

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

TEMPLE SCHEDULE

MAY

- 4 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 6 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 11 10:00 am **Mother's Day Family Service & Breakfast**
- 17 10:00 am NAD SoCal Seminar
- 18 10:00 am Tanjo-e/Hatsumairi Service
- 20 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 25 9:00 am Coffee & Dharma
- 25 10:00 am Sunday Service

JUNE

- 1 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 3 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 8 10:00 am Sunday Service Discussion Group
- 15 10:00 am **Father's Day/ Graduation Family Service & Luncheon**
- 17 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 22 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 29 9:00 am Coffee & Dharma
- 29 10:00 am Sunday Service

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2025

Tanjo-e & Hatsumairi

10:00 AM

VISITING THE TEMPLE

The temple is currently open for private services and visitations by appointment. Please call us to schedule an appointment. 213-626-4200

Though we are open for Sunday Services in person, we will continue to
STREAM LIVE ON FACEBOOK
[FACEBOOK.COM/HHBT.LA](https://www.facebook.com/HHBT.LA)
SUNDAYS | 10 AM

MOTHER'S DAY FAMILY SERVICE

SUNDAY, MAY 11
SERVICE AT 10:00 AM
BREAKFAST FROM 8:30 - 9:45 AM

FATHER'S DAY/ GRADUATION FAMILY SERVICE

SUNDAY, JUNE 15
10:00 AM



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Hana-matsuri

Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa

April is the month of *Hana-matsuri*, a traditional Buddhist event held to celebrate the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. The celebration of *Hana-matsuri* is widespread across many Buddhist traditions around the world. At the *Hana-matsuri* of our Jōdo Shinshū tradition, a beautiful flower pavilion (*hana-midō*) is set up and we pour sweet tea over the statue of baby Buddha standing at the center of the pavilion. This ceremony of pouring sweet tea is called “*Kanbutsu*” (*kan* means to pour a liquid and *butsu* the Buddha.)

The *Kanbutsu* ceremony is based upon a legend about the birth of Shakyamuni. According to the legend, a boy was born as a prince of the Shakya clan 2,500 years ago in India. The prince would later become known as Shakyamuni Buddha. Before he was born, his mother (“Maya”), the queen of the clan, stopped by the Lumbini Garden on her way to her hometown since it was a custom for a woman to go home to give birth to her child. When the queen was taking a rest in the garden and grabbed a branch of a tree, a baby was born from her right armpit. When the baby was born, many beautiful flowers came down from heaven and blossomed on the earth. The dragons appeared in the sky and poured sweet rain over the baby to give him his first bath. The baby boy stood on his own feet and took seven steps forward. Then he pointed toward the heavens with his right index finger and toward the earth with his left index finger and said, “I alone am the World-honored one.”

This is the outline of the Buddha’s birth story in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. Each event in this story signifies the Buddhist teaching. For example, right after the boy is born, he takes seven steps forward. The boy’s “seven steps”

is based on the concept of the six realms of sufferings, which are described as hell (anger), hungry ghost (greed), animal (ignorance), asura (belligerence), human beings, and heavenly beings (the fear of losing what we have). These six realms are metaphorical expressions of the state of our mind, and our everyday life is made up of moments cycling through these six realms. But it is not easy for us to realize that we are in a cycle of suffering especially when things are going along with our expectations. Moreover, we can be deeply and unconsciously attached to our blind passions even if we know those passions are the source of our suffering. As described in the *Tannishō*, “It is hard for us to abandon this old home of pain, where we have been going around over a long period of time until now, and we feel no longing for the Pure Land of peace. Truly, how powerful our blind passions are!”

However, there is one state in the six realms where we can reflect upon our life: the realm of “human beings.” The episode of the baby making seven steps forward can be interpreted as the symbol of the Buddha’s deep wish that we transcend the six realms. On the other hand, the episodes of the flowers that come down from heaven and blossom on the earth as well as the sweet rain poured by the dragons can be considered as the metaphor for our innermost desire to awaken to the truth of the cycle of the six realms and to respond to the Buddha’s wish that we live our lives to the fullest. The baby’s declaration, “I alone am the World-honored one,” signifies that each of our lives is uniquely precious on its own. The deep wishes of the Buddha and us as human beings, as well as the preciousness of our lives, are beautifully expressed in this short story of Sakyamuni Buddha’s birth.

(Please see *HANAMATSURI*, page 3)

Sangha Voices

Spring Ohigan Service &
Spring Seminar
with Guest Speaker
Rev. Masao Kodani
Leslie Wong

On March 16, 2025, we had an opportunity to hear Reverend Masao Kodani speak at both our Spring Ohigan Service and Spring Seminar. Rev. Kodani served as the resident minister at Senshin Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles from 1969 to 2013 when we retired after 45 years. He focused his Dharma Talk and seminar on what it is to be a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist in a Christian country.

