Since my ministry in the US, I have received various questions about Jodo Shinshu. One of the frequently asked questions is, “What is Namu Amida Butsu?” Namu Amida Butsu is translated into “I take refuge in Amida Buddha.” I feel introducing this translation is not good enough. It is not too difficult to understand that Amida Buddha is not like God as the creator. However, people still wonder, “What is Amida Buddha?” and “What does ‘taking refuge in Amida Buddha’ mean?”

As you know, unlike Śākyamuni Buddha, who actually lived and died, Amida Buddha is not a historical Buddha. Amida Buddha, as a mythical Buddha, manifests the content of the enlightenment Śākyamuni Buddha attained. We receive the truth which Śākyamuni Buddha awakened to through Amida Buddha and his mythological story. The truth in Buddhism is about ourselves. In other words, showing what we truly are, is the working of Buddhism, and the truth works for everyone beyond time and space. Therefore, when we sincerely accept the truth as our reality, it is the moment we take refuge in Amida Buddha.

Buddhism reveals our reality from two aspects. The first truth is the preciousness of our existence, which is clearly described by Śākyamuni Buddha’s declaration, "Below the heavens, above all the earth, I alone am most noble" in his legendary story of his birth. We determine our value by comparing others. And, we always judge others and ourselves based on various conditions, such as “what we have,” “how much we contribute to society,” “whether we are young and healthy or not,” and so on. On the other hand, Buddhism assures that we are all unconditionally invaluable as we are. “Our Lives Matter,” if we use a modified version of a contemporary slogan, is the truth of our existence, which Buddhism encourages us to be aware of. When we come to realize our own preciousness and the preciousness of others, and we deeply accept it as our truth, we take refuge in the truth, that is, Namu Amida Butsu. It is our expression that is full of joy and appreciation.

Buddhism also exposes the other aspect of our reality. It is the reality that we cannot accept the truth even though we fully understand that everyone’s life is equally precious. The serious contradiction between words
Summer is just around the corner and we hope that you are well and keeping safe during these difficult days.

Our temple will be celebrating Father’s Day during our June 21 Sunday service. The Dharma School Staff has asked our children to make a sign in honor of their Fathers and/or Grandfathers. We will share their creations with the Sangha through Zoom. It will be fun to see the children’s designs!

The following is a Buddhist parable which may be familiar to many of you:

**The Parable of the Burning House**

*One day, the beautiful house of a rich man caught fire. The man happened to be outside of his home when the fire started. His children were inside the house. The father became very fearful for the safety of his children.*

*He frantically shouted to his children to run out of the burning house, but the children were playing with their toys and did not notice that they were in danger.*

*The father kept shouting to no avail. Desperate to save his children, he changed his way to rescue them.*

*The father shouted, “Children, I have wonderful new toys for you! Hurry and come outside to see what I have brought you!”.*

*Excited, the children ran from their burning house into the arms of their loving father. They were safe at last!*  

What do you think this parable teaches all of us? Ask your parents if they can help you with this ancient story.

June is also the month of graduations. Please let Sensei know ASAP if you have a graduate in your family. We would like to recognize their achievements during our June 28 Sunday service.

Because these days are difficult for all of us, the following book may help our children (and us!) to cope with our new “normal”.

“Each Breathe a Smile” by Sister Susan based on the teachings by Thich Nhat Hanh.

Gassho,
Claire Hansen

**Parenting in the New Normal**

Wesley Hamachi

I ‘grew up’ in West Covina, East Los Angeles, and Temple City. These are the areas where I lived, attended preschool (yes I'm a graduate of Lumbini Child Development Center), and was cared for after school. As a kid I was super fortunate to have had both sets of grandparents help take care of me in my early years, and friendly neighbors that would watch over me before and after school. These helpful people shaped my early developmental years. Being exposed to these diverse cities at a young age, I was fortunate to have had many good life experiences during my childhood that helped instill the beliefs I have today.

