



GATEWAY



October 2013 -- Vol. XLVII No. 10

Living Dharma News
www.livingdharma.org

Over the years, the Gateway has gone through several metamorphoses—one of them being this very column, which was a by-product of the website, itself created in 1997. But lest you believe that just because the Gateway hasn't changed that much recently, that this means it isn't "changeable," please be assured it's always open to change and to new ideas and new contributions. This is, after all, a Buddhist publication! We welcome any ideas and submissions that might be of interest or helpful to our Sangha. Submission deadline is usually the 3rd Sunday of the month.

Gassho,
 Rev. Peter Hata



Above: At WCBT's Autumn Ohigan Service, Rev. Patti Usuki gave a well-received dharma message.

Selected E-mail

From = Laura
 Subject = School Project
 Message = To whom this may concern, My name is Laura and I am writing to you in regards to my Year 12 research assignment in Stage 2 Religion Studies at Mary MacKillop College. I would truly appreciate if you responded to my questions as it will give me a greater understanding of the Buddhist view on the afterlife. My research is based on the question What are the differences and similarities between Buddhist and Catholic beliefs on the afterlife? Thank you for your time and effort, all responses will be taken into consideration and used only for the research assignment.

Questions:

1. What is your understanding of the afterlife?
2. In what form do you consider humans might exist after death?
3. My understanding of the Buddhist belief is that you believe in Reincarnation and Nirvana. If this is correct, can

Please see L.D. NEWS, con't on page 4

WCBT's Autumn Ohigan: Longing for the Other Shore

West Covina Buddhist Temple held its Autumn Ohigan service on Sunday, September 22, 2013 and enjoyed a nice turnout and, for a change, nice weather—it finally has begun to cool off a bit in the East San Gabriel Valley!

Following the opening message by chairperson Dr. Kurt Kowalski, kada sutra chanting was led by Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa and then the chanting of the Shoshinge was led by Rev. Peter Hata. Also assisting in the chanting was Rev. Fred Brenion, newly-ordained Higashi priest Michael Jitoshu, and our guest speaker, Rev. Patti Usuki, minister of the San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, a popular Buddhist Churches of America temple in the city of Arleta.

After the gatha singing and recital of the Three Treasures, Rev. Peter introduced Usuki-sensei. Besides noting her status as the author of the influential book. *Currents of Change: American*

Buddhist Women Speak Out on Jodo Shinshu, he mentioned a memorable conversation the two had several years ago where she had encouraged him to continue to work as hard as possible for his temple. It came at a time in his life that helped clarify his priorities.

In her dharma talk, Rev. Usuki spoke eloquently about the relevance of *ohigan*, which refers to the "other shore" of enlightenment, to our contemporary lives. In one example, and which

Please see OHIGAN, con't on page 4

Temple Event Highlights:

- Oct. 6 Shotsuki Service
- Oct. 13 Sunday Service
- Oct. 26 NAD Local Retreat w/Rev. Miyoshi@Betsuin
- Oct. 27 Sunday Service&Halloween Party
- Please See Temple News



T H E G A T E W A Y

DHARMA SCHOOL NEWS

Many of us old-timers remember reciting, "I am a link in the Buddha's Golden Chain of Love..." We would like our children to learn these beautiful words by reciting them on the last Sundays of the month. It will be at this time that we would like to dedicate a special portion of the service for our young students who range from 3 - 6 years of age. We are planning to slowly learn the gatha, "I'm a Link in the Golden Chain" as well.

We are also making preparations for a fun-filled Halloween party on the 24th of Oct., along with a special reading of the wonderful *Giving Tree* by Ms Claire Hansen to our students and parents. It has been our experience that read alouds offer entertaining and deep insights for young and the not-so-young simultaneously!

Gassho,
Diane Hata



Quote of the Month

There is a profound power that is awakened in us by contemplating impermanence and death. We are inspired to practice the dharma in everything we do and not to waste another moment of our precious lives."

-Keanu Reeves



Clockwise from top left: Claire Hansen, Diane Hata, Ruby Kagawa and Merry Jitoshu plan the Dharma School curriculum for the upcoming year; Michael Jitoshu with his friend Kiyoka who was visiting from Japan; Mika Ito and Byron Yamada at their wedding reception and Rev. Enoki from Newport Beach Higashi Honganji presents Merry Jitoshu with the first place trophy at the recent Newport Beach Golf Tournament.