As a Sansei who grew up in Watts, Rev. Kodani would not appear to be your typical Buddhist minister. As he discussed his personal history and the path he took to becoming a Buddhist minister, it became clear that he continues to provide a unique and very independent spirit to the Shin Buddhist community in the United States. After completing his undergraduate degree at UC Santa Barbara, and then studying at Ryukoku University, he decided to travel and explore the world before his return to Los Angeles to become a minister at Senshin Buddhist Temple.

Retired after 45 years, he welcomed the chance to speak to our Sangha and reflect on what it means to understand Jodo Shinshu in a Christian society like America.

(Please see *SPRING*, page 3)

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HHBT-LA.ORG



Betsuin News



Mother's Day Family Service & Breakfast

Please join us on Sunday, May 11th for our Mother's Day Family Service! A special message in honor of our mothers will be given by our guest speaker. We hope you will join us in celebrating our mothers. A special breakfast in honor of our mothers will be served in the social hall from 8:30 to 9:45 am before.

Tanjo-e/Hatsumairi Service

On Sunday, May 18th, we will hold our Tanjo-e Service. Tanjo-e is a special service that celebrates the birth of Shinran Shōnin, the founder of our Jodo Shinshu Buddhist tradition. Shinran was born around this time near Kyoto, Japan in the year 1173. Special sermons will be delivered by our ministers for this occasion.

At our Tanjo-e service, we will also observe Hatsumairi, which is held to welcome all new children into our Sangha. The Hatsumairi presentation is traditionally for newborns, but we welcome all children up to six years of age to participate. If you are interested in having your child participate, please contact the temple office to register. There is a nominal fee of \$50 for children of paid 2025 members or \$75 for children of non-members to participate.

Please join us at the temple. The service will also be streamed on our Facebook page for those who cannot attend in person.



HHBT OBON 2025

SATURDAY, JULY 26TH & SUNDAY, JULY 27TH

**AT HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE
WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US!**

Celebrating

RINBAN NORIAKI ITO

SUCCESSION SERVICE & RETIREMENT LUNCHEON

Sunday, September 28, 2025

Father's Day/Graduation Family Service & Luncheon

Please join us for our Father's Day and Graduation Family Service on Sunday, June 15th at 10:00 am. We will have a special guest speaker. This service will celebrate and honor both our Dads and 2025 Graduates. We welcome all graduates to attend and families to bring their fathers for this special service! We hope that you and your family will be able to join us!



Interesting Times

Join us at the Coffee & Dharma Informal Discussion

As you all surely realize, we live in a divided society, not only along political lines, but also concerning immigration, the economy, and our transgender community, among other topics. How do we, as Buddhists, address these issues? Our group, Coffee & Dharma, began to ask this question in 2016, and we continue to seek answers. This year, the C&D meetings are trying a few new ideas, including sending out articles ahead of time. In February, the conversation was about compassion. In March, the article discussed "Six Strategies for Navigating Tense Political Times," from a Buddhist perspective. In April, we talked about an article entitled "How Would the Buddha Handle Trump's Inauguration?" We look forward to more timely topics in the months to come.

Join us. You can attend in person at 9:00 am in the conference room or you can sign up for temple emails and join on Zoom. We meet the last Sunday of the month (except for Obon weekend in July). See you there.

(HANAMATSURI, cont. from page 1)

The flower pavilion and the *Kanbutsu* ceremony are physical representations of this legend. The beautiful flowers adorning the pavilion symbolize the heavenly flowers and the pouring of sweet tea over the baby Buddha symbolizes the sweet rain of the dragons. The *Kanbutsu* ceremony gives us the opportunity to reflect deeply upon our lives and to remind ourselves of the deepest wishes of the Buddha and ourselves.

The legend of Shakyamuni Buddha's birth reminds me of another story of his awakening at age thirty-five. The baby boy becomes the prince of the Shakya clan and is named "Gautama Siddhartha." At the age of twenty-nine, he abandons his worldly life, social status as a prince, future as the king, his comfortable life, and his family in order to embark on the journey to find the universal truth in human life filled with suffering. Then after six years of ascetic practices, he goes into meditation under a tree. During the meditation, he carefully observes how everything in the world appears and disappears over and over again. Finally, he is awakened to the true nature of life, which is known as the law of dependent origination. However, he strongly hesitates to spread his awakening to others because he thinks the truth he found is too difficult for them to understand. People's minds are so deeply attached to their blind passions that they wouldn't be able to accept the truth. He almost gives up sharing his awakening with people and decides to keep his awakening locked only in his mind.

