama and her dedicated mailing helpers. If you’re interested in joining

Please see L.D. NEWS, con’t on page 4

NEW YEAR’S GREETING
Bishop Ko Yasuhara, Chief Administrator, Shinshu Otani-ha denomination

Those who truly attain shinjin as they utter Amida’s Name, being mindful of the Buddha always, wish to respond to the great benevolence

Those who say the Name while they doubt the Vow beyond conceptual understanding attain birth and abide for five-hundred years vainly within a palace; so it is taught.

As I reflect on the meaning of the two verses from the Wasan, the hymns written by Shinran, I express my New Year’s greetings to all of you at the start of this most auspicious year of the 750th Memorial for Shinran Shōnin.

The much anticipated 750th Memorial will begin on March 19 and will continue for 71 days, and will culminate with the special 750th HOONKO services in November. Special projects in commemoration of the 750th Memorial included the renovation of the two main halls, the restoration of the Bando version of the Kyogyoshinshō, and many other projects in preparation of this historic event. These efforts have proceeded in hopes of restoring our every-

Please see SOCHO, con’t on page 4
DHARMA SCHOOL NEWS

Change is difficult to accept. Santa Claus has seen and heard it all. Decades ago, Santa was searching through his bottomless bag for Transformers and Cabbage Patch dolls. This year he may need to stock up on things beginning with “i”...iPad, iPod touch, etc.

The year 2011 will have its share of unexpected changes, but those of us involved with Dharma School look forward to more new faces as well as the wonderful faces of those students who come each Sunday. Happy New Year!

With Gassho,
Diane Hata

Quote of the Month
No matter what your circumstances, you must seek to awaken to the Dharma. In this highly technological society, our lives have become increasingly mechanized so as to be dehumanizing. Even then we still bear the capacity to reflect on ourselves and seek for truth without which we would have no chance of ever truly living.

-Ryoshun Nakano

Higashi Honganji North American District Kyoshi Training Program

Above: From December 16~18, 2010, Higashi Honganji’s North American District ministers, priests, and minister’s assistants gathered for the Second Phase of the Kyoshi Training Program; (seated) Bishop Noriaki Ito, Minister’s Assistant Fred Brenion, Rev. Dr. Michihiro Ama, Rev. Patti Nakai, Minister’s Assistant Peter Hata, Rev. Shig Morita; (standing) Auditor Steve Toyoshima; Rev. Ryoko Osa, Rev. Ken Yamada, Rev. Paul Imahara, Rev. Nobuko Miyoshi, Rev. Ted Shimizu, Former Bishop Akinori Imai, Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa (note: Rev. Ken Kawawata had been called to Japan on a family matter)

BISHOP, con’t from page 1

I represent all of us in expressing our deepest gratitude to former Bishop Imai for the wonderful work he did in advancing the growth of the district and of our individual temples. Thanks to his dedication, our educational programs have enriched the lives of all of its participants. In addition, we recently completed the second phase of the Kyoshi Training Program and we hope to have three new full-fledged ministers by the end of this year.

It is, therefore, with some reservations that I assume this position, wondering if I can live up to the work that has been done by my predecessors who have held this title. This is especially true because I will be continuing in my role as Rinban of the Los Angeles Betsuin. But I also know that I will have the support of the staffs of the District office and our Betsuin, and the ministers and leaders of the other temples as well. I will do my best to fulfill the expectations given to me by those for whom I owe my appointment and from all of you, the Sangha members of our district.

2011, as you know, is the year in which we observe the 750th Memorial Service for Shinran Shonin. The 11th World Dobo Convention will be held in May as part of the 750th special events and services. Since this special memorial service is held only every 50 years, it has been referred to in our history as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We will eventually be observing our own 750th memorial services here in our district and most likely at our temples also. However, I appeal to all of you to consider joining our tour to the service at the Honzan, our mother temple, and the convention as well. It would be wonderful to have a strong presence there to show how active our North America District is.

