

**HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE**

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Los Angeles, CA 90013  
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HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

**TEMPLE  
SCHEDULE**

**DECEMBER**

- 18 9:00am Temple Clean-up
- 27 9:00am Mochitsuki (Tuesday)
- 31 6:30pm Year-end Service (Joya-e)

**JANUARY**

- 1 10:00am New Year's Day Service (Shusho-e)
- 8 10:00am Shotsuki Service
- 15 10:00am Family Service
- 22 10:00am Sunday Service
- 29 10:00am Eitai-kyo Service  
New Year Luncheon &  
General Meeting

**FEBRUARY**

- 5 10:00am Shotsuki Service
- 12 10:00am Sunday Service

*Joya-e New Year's Eve  
Service*

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31  
6:30PM

*Shusho-e New Year's Day  
Service*

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1  
10:00AM

**EITAIKYO SERVICE  
NEW YEAR LUNCHEON +  
GENERAL MEETING**

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29  
10:00AM



# The Way



Volume 68 | Number 11 | December 2016 ●

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE • LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

## The Hōonkō Gift of Shinjin

Rev. Frederick Brenion

I write this before Hōonkō. You, gentle reader, will receive it afterwards. Before, after, or during makes little difference, as the great matter of Hōonkō is the great matter of every day, the great matter of our lives.

The focus of Hōonkō is to express gratitude towards our founder, Shinran Shōnin. Yet, if it was nothing but this, then a simple memorial service would have sufficed. Rather Hōonkō is not just for us to give, but it is also meant for us to receive, to awaken to. What is to be awakened is the matter of *Shinjin*. It is for this that we express our gratitude.

It was Rennyo Shōnin, the Restorer, who built up our Honganji. Who fashioned and gave us our services. Who made the Hōonkō central to our lives, for as it is said, "In Jodo Shinshu, our year ends and begins with Hōonkō." And throughout his many letters, and throughout his many collected sayings he brought up the central importance of awakening *Shinjin*, particularly at the time of Hōonkō. For Rennyo, any service at any temple where *Shinjin* is not discussed, is not attained, is a waste, a lost opportunity.

What then is this *Shinjin*?

I don't know.

That must be rather shocking. Ministers are supposed to know these things. But I have discovered that one of the secrets of being a minister is to discover what you don't know, and if you're lucky, why.

That *Why* may well be in its own way the answer. I don't feel so alone in this central ignorance when I consider that the illustrious spiritual teacher, Zuiken Sensei, wrote:

*What is Shinjin?*

*I don't know.*

*Amida Buddha does it all.*

*Amida Buddha does it all.*

There is incredible wisdom in this

poem that I've paraphrased. Our inability to define is a signal of a greater import.

How does one convey what *Shinjin* is then? There has been much controversy on this matter and it reflects in the various translations. Some have translated it as "faith". Many scholars have objected to it because in English the word carries a ton of nuances from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that would distort our Mahayana Buddhist perspective. I have witnessed myself how people conflate "faith" and "belief" together, which are two separate mental actions and leading to distorting views. Some have presented "entrusting heart" or "entrusting mind", which has advantages. Some say that nothing in English will work, just leave the word as *Shinjin* and we can just figure out a meaning from context. For me as a sole English speaker that is no solution at all. You might as well print an "x" for the unknown in place. For me, English speakers and Japanese speakers are first fundamentally human, and our languages reflect that humanity in vibrant ways.

Perhaps we don't understand *Shinjin* because we're not reading Shinran correctly, as if there is a right way to read any person. One can only be open and to simply listen. Because no matter the language there are sounds that are common to every person on this planet whoever was, ever will be, and is right now. It is the sound of tears, the sound of pain, and the sound of laughter. That to me is the root behind all communication. It may well be that *Shinjin* is one of the bridge words from those primal sounds to our hearts and minds.

One thing I've noticed is that people ask, "How do you get *Shinjin*? How do you know you have it?" It is as if it is something we have to do something

about. Yet when I read Shinran I simply don't see that direction, but then maybe I am reading him wrongly. I would not be surprised. But what I think I see from Shinran is that whatever *Shinjin* is it comes from Amida's side, not mine. It is a gift from Amida to me. The 'entrusting heart' is not mine, it is Amida that gives it to me, pours it out to me, and to all, without constraint, light and life, wisdom and compassion.

This then is the *Why* I was waiting to find. The *Why* for why I can't understand *Shinjin*. It is from Amida's side, the Other Power side, the side that frustrates my ever Calculating Mind that Shinran so often warns me against.

What does "Amida" mean? It literally means "without measure". It is another word for "infinite" which simply means "not finite". To de-fine is to put limits and bring to focus and order for the Calculating mind to control and manipulate. That is why dictionaries are so useful, and I am very much a man of my words. That is why Jodo Shinshu is of such importance to me because it confounds all that I've made foundational, all that I have sought to de-fine and layout for my own control and for my own protection. Words have been my fortress but the word of Amida, expressed through *Shinjin*, heard through Nembutsu, breaks all words and walls asunder. And they make us free.