Fast forward to 2020, I myself am now a parent of 2 little rascals. Like my parents had to do for me and my brothers, I am now having to make some challenging decisions that surely will affect their future. With school attendance canceled, I worry they will not have the same social experiences when participating in distance learning. My wife and I do the best we can to give them ‘at home’ experiences that might mimic what they would experience at school, but they are missing out on the social interaction with their peers that I had as a kid.

As the world is changing at an ever increasing rate, parenting needs to keep up. Can we keep up? Is Covid19 going to morph to Covid20 next winter? Will the continued bad faces of humanity perpetuate and crumble our society? What if a natural disaster hits us when we haven’t even recovered from Covid19? These are the situations I feel I need to prepare my children for.

Growing up, I never had to deal with wearing masks, distancing from my friends, constantly washing my hands (up till age 12, I don’t think I ever washed my hands). The lesson I am prioritizing teaching the kids is: the world is constantly changing. And we adapt to these changes. When the kids started asking questions about Covid19,
Sunday Services
All Sunday services will be conducted via Zoom until further notice. Expect an email from Rev. Miyoshi or Rev. Fred inviting you to the services with the Zoom meeting ID and Password. If you have not received an email from them, please contact the temple (wcbt.livingdharma@gmail.com). The attendance for the services are growing every week and it’s such a pleasure to see all the familiar faces so please join us!

Discussion Class
A weekly discussion class is held every Thursday at 10 am via Zoom. There is a different topic of discussion each week and a lively dialogue with a growing number of participants. Look for the email invitation with meeting ID and password or contact Rev. Miyoshi for the information.

2020 Obon
This year’s Obon Festival has been cancelled. Manto-e lanterns can still be purchased to remember your loved ones. Arrangements can be made to pick them up after the Hatsubon Service.

Father’s Day Service
A Father’s Day service will be held via Zoom on June 21 at 10am to celebrate all fathers.

Graduation Service
Grades will be celebrated on June 28 at 10am to honor all the graduates of 2020. Please bring pictures of your graduates to share at our Zoom service.

Obon & Hatsubon Service
Obon & Hatsubon Service will be held on July 12 at 10am via Zoom.

Online Donations
The Living Dharma website now has a link (https://livingdharma.org/index.php/donations/) for donations. You can use PayPal, credit and debit cards to make donations to the temple with a few simple clicks. Checks are still and always accepted as well for the traditionalist.

Events Cancelled
The uncertain situation of the Corona virus has required us to cancel events through the Fall of this year including September Oldies and Kiku Craft & Food Fair.

JUNE BIRTHDAY
Laurie Hansen, Kiyoshi Earley, Joshua Gutierrez, Kay Yamashita, Ray Maekawa, Sam Meites, Mia Lynn Meites, Justin Toshiro Ezaki, Kiyoshi Earley, Jerry Earley, Nicholas Ishibashi Jung, Noah Kowalski, Terri Shams, Tor Ormseth, Craig Yanase, Richard Nakawatase, Andrew Jung, Ikuo Matsukiyo, Linda Chen, Mitchell Kozono, Mark Masai, Sumie Kinoshita, Toshio Tawatari, Allan Wexler, Xavier Godoy, Sadako Sogioka, Jeanne Kawawata, Kalia Hendrickson, Robert Di Santo

JULY BIRTHDAY
Sally Ariza, Mikio Earley, Jamie Nakatani, Sylvia Ena, Jaylene Gutierrez, Kevin Hata, Lauren Koga, Russell Martinez, Laura Miyake, Margaret Takemoto, Ryoko Kodama, Richard Haraguchi, Elijah Godoy, Craig Taguchi, Corey Taguchi, Pat Sato, Garrett Kawaguchi, Tyler Kobayashi, Steven Kuwahara, Marcus Nishihara, Lillian Nishihara, Kurt Kowalski, Jamie Teragawa, Jonathan Hoey, Jeffrey Akune, Anthony Gutierrez, Sam Kozono, Susie Kozono,
Late Night Thoughts
Michelle Harrison

