



GATEWAY



March 2011 -- Vol. XLV No. 3

Living Dharma News
www.livingdharma.org

New on the site is, "The Best Kept Secret in Buddhism: Shin Buddhism in America," by Dr. Alfred Bloom. Dr. Bloom reviews recent declines in American Shin Buddhist Sanghas but also clearly outlines the potential of Shin's appeal to Americans as a demanding discipline of the heart, not merely as a self-centered means to gain one's personal salvation. Shinran deeply—and realistically—understood the nature of our ineradicable egoism, and thus altered the general Buddhist assumption that enlightenment could be achieved through determined, rigorous practice. As Dr. Bloom states, "For Shinran, if salvation were possible, it is only possible by virtue of the Buddha's action, not from a practitioner's own finite, unstable mind and actions."

Also interesting is a resolution passed by the BCA's Federation of Buddhist Women's Associations (FBWA) at their recent national meeting in Sacramento. In my opinion, it is not a coincidence that this issue is originating from American Sanghas. Their resolution was a petition to the BCA National Board and Council to "encourage" all BCA temples to display pictures of Eshinni [Shinran's wife] and Kakushinni [his daughter] in places of honor near the onaijin. After Shinran's death in 1262, Kakushinni was instrumental in establishing a shrine to her father, which later became the Honganji, the institution which has preserved Shinran's teaching for us today. Also, Shin abbots (Higashi and Nishi *monshu*) trace their lineage to Shinran through Kakushinni, not through any of Shinran's sons. It will be interesting to note what action the BCA takes. Perhaps the FBWA members are consciously or unconsciously addressing certain often-mentioned

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Above: WCBT's 2011 Family Retreat participants happily pose for the normally outdoor group picture, despite being moved indoors to the San Luis Obispo Buddhist Temple's hondo due to heavy rain (crab bibs are tantalizing remnants of the previous evening's crab feast!)

The 2011 WCBT Family Retreat: *Jiri-Rita: Benefitting Self and Benefitting Others*

Over the President's Day weekend of February 18-20, 35 members of West Covina Buddhist Temple made their annual trek up the California coast to the beautiful San Luis Obispo Buddhist Temple for their 2011 Family Retreat. These retreats have been an annual occurrence since the late 1980s, and usually there is rain in the forecast, and this year was no exception. However, even if there is rain on the way up, once the retreat begins, the rain always seems to yield to clear blue skies. However, this year was different, and even after our Saturday morning seiza meditation and service, with the Shoshinge chant led by young Noah Kowalski, it was still raining heavily and in fact, the rain continued all day Saturday, necessitating alternate plans. Of course, though everyone might have been initially disappointed with not being able to visit Avila Beach or the Monarch Butterfly Grove at Pismo Beach, the rain not only

allowed for additional time to interact with featured speaker, Rev. Mas Kodani of Senshin Buddhist Temple, the Sangha was able to get in some gatha singing practice.

Rev. Kodani began his talk by providing some background info about the SLO temple (currently celebrating its 85th year), including descriptions of some of the retreats his own Senshin Sangha had experienced there, such as

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Temple Event Highlights:

- Mar. 13, Ohigan Service
- Mar. 19, Cherry Blossam Festival
- Mar. 26, Oldies Dance
- April 3, Hanamatsuri Service
- Please See Temple News



T H E G A T E W A Y

DHARMA SCHOOL NEWS

Valentine's Day was an exciting event at the local schools (candy, candy, cupcakes, candy). The Dharma School staff and students enjoyed their version of Valentine's Day at the Atria Retirement Home in Covina, CA on February 13th. Toddler members, Ella Tomita and Andrew Kobayashi made our annual visit extra special just by their mere presence! Thanks to our former students for accompanying us, lending their hands to the distribution of valentines. Hope you enjoy the enclosed pics!

With Gassho,
Diane Hata

DHARMA SCHOOL VISITATION

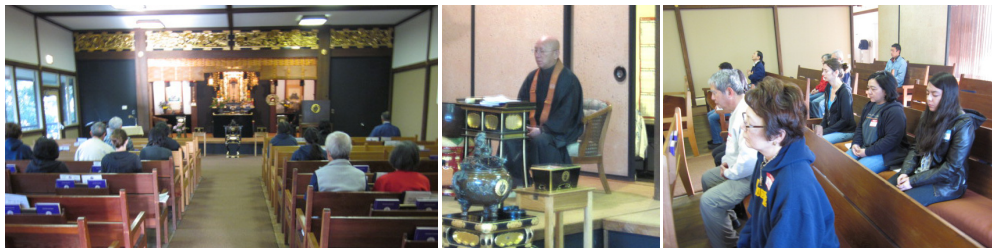


WCBT FAMILY RETREAT 2011

Quote of the Month

When we are able to see our true nature, we receive what is called awareness or insight in Buddhism. This insight is the "namu" part of the nembutsu, of the phrase "namu amida butsu." It is the attitude of humility. Receiving this attitude of Namu is the most important part of the nembutsu. It is the bowing aspect. But it is not 'I bow my head.' It is "my head being persuaded to bow by other power." Such a rich, wide-open world opens up for you once you wipe out self-centeredness. And the key to achieving that is to understand "how dumb I am."

-Rev. Gyoko Saito





T H E G A T E W A Y

T E M P L E N E W S

Oldies Dance XXXVIII

Oldies XXXVIII, "Make it a Date!" is set for Saturday March 26, in the Year of the Rabbit. 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. Please note that the dance will end 30 minutes earlier so our clean-up hopefully will end earlier. Donations are welcome for raffle prizes and drinks. Sign-up sheets for drinks will be at the Sunday service.

