

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

505 East Third Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013
(213) 626-4200 - FAX (213) 626-6850

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The Way

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HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

TEMPLE SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER

- 1 *Labor Day*
- 2 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 7 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 14 10:00 am **Autumn Ohigan Service**
- 16 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 21 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 28 10:00 am **Succession Service**
- 28 12:30 pm **Rinban Ito Retirement Celebration at Quiet Cannon (RSVP required)**

OCTOBER

- 5 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 7 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 12 10:00 am Sunday Service
- Discussion Group
- 19 10:00 am Family Service
- 21 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 26 9:00 am Coffee & Dharma
- 26 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 26 **Dharma School Halloween Party**

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2025

Celebrating 50 Years of Service
RINBAN NORIAKI ITO

SUCCESSION SERVICE
Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple | 10 AM
*for Rinban Noriaki Ito and
successor Rinban Kenjun Kawawata*

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION
Quiet Cannon, Montebello | 12:30 PM



Scan to RSVP



VISITING THE TEMPLE

The temple is currently open
for private services and visi-
tations 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
SUNDAYS | 10 AM



The Way



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HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE • LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

My Own Religious Conviction

Rev. Frederick Brenion

I dedicate this as a token of gratitude to my friend, mentor, teacher, boss, Rinban and Bishop, Noriaki Ito, for permitting me to be ordained within our tradition, and for allowing me to serve our people. Perhaps he saw a touch of gold within my rubbish, though I fear it is more likely to be fool's gold. Nevertheless I am grateful for the trust and encouragement he has given me.

Many who come to Buddhism elect to enter Zen, Theravada, or Tibetan. Jodo Shinshu is regarded as a "hard sell." Yet Jodo Shinshu speaks to me. It shows me who and what I am. It offers a way of entering the Dharma that stills my calculative mind and troubled heart. It did this by telling me a story. I like stories. Stories still continue to form me. I love stories that allow me to enter into them. I participate in them as if I were within its world. Entering into their reality allows me to see the 'real world' in a clearer way. To see myself in a clearer way. I believe Shinran discovered this as he settled upon the story of the Larger Pure Land Sutra as the key to his world. Our great teachers, Soga Ryojin and Kaneko Daiei, I believe take up this same understanding. We must see ourselves as birthing Dharmakara Bodhisattva within us and living out their story within our heart-minds.

As we enter into the great drama of the Pure Land we encounter the power of the Vows. A power that enables the hero, Dharmakara, to be transformed into Amida Buddha by living out their fulfillment. This story is really about us. It is a guide for how we too can be transformed into living and expressing the Buddha-nature that Amida Buddha represents. We must consider the Vows that we bring forth. All Buddhas must have their Vows. The question then for us is 'What's in your Pure Land?' The

answer is your story! At the end, Ananda asks, "What happens next?" The answer is Dharmakara IS Amida Buddha, the expression of Infinite Compassion and Wisdom, the heart of the Mahayana. All of us are reaching towards Buddhahood. To be a Buddha is to be what Amida Buddha is. Can one imagine a happier ending for a story? I am often overcome by my words, as you can see, but all words can lead to Buddha's singular word of Yes to each of us.

For us the story leads living the story. We live it by fulfilling the Primal Vow. All I have to do is sincerely call for help. Call on Amida's Name, and be embraced. That's it. So simple. A child of seven could do this, but I, a person of seventy-plus years, am overcome.

We come to Shinran's command to us. All throughout his writings, he says this again and again. "The formation in the Tannisho was key for me. "But in this impermanent world, like a burning house, all things are empty and vain, therefore, untrue. Only the nembutsu is true, real, and sincere" and again, "Just say the Nembutsu and be saved by Amida, and entrust yourself to the Primal Vow. Besides this, there is nothing else."

Here I've hit bedrock. Here I must build. My calculative mind rises up. I desire to understand, deliberate, and judge. Shinran says rather, be "supple and gentle in body and mind." My self-power resists. To use culinary terms, my calculating mind needs tenderizing in order to become supple. That tenderizing is the encountering of the reality of our burning, impermanent world. My world. This alone reveals that it is the Nenbutsu alone that is true and real. This world of Samsara, this world of suffering, points to what I truly need but

(Please see **CONVICTION**, page 4)

Rinban Noriaki Ito Retires after 50 Years of Service



Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple celebrates the retirement of Rinban Noriaki Ito, marking 50 years of service as a minister. Rinban Ito was born as the first son of Rev. Horyu and Kazuko Ito in Kumamoto, Japan,

in September 1948. He settled in Boyle Heights, where his father was serving as Rinban of the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple. After completing his undergrad at Occidental College in Los Angeles and Shin Buddhist studies at Otani University in Kyoto, Japan, he received his full ordination. He became a full-time minister at Higashi Honganji

(Please see **ITO**, page 4)

Welcoming Rinban Kenjun Kawawata

Rev. Kenjun Kawawata will assume the Rinban position for the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple as well as the Bishop position for the North America District as Rinban Noriaki



Ito retires. The succession service will be held at 10 am on Sunday, September 28th, 2025.