I think it is fair to say that 2020 is one of the worst years anyone has experienced. A few weeks ago it felt like Coronavirus was the worst of our worries and now police brutality has resurfaced, but it never really disappeared, did it? Suffering is a relative term, which we know well as Buddhists. To be alive is to suffer, but not in this way...this is unique. In a time where I want to be optimistic and inspiring, I am at a loss for words. I remember a few months ago, I was eager to be in quarantine not because I wanted to stay home, but because coronavirus was not looking great. A novel virus that spreads fast is dangerous to the most vulnerable, and we have no vaccine. In Buddhism, the idea of karma permeates everything and we know that our actions have a direct impact on others. That is to say that I was terrified that I was one of those asymptomatic super spreaders and would infect those whose immune system cannot protect them. I do not think any of us expected to stay at home for this long, but what did we expect? That everyone would look out for one another, wear masks, follow rules, and it would just disappear? Maybe in a different time, a different place...but flash forward three months in and I have become a decoration on my couch. My classes have moved online, which I find to be both a blessing and a curse. The distraction of classes is a wonderful thing when most people my age are staring at a wall with the blinds drawn at 4pm; however, the new struggle of finding motivation to learn about a subject I truly love is...confusing. It feels like many people are continuing business as usual and posting inspirational quotes online, illustrating how happy they are in their homes, and I do not feel the same. This is not a revolutionary thought, but it is lonely to be alone. Even my dog has taken to napping all day. I know it might seem cliché to say, but I have realized that it is okay not to be okay. People often try to find the best in situations, but accepting the feeling that things are bad is often times the first step towards change.

Unfortunately, in addition to coronavirus, the world has had to suffer yet again more instances of police brutality; at least, those are the cases that received recognition by the media. George Floyd and Breonna Taylor both died unnecessarily by the hands of the police who, for whatever reason, continuously choose to be alienated from the phrase “Black Lives Matter” instead of listening to the true message. I know that not all cops are bad and there are certainly pockets of corruption that spoil the bunch, but it is time for change. It has been time for change. Time to have hard conversations with friends, children, parents.... We have to decide as a society what kind of world we want to live in. Do we want to resist change or help create a future we want for ourselves, our children, our community? As Buddhists, we have an idea that everyone is interconnected, which means that we all have a direct impact on others. This has been an empowering idea for me as a young person feeling hopeless and demoralized during this bleak time in quarantine. Seeing incremental change as a result of the protesting, marching, petitions, and donations as a result of the murder George Floyd and Breonna Taylor has given me a glimpse of the kind of power we have as a community. I think we have a lot of things to mourn, but also a lot to uplift us all.

The first half of 2020 was, without a doubt, a disaster in so many ways. As a society, we are capable of making a change, whether it is through helping a neighbor, donating masks to our frontline healthcare workers, or protesting racial injustice. Life is suffering, but experiencing moments of enlightenment can allow us to see what truly matters at the end of the day, regardless of our differences.

we explained to them as much as we understood of the virus, and let smart people in a YouTube video explain the rest. There was no sugar coating, or hiding information from them. We told them straight up everyone is at risk, and here are ways we can minimize the risk of getting infected. I feel if I do a good job explaining to them these problems, and how they affect our situation and how we will deal with them, they will soon learn how to solve future problems on their own.

As our lives speed up, I only hope we can pour enough knowledge and give enough ‘life-experiences’ into our kids’ minds so they can flourish and have an enjoyable life.
Challenges And Hopes During Difficult Times

Don Frack

We are living through a truly historic moment in time. The Covid-19 Pandemic has touched nearly every corner of our world. Millions of people have been infected, hundreds of thousands have died, and the entire world has been affected by this in one way or another. There are people dealing with the death of a loved one infected by the virus. Business closures are affecting the owner and its employees ability to make a living. School closures are sending millions of kids home forcing many parents to figure out daycare and become a homeschool teacher. The list of challenges this has caused is infinite and many are completely out of our control. So perhaps we might look at some of the positive things that have occurred during this time and some of the things that are under our control, or at least that we can influence.