Please note that the dance will end 30 minutes earlier so our clean-up hopefully will also end earlier.

Cherry Blossom Festival

Amidst the rains and chills of winter there is a hint of a coming spring, and the scent of cherry blossoms fills our minds. It is time to celebrate the Cherry Blossom Festival hosted by ESGVJCC on Saturday, March 19, 12 PM. Our Temple will be selling our delicious teriyaki chicken and the Howakai's excellent sushi. We will need help in preparing the teriyaki the night before, and to sell on the day of the festival.

The Center is asking for 6 volunteers from Temple to help set up the booths starting from 8 am that morning, and 4 volunteers to assist with the clean up after the festival. These volunteers are to help the Center and are separate from our own booth - cleaning up our WCBT booth does not qualify as helping the Center's clean up! So please volunteer to help our Temple's booth and the Center. Look for the sign up list when it comes around, or let your Toban Chairs or Rev. Ken know. Lend a hand as needed as we come together

as a Temple to celebrate the newness of life that comes with the blossoming of the Cherry Tree.

Spring Ohigan Service

Spring Ohigan will be observed on March 20 at 4:30 PM. Our special guest speaker will be Rev. Bill Briones. Please join us in welcoming Rev. Briones and stay for the complimentary otoki dinner following the service.

WCBT Hanamatsuri

West Covina's Hanamatsuri Service will be held on Sunday, April 3, at 10:00 AM. Everyone is invited to arrive early with flowers to decorate the *Hanamido*. There will be a special performance by the Dharma school children and light refreshments will be served after the service. We invite you to come and join us to celebrate the Buddha's birthday!

LACBF Hanamatsuri

The Federation Hanamatsuri Service will be held on the April 10 beginning at 1:00 PM at Nishi Honganji in downtown LA. Everyone is encouraged to attend the LACBF service after our Shotsuki Service.

Study Center Lecture Series

The Study Center Lecture Series continues in April with "Modern Thinkers of Shin Buddhism." Rev. Nobuki Miyoshi will give the lectures on April 5th & 12th and Bishop Noriaki Ito will continue on April 19th & 26th. The lectures will be held every Tuesday evenings in April at 7:00 PM. More information will be in the April Gateway or contact Rev. Ken.

15th Annual Golf Classic

Mark your calendars for WCBT's 15th Annual Golf Classic which will be held on Friday, May 6, at the Pacific Palms Golf Course in the City of Industry. It will be a shot-gun start at 1:00 PM. More details will be in upcoming Gateways or contact Jack or Julie.

GATEWAY Staff

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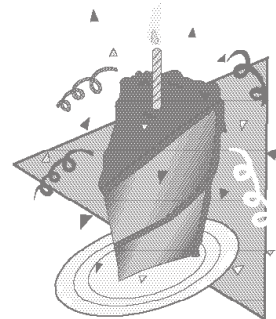
West Covina Buddhist Temple Mission Statement:
In the spirit of universal brotherhood, West Covina Buddhist Temple provides the opportunity for all to listen to and share the Teachings of the Buddha in order that we may awaken to our true selves, living our lives fully and dynamically.

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MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Brandon Kawaguchi, Kendra Kagawa, Brion Martinez, Edward Miyashiro, Cathy Nakano, Karolyn Fujimoto, Joy Kitaura, Steve Takemoto, Kelley Sakoda, Frank Konno, Kathy Masai, Bob Yamashita, Danny Iwama, Lee Ezaki, Karen Ezaki, Clare Hansen, Dick Koga, Leo Kowalski, Ken Kawawata, Miki Fukusumi, Tamara Teregawa, Allisa Arnheim, Dana Yamada



T H E G A T E W A Y

WCBT FAMILY RETREAT 2011





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one with the noted Rinzai Zen master, Sasaki Roshi. Even though WCBT is of course a Jodo Shinshu tradition, Kodani-sensei's insights into his Zen experience were interesting because a form of sitting meditation—three 15 minutes sessions of seiza meditation—was an important part of our retreat. Thus it was instructive when Rev. Kodani related his own experience of heightened self-consciousness during meditation: “Group sitting sessions show you how big your ego is—how self-conscious you are about coughing and even just swallowing.” Sitting meditation is valuable even though not emphasized in Shin Buddhism because, “Seeing the ego-self is Jodo Shinshu.”

Moving on to the retreat's theme, Jiri- Rita or “benefitting self, benefitting others,” Rev. Kodani clarified that “This phrase does not refer to American values like ‘love yourself and then love others’; in Buddhism, there is no self.” Though difficult, we have to think beyond the duality of “myself and everyone else” and that, “In Buddhism, benefitting self and benefitting others is not two things, but one thing.”

Next, in order to shed more light not only on this central Buddhist concept of non-duality but on other key concepts as well, Kodani sensei introduced what he called “the seven things we need to clear about as Buddhists.” The first of these is the word, “Buddha,” which has two meanings: on the one hand it refers of course to Shakyamuni, a human being who awakened to the ultimate truth or reality, but on the other hand it also can refer not to a historical person but to that reality itself that Shakyamuni awakened to. He noted that in Jodo Shinshu, this all-encompassing reality is known by various names such as Amida Buddha, *nyorai* (Japanese), or *tathagata* (a Sanskrit term which means “one who comes from reality or suchness”). Kodani sensei clarified that while this reality is also called *bodhi* or “enlightenment,” this enlightenment is more accurately thought of as a transforming experience that is highly diverse—including the experiences of

such awakened beings as Shakyamuni, Shinran, and the Dalai Lama—and ultimately indescribable. In addition, he emphasized that while some Buddhists may hope to receive personal benefits from a buddha, “Petitional prayer (e.g., to Amida) is forbidden in Shin; it's a mindless exercise.” As a concrete example, he advised that, “If you desire world peace, then work for it, don't pray to God or Buddha.”