Having been in this district for 35 years as of 2011, I feel fortunate to have Dharma friends not only at the Betsuin, but at all of our temples as well. I will try to attend as many events at each of the temples as my schedule will permit. Please feel free to contact me regarding any concerns or suggestions you might have (213-626-4200; ito@hhbt-la.org). I look forward to seeing all of you soon.

In closing, I ask that you continue your support of our district and of the temple to which you belong. May we continue to proceed together on the path of the Nembutsu. May we continue to listen diligently to the teaching of the Buddhadharm as interpreted by our spiritual forebear, Shinran Shonin.
New Years Day Service
A special service to commemorate the new year will be held Saturday, January 1, 2011, at 10:00 AM. Following the service, Jeanne Kawawata will be serving her delicious Oshiruko so please let Rev. Ken know if you’re planning to attend.

Eitaikyo Service
WCBT 2011 Eitaikyo Service and General Meeting will be held on January 23, 2010 at 10:00 AM. Bishop Noriaki Ito will be our special speaker. 2011 Temple board members and JR YBA officers with be installed during the General Meeting. A special benefit Eitaikyo Bento provided by the Jr. YBA will follow the general meeting.

Bonbu Class
The Bonbu Class will meet on January 11 and 25 at 10:00 AM in classroom #6. Discussions will focus on deepening our knowledge of Buddhism as well as how we can reflect Buddhism in our everyday life. The class meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. For more information, please call Rev. Ken (626) 913-0622.

Pet Memorial Service
A special service will be held on February 13 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.

SLO Family Retreat
The 2011 Family Retreat will be held on President’s Weekend February 18-20 at the San Luis Obispo Buddhist Temple, with guest speaker Rev. Mas Kodani. Don’t miss out on this memorable experience. It’s always the perfect weekend getaway set in a beautiful location (see photo below), stimulating discussions with friends, outdoor activities and plenty of delicious food. See Rev Ken for more info.

The beautiful San Luis Obispo Buddhist Church, the location of our Family Retreat on February 18-20, is just off the 101 between the city of San Luis Obispo and Avila Beach. It’s nestled in a quiet, secluded area surrounded by woodsy hillsides with the beach just a short drive (or a long walk) away. A weekend in this peaceful setting, breathing the serene, fresh air, will leave you wanting to return again and again.

January Birthdays
Tami Kitaura, Casey Hansen, Kevin Mackawa, Susan Kashiwabara, Carol Oshima, Neil Kato, Kathy Oshima, Cora Ormseth, Matthew Ormseth, Kristen Nakano, Jesse Sakaue
day lives based on our true entrusting of the teachings. I wish to express our deepest appreciation and respect to all of the members of our greater Sangha for your support that was essential in order for us to advance this cause.

The meaning of our being able to receive the blessing to be here together just prior to the 750th Memorial is that each one of us has received the opportunity to become even closer to the teachings of Shinran Shōnin, and receive the karmic opportunity to walk ever more diligently on the path of the Buddhadharma. As it is taught in the stanza quoted above, we are reminded of the “shinjin that is directed to us by Amida.”

Shinran Shōnin was a person who through his encounter with his teacher, Hōnen Shōnin, who, being in the midst of a history of relieving suffering, came to confirm the truth of Amida Buddha. This confirmation comes in the form of the Shoshinge which teaches us who are living in the midst of much anguish today of the human condition that we share with all others. The teaching of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism that Shinran Shōnin clarified to us is the vehicle with which we can find and confirm a positive direction in our everyday lives, the true “path” which we can embark on.

On the occasion of the beginning of this auspicious year, I hope that the heart of the two stanzas from the hymns of Shinran Shōnin that serve as his own confessional reverberate deep within our hearts. Furthermore, as we continue our everyday lives reciting the Nembutsu, that we keep in mind the question of the palace of emptiness and loneliness and that we direct our ears towards Shinran’s calling to realize that indeed “the path is already settled.” On the eve of the 750th Memorial observance, it is my wish that we continue to be inspired to live every day on that path.

L.D. NEWS, con’t from page 1

our staff, or contributing in any way to the Gateway, please feel free to contact Rev. Kawawata or anyone on the staff.

