



We Love Hongwanji! BCA group heads to Hongwanji

Led by Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) Bishop Kodo Umezu, a group from the U.S. mainland, organized of Jodo Shinshu members, joined for a visit to Hongwanji and personally experienced being at historic sites associated with Shinran Shonin.

As a first of its kind, the tour was scheduled to visit Hongwanji on a regular day when special observances were not being conducted. Plans began three years ago, following the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami that devastated the Tohoku region and many who had planned to travel to Japan as delegates to attend the 750th Memorial for Shinran Shonin decided to postpone their travels.



Photo taken in front of the Meichodo (Otani Mausoleum)

Strongly committed, some individuals visited Hongwanji on their own. However, in hearing about the strong desire many had in wanting to visit Hongwanji, the Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) at the Jodo Shinshu Center (Berkeley, CA) decided to come forward and plan a tour. The delegation included a total of 38 participants from California, Minnesota, Ohio, New York, and Massachusetts. The group arrived in Japan on October 21, and spent eleven days visiting various historic sites including the Tsukiji Hongwanji in Tokyo, and the Eshinni Memorial and Kotagahama shore in Niigata prefecture, before arriving at Hongwanji in Kyoto.

Attending the morning service at Hongwanji, as the group sat in the Goiedo hall before the life-sized statue of Shinran Shonin, they placed their hands together in gassho and reverently bowed their heads. Following the morning service, two members of the delegation took part in the Confirmation Rite ceremony receiving their Dharma names, before the group visited the Otani Mausoleum where they paid their respects at Shinran Shonin's grave and at the niches of their respective BCA temple predecessors.

During their stay in Kyoto, they were also welcomed by Hongwanji's Sennyō Monshū in the Hongwanji gardens. Mary Haworth, a member of the Spokane Buddhist Church (Washington) and first time visitor to Japan shared, "During a trip to Thailand, I met someone of Jodo Shinshu background from Japan who was very warm and welcoming. After returning to the U.S., I looked for a Jodo Shinshu temple and began attending temple regularly. [It was] a special encounter. I am really glad to have been able to come and visit Hongwanji." Through the internet, California resident Ron Ito developed an interest in Jodo Shinshu. Having joined the tour and coming to Hongwanji, Ito was comforted and felt at home.

Participants on this tour have come from encountering Jodo Shinshu through various causes and conditions. "This wonderful opportunity has become one that has deepened our friendship through our appreciation of the Nembutsu. It is a feeling of joy that words cannot express," comment Bishop Umezu.

(Hongwanji Journal, November 20, 2014, p.1)

People

Vicky Yamaoka~CBE Delegate visits Hongwanji~



A participant on the CBE tour, Palo Alto (California) Buddhist Temple member, Vicky Yamaoka visited Hongwanji for the first time.

Attending morning service on October 28, she then received her Dharma name during the Confirmation Rite.

Yamaoka's family has been Jodo Shinshu members since her grandparents first set foot on American soil. Attending Dharma school from the age of five, she feels comfortable at the temple. Hearing about the tour, Yamaoka together with her son registered for the tour.

"Words cannot express how happy

I am to have had the opportunity to take part in the Confirmation Rite" Yamaoka shared.

Visiting various sites associated with Shinran Shonin in Kyoto, the Kanto region, and Echigo, and standing where Shinran spent his days, has made me deepen my appreciation for Amida's teaching and words of Shinran. To our forebears, who travelled all the way to America, bringing with them the Jodo Shinshu teaching, and my grandparents and parents, who began sharing with me this teaching more than 60 years ago, I am truly grateful.

(Hongwanji Journal, November, 20, 2014, p.10)

Sharing the Experience

Observing 100 years of sharing the teaching to the next generations

Past and present ministers and members of Tacoma Buddhist Temple gathered for a special service and luncheon celebrating its 100 year history. During the observance, Bishop Kodo Umezu conducted a *Kieishiki* Ceremony during which nineteen members received their Dharma names.

To commemorate its centennial, delectable recipes were collected by temple goers and made into a cookbook.

Majority of the temple members today are 2nd generation *Nikkei* (of Japanese ancestry) in their 80s and 90s. To generate a younger membership, temple programs are being offered inviting the participation of the younger generations and non-Japanese background.



Sponsored by Honoka'a Hongwanji Mission (Hawaii) on September 21.



The annual Choralfest was held September 27 – 28 at Hawaii Betsuin (Honolulu). For the first time, forty delegates from Japan including members from Hyogo, Ishikawa, and Tokyo districts participated.



(Hongwanji Journal, July, 20, 2014, p.7)