Rev. Kodani then spoke more about *bodhi*, the second of the seven terms he wanted to clarify. He said that in Shinshu, *bodhi* or enlightenment is often referred to as “birth in the Pure Land” or *shinjin*. He wanted to clarify some common misunderstandings: “Especially in Nishi, you have people who say ‘I have *shinjin*...and you don't’; also, Nishi tends to have more people who take the ‘Pure Land’ literally.”

The third key term is Karma, of which Kodani sensei said, “Most people think of it in the Hindu terms of “good vs. bad karma,” but the word simply means ‘action.’” Again, referring to the non-dual essence of Buddhist teachings, he pointed out that, rather than saying “I'm a person doing karma,” Shakyamuni actually said, “I am karma.” In addition, this explains the difference between Buddhism and Hinduism; whereas Buddha denied the existence of a permanent soul, Hindus believe in a reincarnating soul whose fate in each succeeding lifetime depends on one's “good or bad” acts. Politically speaking, the concept of karma was then used in Indian society to control and maintain the caste system; as Rev. Kodani put it, “karma + soul = caste.” Also, in terms of us “being our actions” (i.e., being our karma), “We are all killers”—we need to kill just to survive and we are what we do. He advised us, “If you like chicken for example, you should raise and kill your own chickens. This will make you appreciate each life you take much more.”

Next, Rev. Kodani spoke about the fourth and fifth terms, which are related and are known as *pratyasamut-*

pada—“rising into effect” or *engi* (also known as dependent co-arising)—and what he called *hetupratyaya*, or the primary and secondary causes/conditions for things. In practical terms, he said that the significance of these two is that “miracles are not possible in Buddhism.” Kodani-sensei pointed out that since miracles require an all-powerful god or other-worldly being that can alter or reverse the causes and conditions of aging, illness, and death, which are of course, the inevitable outcomes set in motion by our birth, “It is only in theistic religions that miracles are possible.”

The sixth term was *anitya*, which means impermanence; “All is impermanent, nothing is unchanging and least of all, my self. According to Buddhism, if you cling to a ‘real self,’ you will suffer,” he said. As an example of someone unattached to the concept of the self—or even to the long-established tradition of Buddhist monasticism—Kodani sensei stated, “The fact that Shinran, despite being an ordained priest, married, essentially ended monasticism.” Shinran basically said, “I tried on Mt. Hiei for 20 years but could not rid myself of my self... Shinran studied Buddhism for 20 years, which is the equivalent of attaining a PhD, and finally said, ‘I don't get it.’ Shinran changed the meaning of ‘*bodhi*’ from “fully enlightened being” to someone who realizes the true nature of the self.”

The seventh term is *anatman*, or “no self” and attaining this state is known as *nirvana*, the extinguishing of the “flame” of selfish desires. However, Rev. Kodani explained that from a Jodo Shinshu point of view, even with enlightenment, the self or ego is still present, so “Nirvana is really the non-interference of ego; it is being aware and awake... Thus, Jodo Shinshu practice is ultimately about getting you to see your ego as it really is, because if you really see it, you will be so disgusted you'll let it go. The idea is to let go of the ego, and you can't let go of

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something you don't see." Why let go of one's ego? Because, Kodani sensei pointed out, "Someone who has let go of the ego can truly play as like a child; Buddhas and Bodhisattvas know how to 'play' in the present moment. A Buddha is simply a human person who can live in the present moment." One example of this awareness of the present moment in Buddhist literature is the famous passage from the Tanbutsuge, "Ko gen gi gi"; the "radiant moment" observed by Ananda, the Buddha's closest disciple.

Rev. Kodani next focused on comparing Buddhism to other religions. He stated that, at the core of the conflict often created by monotheistic religions is the ego. "Historically, monotheistic religions tend to conflict because whenever you have an idea of one god or one supreme teaching, you're bound to fight with others who disagree. This is really a problem of ego." Instead, "Buddhism values diversity and brings peace. There is no need to have everyone agree on 'one truth; this is what breeds conflict," he said. He referred again to his opening point, that "there is no duality between benefitting self and benefitting others, and this is why jiri-rita is one word. There is no sense in Buddhism of a separate self that needs to tell everyone what 'it' is."

Interestingly, Kodani sensei also observes a parallel relationship between a religion's core focus and its architecture and music. The high-walled, multistory architecture of classic Gothic cathedrals and the typically "soaring" music of the Catholic liturgy illustrate Christianity's vertical focus. "It's pointing to or connecting you to an other-worldly, heavenly God," he said. In contrast, Buddhist temples such as those of the Nishi and Higashi Honzans feature a "forest of pillars" and a relatively low/wide altar. Also, musically speaking, Rev. Kodani characterized Buddhist chanting as "very earthy." Thus, "the focus of Buddhism is horizontal; it's never trying to leave the earth."

Kodani sensei also spoke a bit about ancient Buddhist history, specifically,

the criticisms raised by the religion of Brahminism which preceded Shakyamuni. "The early Indian religion that preceded Buddhism was Brahminism; it used rituals and chants to invoke gods to achieve desired benefits." But around 500 BCE, there was a lot of criticism from those left out of the Brahmin elite and out of this came Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Kodani sensei called the latter, "Brahminism's response to the critique from other movements, including Buddhism." Most importantly, he clarified that among all these new strains, "Buddhism is unique in saying there is no creator god and that attachment to a creator god and to the idea of an eternal soul is suffering." He added that for about 1000 years after the Buddha, Buddhism dominated India. But even when it began to disappear from India, its influence continued to be felt there; for example, "Hinduism tried to incorporate Buddhism by claiming that Shakyamuni was one of the 10 avatars of Vishnu."