Many of you will remember Rinban Kawawata from his early years as a minister at the Betsuin in Los Angeles, where he served from 1984 until he became the resident minister for West Covina

(Please see **KAWAWATA**, page 4)



Betsuin News



Autumn Ohigan

This year's Autumn Ohigan Service will be held on Sunday, September 14th at 10:00 am. The guest speaker for our Autumn Ohigan Service will be Rev. Kenjun Kawawata, our incoming Rinban. We look forward to welcoming him back to Higashi Honganji in Los Angeles as he prepares to become Rinban. The Autumn Seminar will be held later in the year on Sunday, November 23rd, with guest speaker, Rev. Takashi Miyaji. Ohigan is held twice every year on or about the equinox in the spring and fall. At these times of year when the weather is most often ideal, we endeavor to strengthen our commitment to the Buddhist life. We welcome you to invite your friends and family to join us for both important events!

Help The Way

The Way needs your help and welcomes your contributions. With the cost of printing and postage steadily increasing, we request your support in helping to make our newsletter available in the years to come. Please consider making a donation to *The Way* to offset some of the cost. Thank you for your continued support and readership.

Onegai-shimasu!

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celebrating
120
Years in Los Angeles

120th Anniversary Capital Campaign Update

We appreciate the donations and gestures of support that we have received in response to our 120th Anniversary Capital Campaign. Over the past few months, we have had the opportunity to make various improvements to the temple.

We purchased two new large-screen monitors for our hondo. These are used regularly to display audiovisual presentations that enhance our Sunday Services, funerals, and other events held in the hondo. During Sunday Services, the monitors display the same live stream as our Facebook account. This provides an added visual for those in attendance as well as a place to show slideshows, videos of guest speakers who are unable to be here in person, and other media presentations.

In June, we began a paving project in our parking lot. After years of use, the lot was beginning to age, with cracks in many places and fading lines. The entire parking lot was repaired, repaved, and restriped prior to our Obon Festival. Now, the lines are clear and the pavement is clean and ready for use.

Now that the temple is over 50 years old, its infrastructure is aging, and we are facing numerous issues that are likely to persist as the temple continues to grow older. We are grateful for your ongoing support as we address current challenges and strive to enhance the facility for the benefit of future generations.



Our deepest condolences to the family and relatives of ...

*Henry Shoichiro Yasuda (96)
June 29, 2025*

*Hiroko Saisho (91)
July 5, 2025*

*Yuko Shelly Hirahara (56)
July 26, 2025*

Namu Amida Butsu

66TH ANNUAL

HHBT OBON 2025

2025 RAFFLE WINNERS

1ST PRIZE

\$1,000 Cash
Hayley Hunter

2ND PRIZE

4 Dodgers tickets
Kim R. Hosea

3RD PRIZE

\$500 Cash
Lauren Kojima

4TH PRIZE

Apple iPad
E. Mizota

CONGRATULATIONS!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

The party is over, and our OBON 2025 is in the books!

THANK YOU to ALL the PEOPLE of HIGASHI, along with FAMILY and FRIENDS, who volunteered throughout OBON!

This being the last official OBON under our dear Rinban Ito, it certainly was a MEMORABLE ONE!

We had cool weather, a beautifully-manicured temple landscape, amazing OBON entertainment, several ceremonial temple services, delicious food options/desserts/baked goods/drinks, lovely flowers/plants, fresh produce, along with games/activities for the young and young-at-heart!

Our personalized manto-e lanterns honored our ancestors and loved ones. We all had a marvelous time dancing in their memory with so many people present! It certainly was a full house... both upstairs in the parking lot and downstairs in the social hall!

Last year, I missed several names from my article. This year, I named no

one! HOWEVER, YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE! YOU MADE OBON 2025 HAPPEN! Thank you for all that you've done and will continue to do forever!

Life is BUSY...Life is GOOD... OBON was spectacular!

See you next year for another PICTURE PERFECT OBON CELEBRATION!!