T H E G A T E W A Y

T E M P L E N E W S

Akimatsuri

The ESGVJCC Akimatsuri will be on Saturday, October 5, from 12 – 8pm. WCBT will again be in charge of the Chicken Teriyaki Plate. If you haven't signed up to help, please contact Dick Koga at (305) 305-2545 or dickkoga@gmail.com.

We'd like to see everyone come out and support the Temple and the Center.

The Study Class

The Study Class (formerly known as Bonbu Class) will meet on October 8 and 22 at 10:00 AM. Discussions will continue to focus on the Sho Shin Ge. The class meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month.

For more information, please call Rev. Peter, (626) 337-8373

Osaisen Project

Every year, as part of an ongoing fund-raiser by the BCA Southern District Dharma School Teachers, all the osaisen collected on the second Sunday of October is dedicated to the Bishop's Special Project Fund. This year that Sunday falls on October 13.

Everyone please remember to donate thoughtfully that day with the Dharma School children in mind.

NAD Local Retreat

A North American District Joint Local Retreat will be held on October 26 at the Los Angeles Higashi Betsuin from 9:30am – 4:00pm. Rev Nobuko Miyoshi will be the special speaker. The fee for the retreat will be \$12.

Please see Rev. Peter for more information.

Halloween

Our annual Halloween party will follow the Sunday Service on October 27. There will be fun and games and prizes so get in the Halloween spirit and come dressed in your favorite costumes. There will be refreshments for everyone so join us in the fun!

Kiku Crafts & Food Fair

WCBT will sponsor our 4th Annual Kiku Crafts & Food Fair on Sunday, November 3 from 10am–3pm. Asian inspired crafts, clothing, jewelry, giftware, unique wood items and lots of delicious food will be offered. Each vendor will be handling their own sales and not all take credit cards so come prepared. WCBT members are welcomed to shop early from 9:30 a.m. Come for some holiday shopping. Stay for the fun and food!

For more information or if you can help, please contact Hisako Koga 909-626-6131 or hskoga@gmail.com.

November Shotsuki Service & Board Meeting

November Board Meeting will be held on November 10 at 8:30am followed by the Shotsuki Service at 10am.

Ho-onko Service

Our Ho-onko Service will be held on Sunday, November 17, at 4:30 pm with Rinban Noriaki Ito as our special speaker. Please join us as we welcome back Rinban Nori and stay for the complimentary *Otoki* dinner that will follow the service.



Rev. Peter chats with WCBT's former minister Rev. Motohiro Kiyota during his recent visit to Southern California.

GATEWAY Staff

Layout & Editing: Rev. Peter Hata, Hisako Koga, Claudia Haraguchi, Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa

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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.

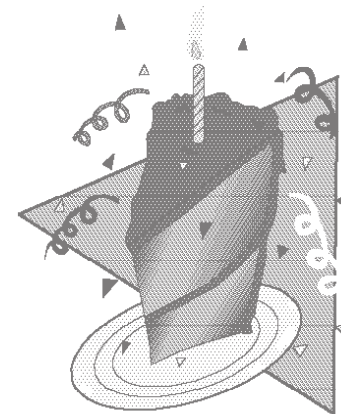
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OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Ethan Ezaki, Kelly Yamashita, Traci Takemura, Glenn Nakatani, Diane Hata, Jane Earley, Kimio Earley, Miyo Takahashi, Erik Akuna, Melissa Kozono, Melanie Pai



T H E G A T E W A Y

OHIGAN, con't from pg. 1



Above L-R: Dharmatones Rev. Peter Hata, Lynette Godoy, Edith Ariza, Aiko Enoki, Diane Hata, and Joanie Martinez perform at the Ohigan Service.

seemed to resonate greatly with the sangha, she spoke of her heightened concern over the recent developments in the Middle East, particularly with regard to the likely dangerous repercussions should the U.S. decide to strike targets in Syria. Rev. Patti expressed sadness at the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people but also questioned the claims by our government that we have the technology to "surgically" strike only military targets. She expressed her fear of the inevitable fan the flames of resentment towards the U.S., and referred to the wisdom of the Buddha's teaching that violence can never be ended by more violence. This reflects the wisdom of the "other shore": even though the Middle East is thousands of miles away from us, due the teaching of interdependence, the potential for greater unrest there would no doubt affect all Americans.