Again restating his earlier point about the seven key points, he stated that the essence of the radical change brought by Buddhism was that "Buddhism replaced all gods with the Dharma." He added that "Dharma has two meanings: first, it is the teaching of the Buddha; second, it is the ultimate reality that the Buddha awakened to... Of the two, the latter is the more important meaning."

Kodani-sensei concluded his morning session by stating that the ultimate goal is to realize the Pure Land in the present life, to attain awakening or bodhi. However, he clarified that, "Shinran redefined what awakening is. It is not attaining a sort of perfectly peaceful attitude. It's appreciating the world as it is, which comes naturally through the kind of self-negation that Shinran expresses." Thus, "namu and amida butsu are one reality."

On Saturday afternoon after lunch, retreat participants went into the main hondo and had fun practicing singing gathas along with the WCBT's Bodhi Tree Band. Interestingly, these gathas

played by the band represent both new gatha compositions and new arrangements of traditional Buddhist music, such as a funk/rock version of Shinran Sama. Also, group singing arguably requires the same kind of non-dual awareness as sitting meditation.

After the singing, participants held an extended interactive discussion with Rev. Kodani, and were able to give comments and/or ask questions of Kodani-sensei.

During the Saturday evening service, participants enjoyed listening to the thoughtful kanwas by Karen Ezaki, who expressed how much she enjoyed her first SLO retreat, and Leo Kowalski, who, because of the rain, gained an appreciation of the teaching of impermanence.

After a delicious dinner of chicken fajitas & carnitas, chili dogs, tasty salads, and mega-desserts, Saturday evening was spent playing a series of fun and interesting games, courtesy of Merry and Stephanie Jitosh, and Jeanne Kawawata. One game, a "face match puzzle," was really interesting. Pics of all 35 participants' faces were cut up into hair (or "scalp" in the case of some), eyes, and mouth segments and pasted onto a huge poster board. Each team of 5 members then had to see how many face segments they could match with the correct names. This was very hard; in fact it wasn't uncommon for members to incorrectly identify their own spouses. In fact, Rev. Ken could not even identify his own scalp—perhaps too many of us have similar "hairlines!"

Sunday morning began again with seiza, followed by a morning service with Shoshinge chanting led this time by Peter Hata. This was followed by two more thoughtful kanwas by Joanie Martinez, who expressed her appreciation of the opportunity to share experiences with the Sangha at this retreat, and Masanao Hayashi, who told a humorous anecdote of how being chosen to give a kanwa helped him see his own ego clearly. Following another

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tasty breakfast, there was a helpful followup Q & A session regarding Rev. Kodani's Saturday lectures. Kodani-sensei had to leave early to get back to his temple, so Rev. Kawawata led the session. However, it seemed that many more questions were raised than answers given, so in the days ahead, it's likely that retreat participants have much to reflect on, and that discussions will likely continue back at WCBT.

Next, later that morning, it was wonderful to be able join the SLO temple Sangha for their Sunday Service, where Rev. Ken led the (Nishi-style) chanting and gave the Dharma talk since they currently share their minister, Rev. Henry Adams, with no less than 3 other temples. After the service, the SLO Sangha enjoyed the lunch provided by the WCBT Sangha downstairs in the social hall, which was followed by a friendly discussion, where we all introduced ourselves and gave a little background info on how we came to Buddhism.

West Covina Buddhist Temple would like to thank the San Luis Obispo Temple Sangha for allowing us to use their beautiful facility, and of course, Rev. Mas Kodani for his informative and stimulating talk. Sensei gave us all much to reflect on as we try to integrate Buddhism into our daily lives. Also of course, thanks must go to all our participants, who under the direction of Rev. Kawawata, worked very hard to ensure that everything from the religious program to the entertainment activities and food all contributed to a successful retreat, one where we could all take some time out of our busy schedules and reflect on the relevance of the Buddha Dharma in our daily lives. ☸

SLO Retreat Comments

Besides the mega food-eating experience, the most memorable lesson I experienced from listening to Rev. Mas, is to appreciate and stay focused on "the present." I cannot change the past, and who knows whether or not I'll be here in the future?!

Diane Hata

Before attending this year's retreat, Michael and I were saying that the retreats all seem to run together because we always do the same thing year after year. Well... this year was certainly different! With the new faces, the unconventional speaker, the dreary weather, and yes, the now infamous all-nighter, this year was not like the rest.

Speaking of that all-nighter, I must say, we had some very meaningful conversations. The follow of words naturally went from general interests, to the happenings of this year's retreat, to connecting Buddhism and Christianity to one another and incorporating them into our lives. Unfortunately, this deep conversation could not occur during daylight hours, but who am I to say "Stop and go to bed" when the whole point of this retreat was to reflect on the Buddha's teachings and relating them to our daily lives? To be honest, these conversations were some of the most sincere conversations I have had with these boys, or with any individuals, adults or kids.

And then afterward, the urge to do homework arose. The teacher in me thought "Teenagers WANT to do their homework? By all means, go ahead!" I wanted to take the time to praise those boys for being open and talking about what can be touchy subjects. They have definite opinions and ideas about Buddhist teachings and how to incorporate them into their daily lives. Sadly, they do not get many opportunities like this to freely express themselves in a non-judgmental environment and I was very happy I could provide such an environment for them. Again, regrettably it had to be during the wee hours of the morning but nevertheless, such a substantial discussion took place and I was glad to be a part of it.