Reduction In Crime. Prior to the riots that occurred during the protests of the death of George Floyd, major cities across the United States report significant dip in major crimes like burglary, assault, murder, robbery and grand larceny.

Improved Air Quality. The air quality in Southern California is the highest it’s been in decades. And the air quality has improved all around the world.

Gas prices have been lower than seen in many years

Time with family. Many families have gotten to spend more time together. In particular the ability to eat meals at home together more regularly. Something that improves the quality of family life significantly. Parents have had an opportunity to spend time with their children they might not have had prior to this situation.

More people are exercising at home since gyms are closed. Going for walks and riding bicycles has been a staple of activity.

For those so inclined we have had more time to read, listen, and watch materials to educate ourselves more deeply.

A significant growth using technology to improve people’s lives. Whether working from home, learning from home, or video chats, technology has allowed for a far more positive situation than just a decade or so ago.

On A Personal Note

Although my martial art business is struggling at the moment, we were able to pivot and begin the process of offering classes online. Something which we will continue to do to a certain extent even when this is all over to expand our business.

In recent years I have been doing more teaching than training. Because I have been teaching online, I am often physically leading the classes.

And because of this I’ve gotten more exercise in the past two months than I have in the past two years.

I’ve been doing a better job of food storage and essential items preparations at home since this happened. I intend to keep this up to be better prepared for future challenges.

With the exception of one meal, I have cooked every meal I’ve eaten since the outbreak. This has given me the opportunity to explore my cooking skills and tastes more often.

I feel that while there is nothing we could have done to prevent this pandemic, there are many things we can do to grow from this experience.

*If you have not received emails from the temple, please send your email address to us (wcblivingdharma@gmail.com). We will send you invitations to services and updated information. Thank you.
AMIDA, con’t from pg. 1

and actions is also our reality. Unfortunately, this truth is not pleasant to face, therefore, we usually ignore this.

"Black Lives Matter" protests and demonstrations against police brutality and racism have swept across the country and around the world. While diverse groups of people support these protests, some people are skeptical about this movement. They usually say, "Why only African American’s lives matter? If it is so true that everyone’s life matters, we do not have to give special weight to them, do we?" Buddhism would clearly respond to them saying, “Because we have been ignorant about the fact we did not live in accordance with the truth. The reality is that we do not treat everyone as equally precious." As a result, so many people’s lives and their dignity have been sacrificed and neglected. Buddhism attributes discrimination, being judgmental, and elitism to our ignorance about the second aspect of our reality.

Awakening to this truth of our reality is very painful. Through this awakening, we become aware of the anguish of many people who have been neglected, and realize that their problem is surely our problem. When we genuinely take refuge in the truth, Namu Amida Butsu, it is our confession with self-reproach.

Our teachers explain Namu Amida Butsu with two simple phrases—"Thank you" and "I am sorry." These phrases well describe our responses when we accept two aspects of our truth.

Those two aspects are actually inseparable. Relying on "Our Lives Matter" as our fundamental truth sheds light on the fact that we and our society are actually far from ideal. In this sense, those who protest against the inequality in our society and threats against the identity of people, are the ones who genuinely take refuge in the truth of all human beings, that is, our existence is invaluable as is. We witness that Namu Amida Butsu now jumps out of temples and vigorously works on our lives and society. It is the time for us to diligently listen to the teachings we have received through Namu Amida Butsu.
We Need Your Help

Dear Sangha Members and Dharma Friends,

It is June now and we find ourselves still largely remaining in place while the Corona virus restricts us from gathering together as we did before, especially in Los Angeles County. While some areas and businesses are being allowed to slowly open with caution and limitations, events such as Obon cannot happen this year. Currently, our temple has lost fundraising income from having to cancel two Oldies dances, our golf tournament, and now Obon. Also, since we are not meeting at WCBT, it can naturally make it a little more difficult to remember to donate for special services and other remembrances. We realize that it takes a little more effort to remember to mail in a donation to our P.O. Box, or to do it online.

