

## Connecting with our Sangha with the core teachings of Jodo Shinshu

Hello to all Central California Nishi Hongwanji Sangha friends! In my last article, I wrote “Summer has finally arrived to the Central Valley with 90 plus degree weather and it becomes warmer and warmer.” But I was not correct! How many of you were surprised to observe the cool/cold Memorial Day weekend? In normal years, the Memorial Day service attendees usually stand under trees to avoid the direct sun, and the excessive heat but this year, it was quite the opposite. At the Washington Colony Cemetery, some were wearing jackets! I should have taken photos of these rare opportunities. I heard some say that next summer will be cooler than the average years, so I hope we can observe 2024 Memorial Day Services with cool breeze.

In this article, I would like to write about our Central Cal Ministerial Assistant Program (aka CCMAP). After I moved to CC, I hosted the CC Buddhist Education orientation for Sangha members in Sep 2019 and CCMAP orientation in 2020 to standardize the program for active MAs and Prospective MA candidates. The CCMAP orientation was not an easy project because there was no documentation describing what CCMAP is. I spent several hours with Rinban Nakagawa to publish a standardized handout which included the requirements of and the mission of CCMAP. The handout was distributed at the 2020 orientation.

In 2020, I knew that the California State Law AB506 was coming soon, so I added a “background check” as one of requirements because our Mas may be involved with youth activities. As you may know, many youth organizations such as Dharma School, scouts and summer camps require background checks to participate in these activities as adult volunteers.

CCMAP and CCBEC (CC Buddhist Education Committee) jointly has provided 5 Buddhist seminars every year since 2020. We have invited Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Wondra, a faculty member at IBS (Institute of Buddhist Studies) and serves Orange County Buddhist Temple to speak. She holds PH.D. in Jodo Shinshu so she is a most appropriate instructor. We have also invited Bishop Aoki of Canadian Jodo Shinshu, Bishop Matsumoto of Hawaiian Jodo Shinshu, and various other Rinban(s) over the last two years. We have two more upcoming seminars this year. One of the seminars is hosted by Rev. Rajan Hayashi who is a Nisei (2nd gen) minister from the Mountain State. He was born in Hawaii and served a temple in Virginia. I hope you can attend the seminar.

Rinban Nakagawa, Rev. Midori and I all provide CCMAP classes for adults. I provide two different classes each semester. One class, “Buddhism 101 (Intro to Buddhism)” has over 40 students signed up to learn about Buddhism. I also provide classes for youth, 2nd grade to 12th grade. A youth Ministerial Assistant class runs every two years for 74-hour credit course. Four high school students completed the class and assist in conducting Sunday services by leading chanting, striking the Kansho or leading readings. This class made a significant impact on these students, so I hope more and more students will think about joining these classes.

I try to do my best for you to gain knowledge of and practice Jodo Shinshu teachings. Shinran Shonin handed down these teachings to our ancestors and our ancestors preserved and maintained them for us.

The core teachings of Jodo Shinshu are inclusiveness, harmony, respect, and humbleness.

I work hard for Sangha because I sincerely hope that many people are touched by these wonderful teachings. Gassho.