Stephanie Jitosh

The retreat was fun and meaningful. It resonated with me when Rev. Kodani stated that although one can learn Buddhism through taking classes, reading books, etc, the true value of it lies in actively belonging to a Sangha.

It is through the Sangha that we have dialogue, that we learn to get along and work together for a common purpose, and that all those fundraisers/toban duties, etc. also give us opportunities to bond and LAUGH together. Have you ever watched Johnny flippin' chicken? The SLO retreat is such an opportunity, but one in which we also share a "home" together for the weekend. If like me, you might also meet someone in the Sangha who points out your negative traits, nudging me to take an honest look at myself.

Joanie Martinez

We are an adventurous group of nuts to travel in such stormy weather filled with thunder and lightning, on a Friday Southern California evening rush hour traffic of a three day weekend. What were we thinking??? Boy, did we have a blast once we all got there. We were thirty five people who "crabbed" out at dinner, laughed together, "monku-ed" at each other, cooked side by side, pigged out together at every meal, cleaned up together, finally had time to talk to each other about everything and anything, slept next to one another (even through loud snores) and some doing an all-nighter together with some intense dharma talk of their own. What more could one ask for?

...One of our favorite minister guest speakers to give a whole day of dharma talk and discussion...Rev. Mas Kodani. A few new and old concepts from the talk were: "Right here, right now." Live here in the moment. You can't separate "benefiting self and benefiting others". They go hand in hand. There are "no miracles in Buddhism", only "causes and conditions". "I still like to believe in miracles, though. The human race: "we are born, we live and we die". Make the most of life while we are living. And we did by coming to SLO to listen to the dharma and for some finding the opportunity..."the right conditions"...to finally feel comfortable enough to talk to each other in the middle of the night and share how they

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feel about the Buddhist concepts the adults are trying to teach them and in doing so, "living the moment" and not wasting the opportunity (only sleep). I was thrilled to hear the youth created their own religious agenda for the retreat and thought this was the best retreat yet.

The highlight of the weekend for me was meeting one of the SLO members, Mr. Sato, who is 92 years old. Before WWII, he attended UC Berkeley and had one semester/quarter left before graduating with his mining engineering degree. He had to drop out and enter the concentration/relocation camps. This last year he was presented with his UC Berkeley honorary diploma after over 67 years. I had read in the Rafu Shimpō about the UC, Cal State and City colleges awarding diplomas to the Japanese American college students who were enrolled in colleges before World War II started. I wanted to share his story in front of everyone, but he was too modest to accept my offer. I was so touched and honored to meet this gentleman. I feel very grateful to have been able received my education and college degree. Nothing in life should be taken for granted and everything you have been given in life should be appreciated. Mr. Sato, thank you so much for sharing your story with me and OMEDETO!!

Thank you for all your cooperation and support in the groceries and supplies. Claudia and Joanie, the fajitas were superbly delicious. The meal was soooooo good, we will probably see a repeat at our Spring Ohigan otoki. Hisako, your scones were unbelievable. They are a must at all our retreat. Frank, even with all the monku-ing, the blueberry pancakes were a hit, sausages and all. Jeanne, the photo game was quite a challenge and the handwriting deciphering was almost impossible. It was funny how we couldn't find our own faces and pick our own handwriting. Thank you for all the work it took to design the games. And special thanks to everyone who helped get the meals to the table and clean up after-

ward.

Get ready for next year's retreat...a new modified menu plan....low cal... low fat...no sodium...no caffeine...no alcohol....water and apples. Just kidding....no one would come.

Merry Jitsho

It was a dark and dreary night. That's how the Peanut's story starts. However, this was no fairy tale. The reality was that thirty-five travelers encountered rain like cats and dogs driving up the 101 Freeway on the Friday night along with several car wrecks. What was normally a four hour drive, turned into taking over six hours. Fortunately, we all made it safely to the San Luis Obispo Temple.

Rain showers continued for Saturday, but by Sunday weather returned to its sunny disposition. There was plenty of food to eat to keep up your body energy and the Rev Kodani's lecture also gave food for thought as to how Buddhism relates to your personal life.

There were 18 of the attendees that arrived early on Friday evening and we all went to the Cracked Crab located in Pismo Beach and feasted on delicious Opilio (Snow) crab, Dungeness crab, crawdads, mussels, spicy Cajun sausages, red skin potatoes and corn cobetts, which was all dumped on our table. It was great experience.

My reflections on the weekend, I learned to benefit myself before I can benefit others. In other words, I need to help myself before I can help others. I learned that there are no miracles that what you are is due to causes, conditions and effects. I can excise my own judgment in either accepting the dharma message presented to me, because it fits within my frame of thinking or reject it. I did ask sensei for a further clarification, "Does this mean that if I reject the entire dharma message presented at this family retreat, then I wasted my time and effort in coming to this family retreat? The response was laughter. I had a good time like I had with the previous family retreats.

Frank Tanji

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questions about Buddhism's "sexist past." For example, there's the statement possibly attributed to the Buddha that when, upon Ananda's recommendation, he decided to admit women to the previously all-male Sangha and that, "Now that women are admitted to the Sangha, the Dharma will only last 500 years, not 1000 years." Also, there is controversy over the 35th vow of the Larger Sutra, which states that, in order for women to become buddhas, they must first become men. Of course, as many teachers tell us, the Dharma is not only "exactly" what the Buddha said—his actual words—rather, it's the truth that he was trying to share.

Gassho,

Peter Hata

Selected E-mail

Subject = Information

Message = Hello, I was wondering if I can join your Sunday services, and what do you need to have?

Dear Lily,

Thanks for visiting our Living Dharma Website. As to your question, you don't need to bring anything. Just come a little before 10 am and introduce yourself to our minister, Rev. Ken (he'll be the one in the black robe; everyone else dresses casually) and he will make sure you are taken care of during the service.