Usuki-sensei gave several examples of our interrelatedness, but also reminded us that ultimately, and much closer to home, the Buddha's teaching was about understanding the self. And that it is only our lack of true self-awareness that prevents us from reaching the "other shore" of enlightenment.

Immediately following Sensei's talk, WCBT's Dharmatones entertained ev-

eryone with a couple of beautiful songs in 3-part harmony, led by Rev. Peter. The first song, *Seiya*, was written by Lady Takeko Kujo, the early 20th century Japanese Shinshu poet and women's activist. The song expresses Lady Kujo's feeling of peace realizing the infinite buddhas who support and sustain her. Rev. Hata mentioned the song was chosen in honor of Rev. Usuki, a modern activist in her own right.

The Dharmatones' second song was "Shenandoah," the traditional American song which poignantly declares, "Oh Shenandoah, I long to see you, and hear your rolling river..." Though it is thought to have been written by an early settler who, having traveled west, now wishes to return home to the beautiful Shenandoah River valley, it also seems to express the same kind of longing for peace and serenity that "Seiya" expresses; this is the longing for the "other shore."

The service was concluded by a delicious *otoki* dinner provided by Dick Koga's renowned Toban C, which prepared a gourmet quality pasta dish (rumor has it however that it was Hissako Koga's recipe).

WCBT thanks everyone who participated in the Ohigan Service and contributed to this special sangha gathering.

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you please explain how this aspect is significant to your beliefs in the afterlife?

4. Do humans enter into a special relationship with a supernatural being in the afterlife?

5. Can you please explain your belief towards animals and the afterlife?

6. Do you believe in Karma? If so do you believe it plays a significant role in regards to afterlife?

7. Do you believe there are any connections between the Buddhist and Catholic beliefs regarding the afterlife? Could you please identify the elements which you consider to be similar?

Dear Laura,

Thank you for writing. You have asked very thoughtful and interesting questions and I have had to give careful thought on how best to answer them. I think that dialog between religions is very important. In the process, we can learn much about each other and ourselves.

I want to let you know that I've struggled very hard to answer your email. I think I've gone through at least a dozen versions in my mind before discarding each of them.

My problem is that if I were to answer your questions as you gave them, I would create a major distortion on what Buddhism is all about, and what it can be for you as well. I realize that many Buddhists do profess a belief in an afterlife via reincarnation, rebirth, or even a Buddhist type of heaven. However, I have found that for many others, as they explore deeply what it means to be a Buddhist, that questions about an afterlife become more and more unimportant. Many of us have come to realize that views such as reincarnation are additions that have crept into Buddhism from its Hindu environment. There is the problem that such views conflict with one of Buddha's central teachings on "Anatman," that we do not have a subsisting "self". We are not what we think we are. We are perhaps more of a process than as being an "entity." What then is this "it" that is suppose to "go on?" There is much to reflect on here. I would recommend the

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T H E G A T E W A Y

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book "What Makes You not A Buddhist" by Dzongsar Khyentse for clarification on these important teachings that are at the heart of the Dharma.

For me the heart of the problem about being concerned about the afterlife is best explained by looking at the Four Noble Truths. If you study the "Four Noble Truths" carefully, you will see that they are not separate truths, but really one that is unfolded, namely the truth of our disquietude and what can be done about it. Buddha simply pointed out the obvious that there is suffering, or discomfort in the world, that the origin of this discomfort lies in my own cravings, and that I can be cured of these cravings. That cure can be applied through the application of correct view and intention - which is the basis of Buddhist wisdom, the application of correct speech, action, and livelihood - which is the basis of Buddhist ethical conduct, and the application of correct effort, mindfulness, and concentration - which is the basis of Buddhist mental development - these are the Eightfold Noble Path. This is the basic framework for Buddhist understanding. When I reflect on the Four Noble Truths, I am struck always by the Second Truth - which is that the source of my sufferings is my cravings, and the heart of those cravings is those for my self, and come from my self. On my own, yes, I want immortality, better yet; I want to be the center of the universe, and the self-sufficient source for all my wants and needs. Buddha says that this is why I am miserable. What I want is impossible, and he is right. It is this "Self" that is my greatest problem. It is what I need to conquer and to dispatch, but I can't do it, because it is ultimately the "I" that is trying to cure the "I". That is why, when I finally broke, (part of a long story), I was ready to take refuge and to entrust my heart/mind (shinjin) to the teachings.