Gassho,
Peter Hata

Selected E-mail

From = Kara
Subject = Gassho
Message = Dear Advisor,
Hello, I want to know how to perform a gassho properly. Also, there is this program that says a gassho is performed for 21 days and I want to know if I can do it longer than that.

Thanks,
Kara

Dear Kara,

Thanks for visiting our Living Dharma Website. As to your question about the proper method of gassho, I’m not sure explaining it in detail would be of any help to you since the etiquette varies according to specific tradition. We have a specific way in the Higashi Honganji (Shin) Buddhist Tradition, which you can catch at least a sense of in the pics I attached from a recent service of ours. Most importantly, note the attitude of “bowing,” the sincere act which is at the core of Buddhist ritual.

Regarding your question about length of gassho, I personally do not know of any “length of gassho” restrictions. However, I’m not sure what “program” you are referring to, or why anyone would want to gassho for 21 days, let alone longer than that, especially if you mean “continuously.” In our tradition, gassho is accomplished by the saying of “Namu Amida Butsu,” the full name of Amida Buddha, and our founder, the 13th century priest Shinran Shōnin, clarified that it is not the number of times (or length) of saying the name of the Buddha that can facilitate our attaining Nirvana, but rather the sincerity of our entrusting in the wisdom of the Buddhist teachings themselves. Thus, although there are moments in a typical Shin Buddhist service when everyone gasshos together as if “on cue”—such as before and after chanting sutras, on the reading of the Three Treasures, and so forth—it should not be understood as an act we do because the pro-
L.D. NEWS, con’t from page 4

operations. But we know the self for what it is and we carry on anyway. So, the real question you should be asking is “should you help others even when you’re thinking of yourself?” The answer is obvious. Yes. What you wrote in your letter is also the foundational thought of Mahayana Buddhism, the Bodhisattva path. The Bodhisattva strives to do two things, and they’re done together. The Bodhisattva wants to save others because in that way he/she will save him/herself (find happiness). The Bodhisattva wants to save him/herself, because in that way he/she can save others. In our own tradition of Jodo Shinshu we tell the story of Dharmakara Bodhisattva who makes vows to save others and he realizes that he can’t reach Buddhahood till all others reach it. And because he has reached Buddhahood he is able to welcome all others into his Pure Land. In some ways this sounds like one of those Zen koans. In a way, it is, because our lives are our koans. With this understanding it is clear that in thinking of others you are also thinking of yourself. In thinking of yourself you think of all others. This is because we are all interconnected together. Without all others, then who are you? Who am I? What is left when everything else is removed? And if you are removed then what then of the others? Are they not less, different? You and others together are the basis of the happy life, the good life.

Thank you for asking your question. Answering it is found in the daily life and growth of being a Buddhist. You will be answering this question for yourself every moment of your life.