Best Wishes,

Peter Hata

The Living Dharma Website

West Covina Buddhist Temple

From = BJ Soriano

Subject = Permission to quote

Message = Aloha,

I would like to share some of Peter Hata's messages from his work on "Buddhism in Popular Movies and Songs." I am not sure when he wrote this. I will be presenting the main topic for YESS Camp (Young Enthusiastic Shinshu Seekers) - "The Musical" this March, and I found a number of his comments to be excellent. Please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you soon!



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Dear BJ Soriano,

Thanks for visiting our Living Dharma Website. As to your question, you may quote anything from the Living Dharma website. We just ask you to give credit to the site and author(s).

I think this article might also have some similar observations of mine regarding music and Buddhism from a class I taught at Orange County Buddhist Church: ([Buddhism In Music/OCBC-Mar02.html](#)) I think my involvement with "Buddhistic music" came about naturally when I began to appreciate the relevance of the Dharma to my own life as a musician. You can read a little about this process in another essay on the website I wrote around this same time (early 2000s) on the *Beginner's Mind*: ([BeginnersMind-Hata.html](#)).

Best Wishes,
Peter Hata

Subject = Invitation to Peace Pole dedication
Message = Rev. Kawawata: Please come to our dedication of the Peace Pole on April 3, at 10:30. We would like that the honor of your presence would enrich the experience of all - we will have Christian, Jewish, Muslim and also Buddhist to be present there. Thank you, and please get back to me soon!
Dr. Ben Vinluan, Covina United Methodist Church, Covina, CA

[Ed.Note: We are currently looking for WCBT volunteers to attend since Rev. Ken cannot attend]

From = Shalanda Tucker

Subject = Religious project for class.
Message = I have some questions. I was wondering if you could help me.

Dear Shalanda,

Thank you for writing. I will do my best to answer your questions.

1. What are the historical figures and events?

The most important figure is the Buddha!
The important events in his life are:

a.) His leaving home: After his mother's death after his birth his father gave Siddhartha a very sheltered life. He never

encountered real life as it was actually lived until one day he left the palace walls and saw the impact of sickness, old age, and death on all. He also saw a monk who had a look of serenity that made him want to find the same thing. He left his home and began his search.

b.) His wanderings: Siddhartha was above all a student of life. He learned from everyone and everything. He went to many teachers and learned from them but did not find his answers. He joined a group of monks who practiced extreme asceticism. He outdid them in practice and almost died. Due to the compassion of a milkmaid he regained his health. He learned the middle path of avoiding extremes. At this point he had learned all he could. It was time to put it all together.

c.) His awakening: Siddhartha sat under a Bo tree and reflected on all that he learned. He came to an understanding that behind all his problems was the greatest problem of all: Himself! He came to realize that he was the source of all his problems and its solution. He came to realize that what he thought was a fixed self wasn't at all. Rather he was a summation of all the causes, conditions and effects that led to each moment. If one thing was different, all would be different. As he delved deeper he found his problems, his past views simply blew away like smoke. This was the attainment of Nirvana - blowing out. Siddhartha awoke to the real reality of himself and of all things. He was a Buddha.

d.) His leaving the Bo tree: Now that he "got it," what then to do? Would anyone else understand what he discovered. After much reflection he came to realize that there were others who had but just a few grains of sleep upon their eyes, and with a little effort they too may awake to what he discovered. He began what we call the Bodhisattva path in the Mahayana tradition. His primary mission in life now was to awake others.

e.) His teaching: First he found his monk friends and gave his first sermon on the Dharma - The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path. They awoke to what Buddha taught and followed him. Soon more joined. Buddha preached across the Ganges valley for over 40 years. He orga-

nized his followers, taught all, and lived an exemplary life. He dealt with the problems of the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak. He has been a beacon of hope and understanding for the past 2500 years. He did not just show, he lived peace.

f.) His dying, his Parinirvana: Of all his teachings, the most profound to me is how he faced his death. Without fear, with nobility of spirit, he taught to his very last day. He refused to appoint a successor, because they all had the Dharma, the way of things, that he taught. If you have the Dharma you will always have the Buddha. It is in this that we finally take refuge in.

2. What are Buddhism's central beliefs? Buddhism is not a creedal religion. It is a religion of "proposals", of "observations", not "beliefs." Buddhism is not Christianity and should not be expected to have what Christians have developed for themselves. Over the centuries we have found three cardinal ideas that are central to Buddha's thought. We call them the "Three Dharma Seals". If a teaching does not reflect these proposals of the Buddha then we would not consider them to be authentic Buddhist teachings. They are: Impermanence, Non-Self, and Nirvana. I am going to borrow from Thich Nhat Hanh's book "The Heart of the Buddha's Teachings." Impermanence means that everything changes. Things change because causes and conditions change. "We see that the existence of every single thing is possible only because of the existence of everything else. We see that everything else is the cause and condition for its existence. We see that everything else is in it." This is also known as "Conditional Co-Arising" or "Interbeing". Because everything changes, it means also that I change too! It means that I have no fix essence or nature. This is the teaching of Non-Self, or perhaps "egolessness". It is because my ego wants to be the one true center of the Universe that I suffer. It is because "I" wants to be immortal, it is because "I" wants what "I" want that I know no peace. Sometime ago I realized that Christians have lots of religious swear words but I have never heard Buddhist religiously swear. But I was wrong. There are Buddhist swear words. The worst of