According to some Buddhist mythological stories, a Hindu god Brahma is watching Gautama giving up from heaven. Brahma becomes strongly concerned that if Gautama would give up, his precious awakening would be lost forever. Then Brahma comes down from heaven and appears in front of Gautama to ask him to share his awakening with others. Responding to Brahma's ardent pleas, Gautama finally stands up and determines to spread his awakening to save people from suffering. This is the time when the truth appears as the teaching to awaken people and Gautama comes to be called the Buddha. In this episode, Brahma can be seen as the symbol of our

innermost desire to be awakened just as the sweet rain and heavenly flowers in the Buddha's birth story. Responding to our innermost desire, Gautama stands up to share his awakening.

Those legends of Shakyamuni Buddha remind us of the fact that no matter how deeply blind desires are entrenched in our mind, the wisdom of truth will never stop working to awaken us sentient beings. Even though it is extremely difficult to overcome our blind desires by our efforts, through listening to the teaching and reflecting on our lives, we can be awakened to the true preciousness of our lives and live our lives to the fullest.

The *Kanbutsu* is a very simple ceremony but it symbolizes the very important aspect of the Buddha's teaching.



(SPRING, cont. from page 1)

Reflecting both on his time in Japan and in America, Rev. Kodani presents the idea that one of the main difficulties for Buddhists in America is that growing up in a predominantly Christian society, Japanese Americans are conditioned to think through a lens different from their Buddhist counterparts in Japan.

American culture is defined more by individuality and self-reliance, while Japanese culture tends to focus on the group and cooperating with others. In essence, Japanese culture provides a headstart in embracing many of the core tenets of Buddhist thought. In Jodo Shinshu, Buddhism is the real discovery of the egocentric self. Rev. Kodani continued to point out how American culture works against this type of self-reflection.

Reverend Kodani remarked that in the US, while Buddhism is intellectually accepted, it continues to be difficult to accept as a religion amongst Christians because of the conflicting view on God and the Universe. In Christian churches, one is taught that God created the Universe. However, to a Buddhist, Amida Buddha is Universal, so how could it be created? This diametrically opposed viewpoint seems to be a critical point and one could see some anxious looks amongst the audience as everyone con-

templated this idea.

What I took away from the seminar was a new perspective on how to look at myself as a Buddhist. While American culture may condition me to unconsciously think from a Christian perspective, I embrace the teachings and continue to learn from different teachers.

Namu Amida Butsu



Our deepest condolences

to the family and relatives of ...

Wayne Yoshio Imanaka (89)
January 29, 2025

Sadao Kuwahara (89)
February 13, 2025

Kent Sadao Fukumoto (89)
February 20, 2025

Lung Liu (99)
April 3, 2025

Namu Amida Butsu

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23RD ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Higashi Honganji volunteers arrived at the Candlewood Country Club (our first tournament at this course!) in the early morning of March 10th, 2025, for the 23rd Annual Golf Tournament. Volunteers prepared for the arrival of about 115 golfers early Monday morning. They unloaded trucks while the coffee brewed and goodie bags, donuts, spam musubis, apples, oranges, and bananas crowded the check-in area. Our cheery volunteers registered golfers outside. The weather was nice for early March. It was cold in the morning but warmed up during the day. Tee signs were displayed on the course at all the holes. Sponsorships raised funds for our youth programs and temple maintenance. Thank you to all our generous tee sponsors! After 18 holes out in the sun, golfers were eager to sit down for a hot BBQ lunch. They made their way to the banquet room where tables were overflowing with valuable prizes for our raffle and donations from generous members and merchants in the community. Everyone was treated to a well-deserved lunch. While stories of the course were shared amongst the golfers, Shin Ito announced the tournament and raffle winners.

Closest-to-the-pin winners were Happy Mizutani (hole 10) and Akira Minamura (hole 3). Closest-to-the-line winner was Brent Mitsuuchi (hole 11). The Low Gross winner was Kasey Oshita. Birdie skins were awarded to Kasey Oshita on holes 5 and 15, Ryan Yoshida on hole 9, and Jim Kato on hole 12. The Ladies 1st place winner was Hiroyo Nonoyama. The top three tournament winners were Todd Horio in 3rd place, Wayne Nagao in 2nd place, and Gerald William in 1st place. Congratulations to all our golfers! The Higashi Honganji Golf Tournament continues to grow thanks to all the volunteers who do so much behind-the-scenes work before and during the tournament as well as our tee sponsors and donors. Thanks to the support of our golfers who continue to come out year after year, we were able to put on another fun and successful event.

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(Please see **GOLF**, page 5)



(GOLF, cont. from page 4)

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Onegai-shimasu!

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