Sincerely,
Frederick Brenion

From = Alex
Subject = Thank you, and a question
Message =
Your webpage has helped me come to a better understanding of Buddhism. Thank you very much for your well thought-out and well-written information. This website is a gift that I greatly appreciate, as it has also given me much to think about.
I have question, but I’m not quite sure how to phrase it. I am sorry if this is unclear- I tend to think best when I write things out, but that can sometimes make what I mean unclear to others. I would still appreciate any thoughts, answers, or suggestions you have.
The website says “Finally, Shin Buddhism cautions us to always remember that, even if we do awaken to the Dharma and to our true, egocentric nature, we don’t become “better” people.” We’re still egotistical, judgmental, impatient, fallible and arrogant. In that sense, Buddhism is really beyond ethics, beyond “right and wrong,” because it accepts, with compassion, that to be human is to be flawed. However, though we don’t become “better” (more moral) people, we do gain insight. As mentioned above, what can change is the way we look at our lives and our relationship to others. We can come to see that our lives and, indeed, all life, is both interdependent and precious. This insight can have a profound and transforming effect on how we live our lives.
Would not the transformation affected on our lives change who we are, and generally make us better people? By accepting and coming to compassionate understanding of both ourselves and our surroundings, would not much (most?) of the judgment, egoism, and arrogance disappear?
I have participated in a non-religious program that has led me to many beliefs (truths) I see mirrored in Buddhism. It has been several years since I attended this program, but it continues to be part of my life and to affect changes that have altered me at the most basic levels, making me a much better person. The knowledge of both myself and others I gained has created a person that is much less arrogant, judgmental, and impatient. I recognize that I am still all of those things & have only just begun to be on the right path, but I consider myself a much better person than I was before I began on this path.
Maybe “better” is not the right word since I don’t believe one person is “better” than another, but certainly a person that is more moral, compassionate, and understanding. Does not the knowledge sought in Buddhism also create this change? It seems like following the Dharma would inevitably lead to a similar transformation?
Dear Alex,
Thanks for visiting our Living Dharma Website. As to your questions, yes, we can be transformed, and I’m happy to hear of your progress along the path. Interestingly however, the passage you quoted is expressing the Buddhist teaching from the unique viewpoint of the founder of Shin Buddhism, Shinran Shonin. Shinran cautioned his followers against claiming they had “arrived” or that they were “better” (more ethical) than other people or other traditions. Shinran diligently practiced the most difficult practices of the Tendai sect for 20 years, yet gave up because he deeply realized he had not rid himself of the basic 3 poisons of all human beings: greed, anger, and ignorance. But paradoxically, in acknowledging his failure and giving up his self-power practices—in deeply realizing his own essential human limitations—he awakened to the same insight about the self that Shakya-muni Buddha did 2500 years ago. Shinran became a most humble person because of his deep insight, and many people began to look upon him as a teacher, if not indeed as a buddha. He however, always called himself a “foolish being” and once made the statement, “I am the most evil person.” In this sense, unlike other Buddhist traditions, where the student attempts to “ascend the ladder” towards greater and greater purity, some teachers state that the Shin Buddhist actually descending deeper and deeper into the truth of their human nature.
In any case, I think you’re headed in a good direction, Alex, and you appear to be well aware that the “goal” is not so much to be “perfect,” but rather to be aware or awake to our true selves. From a Shin perspective, this seeking path can ultimately be a wonderfully liberating, dynamic lifestyle.

Best Wishes,
Peter Hata
The Living Dharma Website
Please see L.D. NEWS, con’t on page 6
To: dharma@livingdharma.org
From: Ven. Rashen Barua
Subject: For Visit.
Message: Dera Ajahn, How do you do? I am happy. I am not only a Buddhist Monk but also I am Student (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University). I am very agree & interest for participate in your Temple End Of Buddhist Lent Ceremony time. Please help me. I am agree to donation in your temple. Please give me reply & mobile number. I am waiting for your reply.
Take care
God bless you
Ven. Rashe Barua
Bangkok, Thailand.

Dear Ven. Rashen Barua,
It is a privilege for us to receive your email from Thailand. It is a reminder to us how international Buddhism is! Let me first commend you on your vocation as a monk and a student. I think that in Buddha’s eyes they are one and the same! Buddha was open to all and thus learned from all. He is our supreme teacher because he was a supreme student, and we benefit from what he learned. There are many schools within Buddhism. It is said that there are 84,000 Dharma Doors from which to choose. Our temple belongs to one of those different doors, called Shin Buddhism or Jodo Shinshu. It our tradition we don’t have Buddhist Lent, though I think that is a very noble idea, commemorating the period of time when Buddha and his monks would dwell in one spot during the rainy season. Unfortunately in our part of California, it’s been a non-stop drought season! Anyway, while we appreciate your gesture, it would really be unfeasible for you to travel all the way to California and back. We do wish you well and hope that you excel as a student at the University, and as a student on the Buddhist path as a monk.
Sincerely,
Frederick Brenion