As I write this, I have passed my 61st birthday. I am closer to my grave than I am to my cradle. For you the situation is quite the opposite. One would think that at my age my mind would focus more now on what happens after the grave. Yet it is not. Why should that be? This is what I'd much rather share with you. I shall share with you by telling you a little of my own story

in coming to fully embrace Buddhism.

Some years ago, I had a "near-death experience." No, I didn't see a being of light welcoming me into Heaven or the Pure Land. There was no review of my life, nor did I travel up a tunnel into the Light. But I came close to death. During the night, I had experienced a collapsed Apnea, a sleeping disorder where the throat closes up stopping air from flowing. I awoke with a start, unable to breath. I had minutes to try to get air into me. I was finally able to do small gasps, and then after much struggling, was able to open up for more breath. It was painful and very scary. I knew I had to make some major changes in my life to avoid this from occurring. I was very afraid to go back to sleep after this, but as I tried to doze I was filled with sadness as this thought came to me: "What a pity to find the Dharma and then to lose it."

I had a "Rude Awakening" that night. It was not just a warning call to live life right or lose it, but a realization that of all that I could have lost that night, it was the Dharma itself. I had already spent two and a half years studying about Buddhism, the Dharma, and then becoming a regular visitor to the West Covina Temple, but I was really just a play Buddhist, a dilettante. However, it is not just enough to study, important as that is. I realized that night that I truly wanted to live the Dharma. I wanted the Dharma to live in me. We have a word, "Tariki", the power of the Dharma living through us as Life and Light (Amida Buddha), and I was on the brink of Death and Darkness. The opportunity to live is only there so long as we are alive. I did not realize how much I wanted to live and how much I wanted the Dharma until it hit me that I could lose it all in a matter of moments at anytime. The Buddha is right when he said, "My life is not lasting. My death is lasting. My life will end in death. Inevitable is my death. My life is uncertain. Death is certain." Our lives are always on the brink, and we live only by the power of Light and Life itself. To live our lives otherwise is the greatest of follies and the height and root of our delusions.

Shortly after this experience I attended a seminar on the "Buddhist Views of Life and Death." There were handouts from

the talks. Two caught my attention. The first was "Life and Death" by the Rev. Gyomay Kubose which struck me: "Buddhism teaches resolving the problem of life and death. Most people do not want to die. They fear death. When we come to understand Buddhism, then death no longer becomes a problem. Death no longer becoming a problem means that if I die it's okay, if I don't die it's okay. Whenever death comes, I am able to smile and die. Buddhism teaches that whenever I die, it's okay, because I am living everyday completely." I was nowhere near this level of acceptance. It was not at all okay to me to die, but then I was not "living every day completely" either. I must first really live before I am ready to really die."

The second extract, "The Joy of Impermanence" by an unknown author, however hit the mark for me, and I shall quote it in full for you:

"Death. It's terrifying. Death. It's painful. Death. It's depressing. But I think that because man has death he reflects about life. Because there is death I have the thought of wanting to live.

"In life there is death. But because there is death we are able to be truly sad. Because of death we are able to truly love. Death is what truly makes man live. There is nothing more dignified than a person who lives facing death head-on. I want to live facing death. I want to live with real meaning in life.

"But man is weak, and those who suffer try to avoid death. They try to forget about it. But hasn't one who has forgotten about death also lost life? Eventually in our human life death comes. No matter how much we have tried to forget about it, it still comes. At that time, no matter how much we might regret the lack of real "living" in our life, we cannot repeat it. Now is the time to think about it. As I face death, what am I really living for? What is the purpose of my life? I want to truly live life deeply. It doesn't matter what form my life takes. Whether it be a lifetime of sickness or poverty, if I truly live life, that life will be unequaled in brightness.