At the recent board meeting, we had discussed possibly mailing out Obon raffle tickets to the Sangha so they can sell them just the same. However, after much thought and discussion, it was decided to NOT do raffle ticket sales, and simply request for any donation you can make. We realize that some Sangha members may have had their work income affected during this time, or perhaps other difficulties that prohibit them from being able to help in this regard. We want to remain an independent and vibrant temple, which largely means that we are financially able and responsible to support a full-time minister and pay all our bills. We still continue to pay regular bills such as rent to support the ESGVJCC, the managing and maintenance of our residential rental property, operating expenses, etc. etc. We have no idea how long it will be before we can meet together at temple and be able to resume our activities and fundraisers for the rest of this year.

If you haven’t yet had the opportunity to experience attending Zoom Buddhism classes on Thursdays @ 10 a.m. and Zoom temple services and discussion on Sundays @ 10 a.m. we encourage you to please join in. We have had many thoughtful perspectives shared and we are all learning from one another with Reverend Miyoshi’s guidance. Please contact the temple (wcbt.livingdharma@gmail.com) to receive meeting ID and Password. We want to also thank the hard-working Gateway staff made up of Rev. Miyoshi, Hisako Koga, Claudia Haraguchi, and Richard Kagawa. They tirelessly continue to bring the Sangha together by providing us with current news, articles, letters, reports, photos, etc. that we look forward to each month. To Reiko Ikehara Nelson, we deeply appreciate her keeping us updated on our financial status. Until we can all gather together again in the happy and warm fellowship that a live Sangha provides, please remain cautious and safe.

With Gassho,

Johnny Martinez
WCBT Board President

Donations can be made to WCHHBT, P. O. Box 1616, West Covina, California 91793.
Online donations can be made through this link on our temple website:
https://livingdharma.org/index.php/donations/
The Temple has registered with the AmazonSmile donation program. For those of you who shop online with Amazon, the AmazonSmile foundation will donate 0.5% of your purchase price to the Temple, at no cost to you. You just need to login to “smile.amazon.com” which will connect you to the same Amazon website you know. It will display the same products, same prices, and same service. On your first visit select ‘West Covina Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple’ as the organization that you wish to support. It’s that easy.
Happy shopping!
お寺ニュース

急に暑さが厳しくなってまいりました。皆さま健やかにお過ごしでいらっしゃいますか。

ようやく自宅待機の命令が緩和されレストランや商店など営業を再開する動きも出まわりました。仏教施設についても州が出しているガイドラインの遵守を条件に再開の許可が出ました。先日の理事会では寺院再開のことで話し合われました。その結果、ワクチンや治療薬が開発されていない現在においては、皆さまの健康と安全を引き続き第一に考えることがもっとも大切との考えで一致いたしました。そのため早急の再開は見送り、今しばらく時期と状況を見守りたいと思います。

つきましては7月2日（木）に予定しておきたい法話会も残念ながら中止とさせていただくます。日曜礼拝は引き続きオンラインを通じてお勤めいたします。

3月以降お会いできず寂しい日が続いておりますが、皆さまが安心してお寺に足を運んでいただけるよう細心の注意と準備をしてまいりたいと思います。今しばらくお待ちいただきますようお願い申し上げます。