From: Charles Miller
Subject: John Bush’s “The Yatra Trilogy: Journey Into Buddhism - A Visual Pilgrimage”
To: dharma@livingdharma.org
From the earliest images of the Buddha’s footprint to the gargantuan statues of Southeast Asia to the awe-inspiring intricacy of Tibetan mandalas, dharma imagery has inspired humans to stick to the path. So it seems only natural that the digital age would bring us digital aids for practice meant to inspire authentic devotion in the same spirit as seventeenth-century Laotian wood-carving of the Buddha’s hand. Such is the motive behind The Yatra Trilogy, three films directed, written and produced by John Bush. A longtime Buddhist, Bush set out to document his own pilgrimage (Yatra is the Sanskrit word for “sacred journey”) through Asia for the benefit of as many people as possible. This is a popular series; Vajra Sky Over Tibet had over 400 broadcasts on PBS stations last year. And, in late May of 2011 the entire Trilogy will be be offered as a mini series on PBS stations across the country presented by WGBH & American Public Television.
“Offers up the mesmerizing beauty and ineffable power of places most of will never see.” Tricycle
“Viewers will be awed by this luminous world, so rarely captured on film.” Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
“These visually stunning documentaries are cinematic pilgrimages to legendary places in Southeast Asia and Tibet. Journey into the living traditions and vanished civilizations of this vibrant part of the world and explore the universal ideals of wisdom, compassion and inner peace at the very heart of these ancient Buddhist cultures.” PBS
日本語座談会ご案内
1月11日と25日
午後1時
センターダイニングルーム
気軽に参加出来る座談会です。
お友達をお誘いの上お出で下さい。

1月祥月法要
法話会
1月6日 午後7時半
お寺ニュース
修正会法要
2011年最初の法要となります、修正会法要が1月1日(日)午前10時よりお勤めされます。皆さんと正信偈をお勤めし、その後河和田開教使の新年の挨拶があります。法要後河和田ジニー夫人の作ったおしるこを頂き、皆様と新年の挨拶を交わします。どうぞこの新年初のお参りにご家族お揃いでお参りください。一年は初めを正信偈のおつとめで始めましょう。

2011年度
永代経法要・教団総会
2011年度永代経法要1月23日午前10時より厳修されます。今年も昨年同様、御法話にはこの度か北米開教監督に就任された伊東憲昭輪番を御招きしております。法要後教団総会が開かれ新年度の役員が選出されます。お寺の大事な総会です。どうぞ法要、総会にご出席ください。またお斎は仏教青年会のより唐揚げチキン弁当が用意されます。お弁当は8ドルでこの収益金は仏教育年会の活動資金として使用されます。テイクアウトもできますのでお知らせください。

法話会
今年の法話会は並び日本語祥月法要は来る1月6日午後7時半より勤められます。どうぞご家族、お友達をお誘いの上1月祥月法要にお参りください。

お寺家族リトリート
来る2月18日(金)−20日(日)家族リトリートをサンルイスオビスポ西本願寺にて開催いたします。この度は御講師に洗心寺の小谷政雄師をお招きしております。サンルイスオビスポ西本願寺は丁度ロスとサンフランシスコのの中間点にあたる場所でお寺は山間地に立てられておりに囲まれ静かな研修である場所です。また近くには温泉もあり、お寺に宿泊しない参加者はこのアビラ温泉や他のモーテル、ホテルにも宿泊可能です。日常をはなれ仏法にたずねるよい機会です。どうぞお誘いの上ご参加ください。詳しくは河和田開教使までお尋ねください。

既 有 此 道
宗務総長 安 原 晃
弥陀の名号となえつつ
信心まことにうるひとは
憶念の心つねにして
仏恩報ずるおもいあり
誓願不思議をうたがいて
御名を称する徳は
宮殿のうちで五百歳
むなしくすごとどきたまう

冠頭二首の御和讃を
押し、2011年、宗祖親鸞聖人750回御遠忌「御正當年」の年頭にあたり、ご宗門の皆様にご挨拶を申しあげます。

よいよ本年は、3月19日から71日間わたり御遠忌法要が、また11月には御正當報恩講がおとどまる年です。今年まで、御遠忌特別記念事業であります真宗本廟両堂等御修復事業、そして「教行信証」(坂東本)の御修復、さまざまなお侍受けの事業も、信心の生活回復を期す歴史的営為が着実に進められてまいりました。これもひとえに、宗門各位の信力のたまものと、心より深く敬意と感謝を表す次第であります。

