

## Exchanging letters- connecting hearts of US-Japan Dharma school children

“We may physically be far from Japan, but we are always thinking of you all.”

“Thank you, for caring about us.”

Children of the Arizona Buddhist Temple (Phoenix, Arizona) Dharma school and Seirinji Temple, located in Shiraishi city of Miyagi prefecture, an area that was affected during the 3.11 East Japan Great Earthquake, began a letter-exchanging program and have since built friendships.

The idea to send letters developed during the first year memorial for 3.11 observed at the Arizona Buddhist Temple earlier this year. In hearing stories shared by adult temple members and Rev. Koho Takata, of the devastation following the earthquake and tsunami, the children commented “Shinran Shonin and Rennyo Shonin teaching with others able to show our support to expressed an interest in elementary through high created a scrapbook filled translations written by artwork to send.

The album was delivered during their visit to Hongwanji International album to the Dharma receiving the letters, Rev. minister of Seirinji shared, has been put into the carefully selected in hoping of Tohoku.” The album was during the temple’s In response, fifty-six messages and created a paper crafts and artwork Buddhist Temple in late



Photos of scrapbook pages made by Arizona and Tohoku children



shared the Jodo Shinshu through letters. We want to be the children of Tohoku” and writing letters. Twenty school students, together with messages with Takata, photos, and other

to Japan, by temple members Hongwanji in June 2012. The Center then forwarded the School children of Seirinji. In Akimasa Maeda, vice-resident “It is clear how a lot of thought letters and the words were so to be of support to the children later shared with the children summer program in August. children wrote thank you scrapbook filled with Japanese that was later sent to Arizona October.

The scrapbook from Japan was shared at the temple following the *Eitaikyo* service on November 11. The children were joyously surprised to have received it that as they delightfully looked through the pages, the kids commented “Our feelings reached them. Their feeling of *arigato* can be felt.”

Maeda comments, “Words cannot express our feeling of gratitude for the comforting support and letters all the way from Arizona. To be connected with Nembutsu friends across the ocean through letters is an invaluable experience.”

“Like the children, I too have learned something through writing a letter. Despite our differences in country, language, culture, and traditions, through the teaching of the Nembutsu, it was a priceless encounter to reflect on the heart of empathy” shares Takata.

(Hongwanji Journal, December 1, 2012, p. 8)

## Commemoration events in celebration of Tsukiji Hongwanji temple hall completion

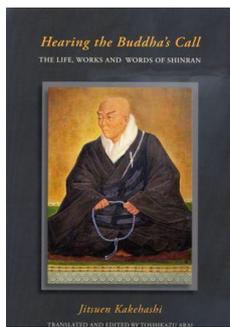
To commemorate the completion of the Tsukiji Hongwanji temple hall renovation, an event, *Kizukinasai*\*, was held on November 11 which began with a parade from Ginza to the Tsukiji Hongwanji grounds. Spectators watched as a hundred ministers dressed in *Shichijogesa*, followed by an entourage of 200 children dressed in *Chigo* costumes, the Musashino Girls High School brass band and baton club ensemble, and 50 *yurukyara* characters from throughout Japan walked down the streets to Tsukiji Hongwanji where festive events continued throughout the day.



Built originally in 1617 in the Asakusa area, Tsukiji Hongwanji known as the Edo-Asakusa Gobo, was a betsuin (district headquarter) of Hongwanji in Kyoto. Through the efforts of Nembutsu followers in the area, man-made land along the Hatchobori canal later became the home to what was then called the Tsukiji Gobo. Following the restructuring of Hongwanji earlier this April, Tsukiji Betsuin has now become an affiliate temple and referred to as Tsukiji Hongwanji.

\*trans., to realize. However, the kanji characters used for the event title ‘築きな際’ plays a game on words which can be interpreted as “festival to build, develop, and grow from.”

(Hongwanji Journal, December 1, 2012, p. 1)



### BOOK: Hearing the Buddha's Call

The Buddhist Study Center Press released “Hearing the Buddha's Call” earlier in June 2012. It is a translation of a book about the life and thoughts of Shinran Shonin written by Rev. Jitsuen Kakehashi (*Kangaku* scholar of Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha). The book's forward was written by Dr. Alfred Bloom, Professor Emeritus of the University of Hawaii and a member of the BSC Press Editorial Committee and the translation was conducted by Toshikazu Arai, Professor Emeritus of Soai University.