Please see L.D. NEWS, con't on page 10



T H E G A T E W A Y

L.D. NEWS, con't from page 9

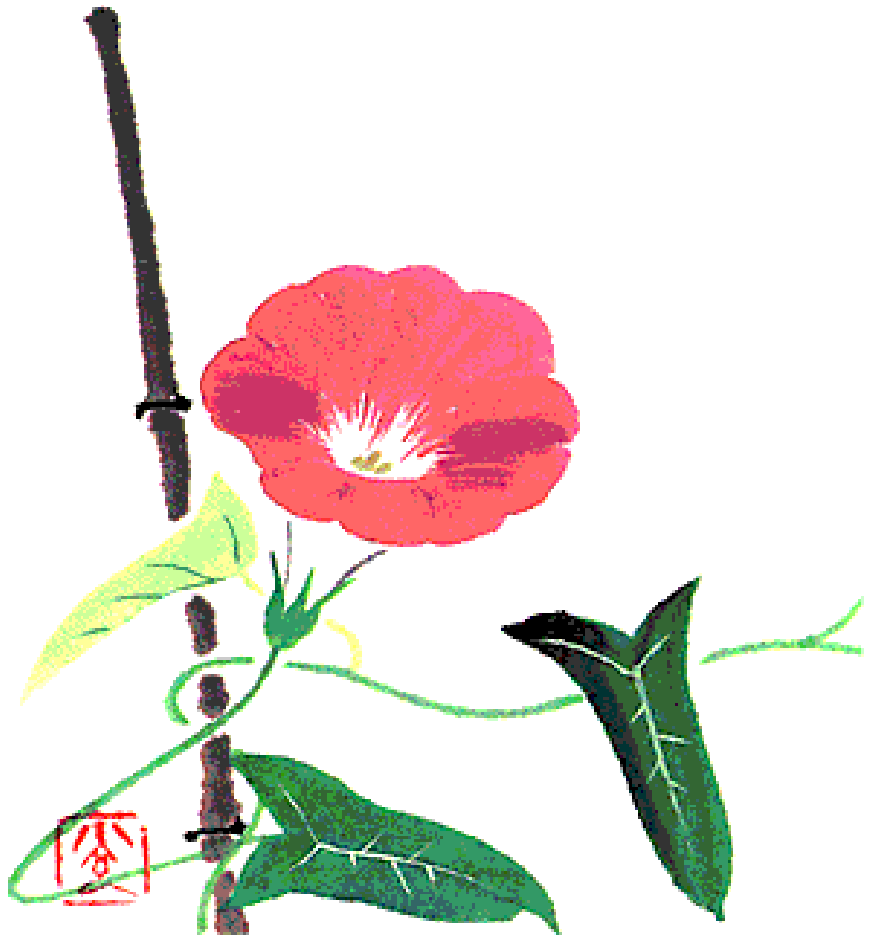
them all, even worst than "Goddamn" are "Me" and "Mine." The first two seals reveal the falseness of "Me and Mine". The third seal, Nirvana, shows me that a cure from them is possible. That the blowing out of desire for "Me" and "Mine" (and that is what Nirvana means: "blowing out") is a life of peace and fulfillment that can begin even now.

3. What is the nature of Buddhism's texts and rituals?

There is a big difference on how we approach our Buddhist texts. If someone destroyed a Bible they would be looked upon with shock and dismay. If a Qur'an was desecrated the perpetrator might well be killed in some countries. If someone were to use a page of the Buddhist sutras for toilet paper they might be applauded for their insight! The sutras are there for our use. They are instructional. We are not enslaved by them or to them. Each generation adds new insights and asks new question to the texts. And in the Mahayana tradition, sutras are ongoing. The works of our founder, Shinran Shonin, are already being treated as sutras. It is possible that in centuries to come that these emails may be used as sutras! Nah! We do rituals, not because we think they will do something or other. It is not sympathetic magic. Rather rituals are done as visual symbolism to convey perhaps more deeply than what words could do.

4. What are the holidays and practices?

Most of our holidays revolve around events in the Buddha's life, or in the life of the founder of our school of Buddhism. We have Hanamatsuri, the flower festival celebrating the birth of the Buddha. Bodhi Day honors his awakening. Nirvana Day we reflect on the Buddha's passing. Practices are very important in almost all schools of Buddhism. Some chant, meditate, study, engage in ascetic disciplines. In our school of Buddhism, Jodo Shinshu, it comes down to listening to the Dharma. When we come to understand what we are really like we can then call upon the Buddha for help. This is called the Nembutsu. It his "call" we bow before infinite compassion and wisdom. Realizing that I am finite I can never attain the infinite. But the infinite contain me and all things. For this I cry out in gratitude, Namu Amida bu. This, for us,



is the heart of the most important practice in all schools of Buddhism: taking refuge. Realizing that one is a spiritual refugee. We flee to the Buddha for help and guidance.

5. What is the state of Buddhism today? Buddhism is world wide. In some areas it is barely alive. In other areas it is growing. It is new here in America. What will be its future? I find this exciting! But for a Buddhist the most important question is not

what is the state of Buddhism? Rather what is the state of Shalanda Tucker? What is the state of Frederick Brenion? That is far more interesting. And really, the future state of Buddhism depends on how well we live and answer that question!

Thank you for writing. I hope your school project goes well. Get an A!