"In death nothing remains. Only the depth of what one has lived remains.

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"If I were to die tomorrow, it's too late to study for it today. If I were to die tomorrow, I could probably forgive all of mankind today. If I were to die tomorrow, I would probably be grateful that I was born and lived as a human being today. If I were to die tomorrow, I would probably be truly humble today. If I were to die tomorrow, I would be able to meet my true self today. If I were to die tomorrow, I would probably cry from the depth of my being today.

"But for me, there is life tomorrow. For me, the sun will come up in the morning. But having faced death, I can now bow my head to the Buddha and die. Having faced death, I can say thank you to all beings and die.

"This is the expression of the joy of impermanence."

Death is a mystery. What happens at that moment and after is unknown to me. Dying is not a mystery. Our passing might be painful and it might be peaceful. There is no guarantee what we shall experience, but experience it we shall and the mystery we each must face. Perhaps we fear death because we fear the pains of dying. Dying can be a dirty business, but then so is birth and we celebrate our births. I didn't die, but I experienced, if only for moments, the possibility of it. In that possibility was an awakening towards life, hopefully a birthing into the Dharma. We are impermanent creatures. We begin and we end. It is what we are. This can be a hard truth, but a liberating truth if we understand it aright. The Buddha taught us this truth and made it one of the centerpieces of his thought. We might just find joy and peace if we accept this truth and make it our own. That joy of impermanence is at the heart of Dharmic life.

But now, having at least faced death, I can now bow my head to the Buddha and live.

That is how I came to take refuge in the Three Treasures of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. What I have found is a teaching that helps to take the sting out of the fear of death that so often plagues us. When we let go of fear we can let go of all concerns that would reinforce those fears again.

I am sorry that it took me so long to



write back to you. You really gave me much to think about and I am grateful to you. I don't know if these thoughts will help you on your project, but I hope that at least these thoughts may help you as you reflect on the great issues of life and death for yourself.

*Sincerely,
Rev. Frederick Brenion*

*Subject = Service 9/8/13
Message = Good morning,
I would love to attend next Sunday's service; this would be my first time ever visiting a Buddhist temple. I'm interested in learning more about Buddhism. I know this may sound dumb but I would like to know if there is a dress code. I wouldn't want to offend anyone.
Thank you in advance,
Araceli*

Dear Araceli,

Thank you for your interest and for asking your question. It's not dumb at all, but one that expresses your sensitivity.

As you can see in the various photos of our services either at our website (<http://www.livingdharma.org>) or Facebook

page (<https://www.facebook.com/WestCovinaBuddhistTemple>), there isn't a dress code other than what would be considered appropriate for most public places such as stores, restaurants, and of course, churches/temples. We do have a few major services throughout the year, such as the upcoming Fall Ohigan Service on Sept. 15, where members (and definitely the temple minister) tend to wear more formal clothing. But even then, our more youthful members tend to come in jeans, t-shirts and flip-flops regardless of the service (and that's OK).

In Buddhism, our most important consideration is not so much our outer appearance but our inner awareness.

*Best Wishes,
Rev. Peter Hata
The Living Dharma Website
West Covina Buddhist Temple*





T H E G A T E W A Y

いのちのせつなさ 呼応する本願

海の幸に恵まれた自然の中に突如として、凶暴な牙をむき出して姿を現した東日本大震災。これまでの私たちの日常の死は、病院の中での死であり、家族に看とられての死であり、思いもかけぬ死でさえ誰もあるいは経験するかもしれない死でありました。

しかし今、私たちが向き合っている死は、瓦礫の中の死、原発避難区域の海浜に投棄されたままに横たわる死、海底深く見失われた死、美しい風景に囲まれた故里と里人の生活を根こそぎ奪い去った生々しい死の現実なのでした。このような死の現実に私たちはどう向き合えばよいのか、言葉もありません。

私は遠い記憶の中から、水俣の作家石牟礼道子さんの「もう一ぺん人間に」（『苦海浄土』講談社）という作品を思いました。この作品の中で石牟礼さんは、漁師の妻坂上ゆきさんに次のように語らせています。

「人間な死ねばまた人間に生まれてくつとじゃろうか。うちややっぱり、ほかのもん生まれ替わらず、人間に生まれ替わってきたがよか。うちやもういっぺん、じいちゃんと舟で海にゆこうごたる。うちがワキ櫓ば漕