“Hearing the Buddha's Call” (\$15.00). Available at Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii Headquarters Bookstore, call (808) 522-9210 or email [hqbooks@honpahi.org](mailto:hqbooks@honpahi.org).

## A Beauty Class



Beauty classes at a temple? Yes, anything is possible. On November 3, the annual Dharma gathering hosted by the temple BWA welcomed women from the sangha and local community to Shofukuji Temple (Hirado city, Nagasaki) for a lecture on beauty and skin care. The day started off with a service and Dharma talk by Rev. Jisui Tamura of Saikyouji Temple (Miyama city, Fukuoka), who spoke on the theme “to inherit, to transmit.” For the first time this year, a beauty and skin care class was offered, hoping to encourage first timers and younger women to attend the program and become

acquainted with the BWA and temple. Shofukuji resident minister, Rev. Keiyu Kiyohara, was selected as the model for the beauty class which filled the temple hall with laughter and excitement.

In preparation for the annual event, members of the Shofukuji sangha gathered at the temple from a few days prior to clean the grounds and temple both inside and out. On the day of the gathering, members also assisted with registration and distribution of pre-packed meals, in addition to working at the temple bazaar which was held in conjunction at the *Monto* (temple sangha) *Hall* selling baked goods and sundries such as handmade crafts.

Through these enjoyable events at the temple, I hope that people will gain a sense of closeness to the temple and practice listening to the Dharma, shares Kiyohara.

(Hongwanji Journal, November 20, 2012, p. 10)

## **IBS Eitaikyo service** by Seigen Yamaoka

The Institute of Buddhist Studies conducted its first Perpetual Memorial Service (Eitaikyo Service) on Thursday, November 8, 2012. The service honored some forty-five pioneers who gave much of their time and energy for the growth of the IBS.

The officiant for the service was Rev. Kodo Umezu, Bishop, Buddhist Churches of America, assisted by Rev. Marvin Harada, IBS Trustee, Chair, and Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto.

Rev. Harada read the names of those who were being honored during the service. They are Mrs. Margaret Blair, Rev. Philip Karl Eidmann, Rev. Ryuichi Fujii, Rev. Hogen Fujimoto, Prof. Ryugyo Fujimoto, Rev. Kakumin Fujinaga, Prof. Ryosetsu Fujiwara, Rev. Russell Hamada, Bishop Shinsho Hanayama, Rev. Satoshi Hirata, Mrs. Kimi Hisatsune, Rev. Eijitsu Hojo, Rev. Ryumei Iguchi, Mrs. Jane Imamura, Rev. Kanmo Imamura, Mrs. Yasuko Kariya, Rev. Kenyo Kumata, Mrs. Shinobu Matsuura, Rev. Kyogyo Miura, Rev. Kakue Miyaji, Prof. Mokusen Miyuki, Rev. Toshio Murakami, Rev. Dr. Masatoshi Nagatomi, Rev. Dr. Yehan Numata, Mr. Hayaji Oda, Mr. Sam Oda, Rev. Shobo Ohata, His Eminence Kosho Ohtani, Prof. Leo Pruden, Mr. Ben Sato, Bishop Enryo Shigefuji, Rev. Remy Snow, Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai, Dr. Kikuo Taira, Rev. Shunsho Terakawa, Rev. Kuyoshiro Tokunaga, Bishop Kenryu Tsuji, Prof. Yoshifumi Ueda, Mr. Noby Yamakoshi, Mr. Motomi Yokomizo, Mr. Eiichi Yoshida, Mr. William Waki, and Mr. Shintaro Ito.

Rev. Jerry Hirano, BCA Ministers' Association Chair, provided the Dharma message. He expressed his deepest appreciation to all the leaders, friends, and ministers who made IBS an educational institution which really helped him to become a minister. Words of appreciation were presented by Dr. Richard Payne, IBS Dean, who stated that IBS became what it is today because of the help all those who went before us, and it is important for us here today, to continue this annual service to express our gratitude.



(<http://www.shin-ibs.edu/news-events/?p=716>)