質問がございましたらいつでも見義開教使までご連絡ください。

お寺ニュース

南無阿弥陀仏
見義信香

アメリカで開教を勤める中でよく尋ねられる質問の一つが「南無阿弥陀仏とはなんですか？」というもの。英語では“I take refuge in Amida Buddha”と訳されておりますが、そうすると今度は「Amida Buddhaとはなんですか？」と「阿弥陀仏に帰依するとはどういうことですか？」と重ねて聞かれます。個はその文脈において阿弥陀仏の存在やその意義についての解釈がされます。阿弥陀仏は創造主である神の存在でない、と絶対に納得する人が多いですが、では阿弥陀仏とは一体なんなのかということがいまひとつはっきりしないのです。

阿弥陀仏はお釈迦様と異なり歴史上の人物ではありません。神話的存在である阿弥陀仏はお釈迦様の得た悟りの内容です。お釈迦様の悟りの内容、つまり真理が阿弥陀仏という形をとって私たちに届けられています。真理とは私たちの現実のあり方そのものです。阿弥陀仏が普遍的存在であるということは、私たちの存在を前提にしたその真実であることを顕しているのです。

私たちについての真実には主に二つの側面があります。一つは「あらゆる人の命が尊い」いう真実です。これは生まれたばかりのお釈迦様が高らかに宣言された「天上天下唯我独尊」という言葉が表しています。受け入れることはとても辛いことですが、なぜならその社会を作り上げているのは私たち一一人ひとりだからです。

真理の通りに生きていない事実を受け入れることはとても辛いことです。なぜならその目覚めを通じて多くの人の苦しみと悲しみに初めて触れ、その苦しみが他人事ではない、と知るからです。その自らの事実を受け入れるとき、南無阿弥陀仏は深い懺愧の表現となります。

諸先生方は南無阿弥陀仏を「ありがとう」と「ごめんなさい」の二つの言葉で表現してくださっています。それは、南無阿弥陀仏が私たちのこのふたつの姿を知らせてしてくれるのだと教えてくださっているのだと思います。

（「南無阿弥陀仏」8頁に続く）
**June**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Obon Festival-cancelled</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 10:00 am</td>
<td>Father’s Day Sunday Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 10:00 am</td>
<td>Discussion Class-online</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 10:00 am</td>
<td>SCA Public Lecture-online</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 10:00 am</td>
<td>Sunday Service</td>
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**July**

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<td>2 10:00 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 7:30 pm</td>
<td>Howakai Japanese Service</td>
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<td>5 8:30 am</td>
<td>Board Meeting-online</td>
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<td>Shotsuki Service-online</td>
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<td>9 10:00 am</td>
<td>Discussion Class-online</td>
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<td>12 10:00 am</td>
<td>Obon/Hatsubon Service-online</td>
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<td>16 10:00 am</td>
<td>Discussion Class-online</td>
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<td>19 10:00 am</td>
<td>Sunday Service-online</td>
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<td>23 10:00 am</td>
<td>Discussion Class-online</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 10:00 am</td>
<td>Sunday Service-online</td>
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<td>30 10:00 am</td>
<td>Discussion Class-online</td>
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**2020年6月行事予定**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20日</td>
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<tr>
<td>21日</td>
<td>父の日日曜礼拝ーオンライン</td>
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<td>28日</td>
<td>日曜礼拝ーオンライン</td>
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**7月行事予定**

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<tr>
<td>2日</td>
<td>午後7時半 法話会ーキャンセル</td>
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<tr>
<td>5日</td>
<td>午前 8時半 理事会ーオンライン</td>
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<tr>
<td>5日</td>
<td>午前 10時 祥月法要ーオンライン</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12日</td>
<td>午前 10時 お盆／初盆法要ーオンライン</td>
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<tr>
<td>19日</td>
<td>午前 10時 日曜礼拝ーオンライン</td>
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<tr>
<td>26日</td>
<td>午前10時 日曜礼拝ーオンライン</td>
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*Emailをお使いの方はメールアドレスをお寺までお知らせください。(wcbt.livingdharma@gmail.com)
オンラインでの日曜礼拝のご案内、最新の情報をお送りいたします。

如来さまは、いつも私のところに来てくださっているのです
近田昭夫『仏さまはどこにおられますか？』