今、宗祖御遠忌御正當の「とき」をたまわります意義は、私たち一人ひとりが、いっそう身近に、親鸞聖人の教え、歩まれた仏道に学ぶご縁をいただくことをおいて他にありません。まさしくそれは、冠頭の御和讃において教えられますところの「如来よりたまわりたる信心」の課題でありますよ。

親鸞聖人は、師法然上人との出会いを通じ、救済の歴史に召され歴史に立って、如来が真実であることを証しられた方であります。その歴史的確信を聖人は「正信偈」をもって告白され、今日私たちに、苦悩の現実に立ち、他と共にある在り方を教え示してくださっております。聖人が願してくださった真宗仏教は、現代を生きる私たちの生活に確実な方向を、すなわち人生の歩むべき「道」を与えてくださるものであります。

新たに、この記念すべき年の初めに、あらためて冠頭二首・教信誠疑の御和讃の心を深くいただきたいと思います。そして、念仏する生活のなかで、宮殿のうちの空過という「問い」を執持いたし、私たちを呼び起こし支えてくださる聖人の「すでにこの道あり」との声に耳を澄ませ、御遠忌御正當の一日一日を大切に尽くしてまいりたく念ずる次第です。

お寺ニュース
修正会法要
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センターダイニングルーム
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宗務総長 安原晃

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—すでにこの道あり—
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よいよ本年は、3月19日から71日間わたり御遠忌法要が、また11月には御正當報恩講がおとどまる年です。今年まで、御遠忌特別記念事業であります真宗本廟両堂等御修復事業、そして「教行信証」(坂東本)の御修復、さまざまなお侍受けの事業も、信心の生活回復を期す歴史的営為が着実に進められてまいりました。これもひとえに、宗門各位の信力のたまものと、心より深く敬意と感謝を表す次第であります。

今、宗祖御遠忌御正當の「とき」をたまわります意義は、私たち一人ひとりが、いっそう身近に、親鸞聖人の教え、歩まれた仏道に学ぶご縁をいただくことをおいて他にありません。まさしくそれは、冠頭の御和讃において教えられますところの「如来よりたまわりたる信心」の課題であります。

親鸞聖人は、師法然上人との出会いを通じ、救済の歴史に召され歴史に立って、如来が真実であることを証しられた方であります。その歴史的確信を聖人は「正信偈」をもって告白され、今日私たちに、苦悩の現実に立ち、他と共にある在り方を教え示してくださっております。聖人が願してくださった真宗仏教は、現代を生きる私たちの生活に確実な方向を、すなわち人生の歩むべき「道」を与えてくださるものであります。

新たに、この記念すべき年の初めに、あらためて冠頭二首・教信誠疑の御和讃の心を深くいただきたいと思います。そして、念仏する生活のなかで、宮殿のうちの空過という「問い」を執持いたし、私たちを呼び起こし支えてくださる聖人の「すでにこの道あり」との声に耳を澄ませ、御遠忌御正當の一日一日を大切に尽くしてまいりたく念ずる次第です。
January 2011

1 10:00 am New Year’s Day Service
6 7:30 pm Howakai Japanese Service
9 8:30 am Board Meeting
9 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
12 10:00 am Bonbu Class
16 10:00 am Sunday Service
23 10:00 am Eitaikyo Service/General Meeting
25 10:00 am Bonbu Class
30 10:00 am Sunday Service

February

3 7:30 pm Howakai Japanese Service
6 8:30 am Board Meeting
6 10:00 am Shotsuki Service/Nirvana Day Service
8 10:00 am Bonbu Class
11-13 WCBT Family Retreat
13 No Sunday Service
20 10:00 am Sunday Service/Pet Memorial Day
22 10:00 am Bonbu Class
27 10:00 am Sunday Service

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