Sincerely,
Frederick Brenion



T H E G A T E W A Y

一年を振り返って

(2010年12月号よりのつづき)

お盆フェスティバルの翌日午前9時より後片付けをおこないます。後片付けは大体午後2-3時まで掛かります。毎年このお盆フェスティバルはお寺全員あげての一番大きな基金募集となります。毎年暑い中奉仕される皆様には頭が下がります。今年も本当にありがとうございました。

7月には毎年洗心仏教会の小谷正雄師を迎えお盆、初盆法要が厳修されます。本年は7月18日にお勤めされました。亡き方をご縁に仏法に聴聞させていただきます。7月いっぱい日曜学校はお休みになります。8月は祥月法要とお寺のラスベガス旅行が行われ、8月の活動は終わりお寺も夏休みとなります。日曜学校の子供のなかではサンバナディノの山中で一週間行われる仏教子供キャンプに参加する子供もおります。仏教連合会から開教使も交代で朝のお参りや仏教クラスの為に参加いたします。

9月はレイバーディーの後学校の新学期と共にお寺の活動が再開されます。9月祥月法要、秋のお彼岸法要がお勤めされ、今年のお彼岸法要には御法話にパサデナ仏教会よりリーロゼンタル師をお招きしました。そして25日には本年最後のダンス基金募集が行われました。

10月はセンターの秋祭りに参加し基金募集行いました。お寺は照り焼きチキン、また法話会の方々のご協力によりお寿司、そしてビンゴを担当いたしました。

この月はスタディーセンターのレクチャーシリーズが毎週水曜日に開催され、オレンジ群仏教会の原田マービン師を招き、三誓偈の講義をお願いいたしました。

9日には教区同朋大会が別院で開催され、教化委員のフレッドブレニオン氏がお寺を代表して発表を行いました。16日には第3回目のポーカー基金募集が行われました。丹治フランク氏、比嘉ローイ、ジェニファー夫妻が中心となってこの行事はおこなわれました。40名の方々の参加ありました。31日には準仏青が中心となって法要後ハロウィーンパーティが行われ、子供から大人までゲームや仮装などで楽しいひとときを過ごしました。

11月4日には別院より見義信香師をお招きし法話会報恩講をお勤めいたしました。そして7日には昨年より開催しているクラフトフェアを行い基金募集といたしました。去る21日午後4時半より英語報恩講法要を厳修、ニューポートビーチ東本願寺より長谷川智行師をご講師に迎え、また伊東輪番、パークレー東本願寺の山田ケン師、長良子師、見義信香師の参勤を頂き素晴らしい報恩講をお勤めする事が出来ました。

この12月は法話会忘年会、お餅つき、年末法要と行事が続きます。会員皆様のご協力によりお寺の教化活動ならびに基金募集が2010年も活発に行われました。皆様方には法要の外にお寺の教化や維持の為に何回も基金募集活動にお手伝い頂き心より御礼申し上げます。皆様方のお寺並びに仏法護持の一念のお気持ちにただただ頭が下がるばかりです。皆様のこのお気持ちと願いがこのお寺を真の仏法を聞く場所としているのです。本当にありがとうございました。2011年も宜しくお願ひ申し上げます。合掌 (河和田記)

お寺ニュース

日本語お彼岸法要

日本語春のお彼岸法要は3月法話会、祥月法要を兼ねて3月3日午後7時半よりお勤め致します。

また英語春のお彼岸法要は3月13日午後4時半より厳修いたします。法話は西本願寺別院のブリオネスビル師をお招きしております。英語法要にもご家族でお参りください。

センター桜祭り

2月号にてお知らせ致しましたが、今年のセンターの桜祭りが3月19日に開催されます。毎年4月にまたは5月に行われておりましたが、本年は早めに行われます。お寺は昨年同様、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もうしあげます。巻寿司でもお稲荷さんどちらでも結構です。当日朝午前11時半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。

WCBT スタディーセンター

春のレクチャー

来る4月5日より恒例の春のレクチャーが行われます。この度は別院より見義信香師ならび伊東憲昭開教監督をおむかえし近代の浄土真宗について4回にわたってお話し頂しいたぎます。4月5日12日は見義先生より、金子大榮師の教え、また19日26日は伊東監督により曾我量深師の思想について講義をされます。講義は英語で毎週火曜日午後7時から8時半まで行われます。

3月祥月法要

法話会お彼岸法要

1月3日 午後7時半

East San Gabriel Valley
Japanese Community Center, Inc.

West Covina Buddhist Temple
1203 West Puente Avenue
West Covina, California 91790
(626) 913-0622

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GATEWAY

March 2011 - - Vol. XLV No. 3

March

- 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 4:30 pm Ohigan Service
- 19 12:00 am Cherry Blossom Festival
- 20 10:00 am Sunday Servi
- 22 10:00 am Bonbu Class
- 26 8:00 pm Oldies Dance
- 27 10:00 am Sunday Service

April

- 3 8:30 am Board Meeting
- 3 10:00 am WCBT Hanamatsuri Service
- 5 7:00 pm WCBT Study Center Lecture
- 7 7:30 pm Howakai Japanese Service
- 10 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 10 1:00 pm LABCF Hanamatsuri @Nishi Honganji
- 12 10:00 am Bonbu Class
- 12 7:00 pm WCBT Study Center Lecture
- 17 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 19 7:00 pm WCBT Study Center Lecture
- 24 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 26 10:00 am Bonbu Class

3月行事予定

- 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
- 8日 午後1時 同信会座談会
- 13日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
- 13日 午後4時半 お彼岸法要
- 19日 午後12時 センター桜まつり
- 22日 午後1時 同信会座談会
- 26日 午後8時 ダンス基金募集
- 27日 午前10時 日曜礼拝

4月行事予定

- 3日 午前8時半 理事会
- 3日 午前10時 花祭り法要
- 7日 午後7時半 法話会
- 10日 午前10時 祥月法要
- 12日 午後1時 同信会座談会
- 午前11時 仏連花祭り法要、於：西別院
- 17日 午前10時 日曜法要
- 24日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
- 26日 午後1時 同信会座談会

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宗祖親鸞聖人750回御遠忌テーマ