With Bruin Power and much Appreciation,
Elaine Harada
Obon co-chair

With Trojan Power and much Appreciation,
Steve Murata
Obon co-chair



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**LUMBINI IS
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* INTRO TO JAPANESE

with Rev. Mayuki

* EXPRESSION THROUGH

MOBILITY with Mr. John



(ITO, con't. from page 1)

Buddhist Temple in September 1975.

In 1988, he was transferred to the West Covina Higashi Honganji to serve as resident minister. In 1993, he assumed the position of Rinban of Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple. In 2011, he was appointed Bishop of the Higashi Honganji North America District while continuing to serve as Rinban.

Throughout his career, Rinban Ito has been involved in numerous community and religious organizations in Little Tokyo, connecting him to the Japanese American, Buddhist, and interfaith communities. We hope you will join us in honoring his many years of service and his legacy in Los Angeles.

The succession service for incoming Rinban Kenjun Kawawata and retirement celebration for Rinban Noriaki Ito will be held on Sunday, September 28th, 2025. RSVPs for the retirement celebration are required and due on August 28th. The cost is \$75 per adult and \$30 for children. To RSVP online, please visit hhbt-la.square.site/rinban50. We hope that you will join us for this momentous occasion.

(KAWAWATA, con't. from page 1)

Higashi Honganji in 1998. He comes to us from the Higashi Honganji Betsuin in Hawaii, where he has served as Rinban and Bishop of the Hawaii District since 2012. We are eager to have him in Los Angeles and hope that everyone will join us in welcoming him and his wife, Jeanne, back to the Higashi Honganji Los Angeles Sangha.

(CONVICTION, con't. from page 1)

lack. Wisdom. Compassion. *Namu Amida Butsu* is my cry of realizing that I must enter into this Awakening of Unending Wisdom and Unbounded Compassion." Knowledge is born of experience. I am led into the reality of my burning world. I am led into its heart, my burning self.

The Nenbutsu is such a peculiar thing. We talk of not looking at the fingers but at what the fingers point to, the moon. But this Nenbutsu is not a finger or a pointer, it is the very moon being given to me and to you. To say Nenbutsu is to receive Nenbutsu. To ask for compassion and wisdom is to receive it. One is made wise in asking for it, realizing my need. One is made compassionate by receiving it, how else can we learn it? Nothing of my own power and effort can effect it. It comes of its own necessity to my lack. It comes with its own evidence, being self-evident.

A wonderful scholar, teacher of our tradition, Bando Shojun, wrote: "The fact that the True Buddha and His Land (Nirvana) is *acintya* (unthinkable) does not mean that they are shrouded in mystery. Rather they are, in the enlightened eyes, most self-evident. *Acintya* means that reality is so self-evident that it is not graspable or expressible through limiting human concepts. Or it means that it is not possible to express reality in finite terms." We seek to understand by our finite means, but the collapse of our finite understandings is the only way to perceive the infinite depth of the wisdom and compassion that continuously surrounds and embraces us.

This brings us to Shinjin, the word

impossible to define simply. Perhaps that is because Amida Buddha is the undefinable. That is what infinitude means. There is no 'fin' or finish, no boundary. If I was to do the dictionary definition of Amida Buddha, and definition means to apply the limits of what the word is, I would be compelled to write "Amida Buddha" and then leave the entry completely blank. No parts of speech, for those apply limits. No definition, because Amida is absolutely open, unbounded. So there we are. Yet, the word Shinjin is "out there." I have come to the conclusion that it can only be approached in an ecstatic moment. It comes upon one unasked for. The closest I have come to what I think is the Shinjin experience was when I sat in our gejin gazing up at the statue of Amida while my fellow ministers were chanting the Shoshinge, and all of you behind me were chanting. I contemplated Amida Buddha as my "ultimate concern." A term that means that which I would give myself completely for, that guides and defines me. Amazing, the Undefinable defines the definable! As I pondered this it hit me that I was instead Amida Buddha's Ultimate Concern. That I was the focus of the full power of the Vows to reach me as I am. My calculating mind during this meditation was instantly made supple. Opened, I received what I needed for the moment, and could rely on for all other moments, even if only as a memory at times. If this is not Shinjin then I don't know what is. Perhaps I never will. All my words are foolish. Yet I am embraced. I cannot ask for more.





The Way





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BECOME A 2025 HIGASHI MEMBER!

Membership dues are \$400 for dual/family (includes children of the primary member under age 22) and \$200 for individual members. Paid Temple Members may receive 10% off coupons from Fugetsu-Do and Toyo Miyatake Studio upon request from the office.

To pay online, visit the link or scan the QR code:
<https://hhbt-la.square.site/membership>