いで、じいちゃんがトモ櫓ば漕いで二丁櫓で。漁師の嫁御になって天草から渡ってきたんじゃもう一ぺんきつと人間に生まれ替わってくる」と。

煩惱が深いので、きつと人間に生まれ替わってくるという言葉のせつなさに思わず息をのむ。海や川や、雲や花、子供や孫たちのすべてに煩惱が深いが故に、だからこそきつと今度生まれてくるときは、人間に必ず生まれてくるのだ、と。このまんまの私でいいから、もう一ぺん人間に生まれずにはおかぬという祈念こそ、まさしく本願そのものではないか。

曇鸞大師は『浄土論註』の中で「浄土の命を捨てて願に随（したが）いて生を得て、三界雑生（さんがいざっしょう）の火の中に生まるといへども、無上菩提（むじょうぼだい）の種子（しゅうじ）畢竟（ひっきょう）朽ちず」（真宗聖典 282 頁）と述べています。これは何を言っているのか。私は死んでも死後の浄土には居ない。この世に何度でも生まれ替わってきて、力を尽くして願に生きるのだと願う菩薩の魂（たましい）を語っているのだと思います。

今回の大震災で突きつけられた生々しい死の現実、それにどう向き合えばよいのか。漁師の

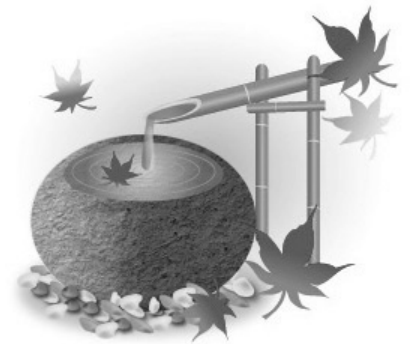
妻ゆきの言葉には、この曇鸞の言葉が重なります。それはまた、このたびの震災でかけがえのない生を断たれた死者たちの志願によりそいながら、その死の現実に応ずる本願との対話の始まりでもあるのです。

（2012年版「真宗の生活」
- 東本願寺発行 - より引用）

お寺ニュース

ハロウィンパーティー

毎年恒例の仏教青年会並びにダーマスクールによるハロウィンパーティーが10月27日（日）午前10時の定例日曜礼拝の終了後、行われます。皆それぞれ思い思いのコスチュームを着て、ゲーム等で楽しいひとときを過ごします。どうぞお誘い合わせの上、ご参加下さいますようご案内申し上げます。



10月祥月法要 / 法話会

10月3日（木）

午後7時30分より

East San Gabriel Valley
Japanese Community Center, Inc.

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

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DATED MATERIAL

THE WEST COVINA BUDDHIST TEMPLE

❁ **GATEWAY** ❁

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October

- 3 7:30 pm Howakai Japanese Service
- 5 Center Akimatsuri
- 6 8:30 am Board Mtg
- 6 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 8 10:00 am Bombu Class
- 13 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 20 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 22 10:00 am Bombu Class
- 26 9:30 am NAD Local Retreat@Betsuin
- 27 10:00 am Sunday Service/Halloween Party

November

- 3 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 3 10:00 am Kiku Craft Fair
- 7 7:30 pm Howakai Hoonko Service
- 10 8:30 am Board Meeting
- 10 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 12 10:00 am Study Class
- 17 4:30 pm WCBT Hoonko Service
- 24 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 26 10:00 am Study Class

10月行事予定

- 3日 午後7時半 日本語祥月法要 / 法話会
- 5日 コミュニティセンター秋祭り
- 6日 午前8時半 理事会
- 6日 午前10時 祥月法要
- 13日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
- 20日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
- 26日 午前9時半 南加地区同朋研修会(於 LA 別院)
- 27日 午前10時 日曜礼拝 /
ハロウィーンパーティー

11月行事予定

- 3日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
- 3日 午前10時 菊クラフトフェア
- 7日 午前7時半 日本語法話会報恩講
- 10日 午前8時半 理事会
- 10日 午前10時 祥月法要
- 17日 午後4時半 報恩講
- 24日 午前10時 日曜礼拝

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