All that comes from Amida is of such nature as Amida. Amida cannot be de-fined. For if Amida was defined he would not be Amida. That is the *Why*, for

*(Please see SHINJIN, page 4)*

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[www.hhbt-la.org](http://www.hhbt-la.org)

and "like" us on facebook at  
<http://www.facebook.com/hhbt.la>



# Betsuin News



## In Gratitude

With the year-end rapidly approaching, we wish to take this opportunity to thank you for your generous support throughout 2016. We thank you for both your monetary contributions as well as your time and energy in volunteering to support our various activities.

The main event that our Betsuin supported this year is the successful 12<sup>th</sup> World Dōbō Gathering that was held here in Los Angeles on August 27-28. Again, we thank you for your volunteer efforts as well as your participation in the event. Of the 310 participants, 80 were from our Betsuin membership. We received so many compliments and that is due to your hard work and participation.

In July, we had another very successful Obon Festival. In terms of fundraising, it seems we set another record for income.

Special thanks go to those of you who have sacrificed so much of your time to help with our temple responsibilities – to those on the property committee who spend much time and energy making repairs and renovations of our temple on a weekly basis, to those who come out regularly to maintain our beautiful garden, especially to Mr. Tadahide Kawahira and Mr. Hirokichi Maehara, to those who come out to help with the polishing of our altar decorations before our special services, to those who help with our various mailings, to those who came to help beautify our temple with the Temple Clean-up, to those who come to prepare our meals for special services and prepare refreshments for our Shotsuki and Family services, to those who create and facilitate religious, cultural, and entertaining programs for our members to enjoy, to the many who make our Obon Festival, and our Golf Tournament so successful, and to others too numerous to mention, we extend our deepest gratitude. Without your support, the temple would not be able to serve our membership and our com-

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

## Joya-e Year-end Service

Come celebrate the end of 2016 at our Year-end Service to be held on Saturday, December 31<sup>st</sup> at 6:30pm. It is an opportunity to reflect back on the past year and to prepare to welcome in the New Year. The evening will also include the exciting Toshikoshi Soba-Eating Contest, so come hungry!

## Shusho-e New Year Service

Shusho-e is the first service of the New Year. It is a tradition in Japan to visit nearby temples and shrines on New Year's Day. We welcome you to join us to greet the New Year on Sunday, January 1, 2017 at 10:00am. Following service, stay for a sip of Otoso (New Year's sake) to toast 2017 and enjoy Ozoni (traditional mochi soup) and exchange New Year's greetings.

## Eitaikyo Service & New Year Luncheon

The Eitaikyo Service will be held on Sunday, January 29<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am. This service is held in memory of all temple members who have passed away. It is also held to remember those who have been placed into the Eitaikyo register.

Following the service, the 112<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting and New Year's Luncheon will be held in the social hall. Further information will be mailed to you in January.



## HŌONKŌ

This year's Hoonko Observances were held during the weekend of November 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. This gathering is held on a weekend near November 28<sup>th</sup> of every year in commemoration of the memorial of Shinran Shōnin. It has traditionally been considered the most important observance in Shinshu Buddhism. Historically, it was said that the calendar of a Honganji temple begins and ends with the Hoonko observance. The word, Hoonko, means a gathering to repay our indebtedness, and is a time to express our gratitude for having the opportunity to encounter the Buddhadharma and to deepen our awareness of the teachings.

Saturday evening, we had our Hoonko Gathering, an informal observance of Shinran Shōnin's memorial. This event was sponsored by our ABA organization. The evening began with a short service, a Dharma Talk in English by Rev. Ken Yamada from Berkeley Higashi Honganji followed by dinner and discussion.

On Sunday, formal observances were held at 10:00am, with a sermon given Rev. Ken Yamada in English and Rev. Nobuko Miyoshi from West Covina Higashi Honganji in Japanese. The Overseas District Abbot, Rev. Chōyū Ōtani was here from Kyoto, Japan to participate and officiate the service. We welcomed him and his wife Satika to Los Angeles and are grateful that they were able to join us for this special service. Following service, Toban 2 provided a traditional vegetarian otoki lunch. We hope that you were able to join us for this special occasion.



## DHARMA SCHOOL UPDATE

In October, we gathered together to celebrate Halloween with other temple members. We had fun sharing our costumes with our friends, making crafts, and decorating sweet treats. After a lunch of hot dogs, chili, nachos, salads, and lots of desserts, we played games! We played several games during the party. One was a version of Pictionary where there were two teams. One person from each team would draw and one person from each team would guess the drawing at a time. The two teams would both draw the same object. We also played Halloween Bingo and a word game where participants had to list as many things as they could think of that were the color orange. The last game was the oreo game where participants had to put an oreo cookie on their foreheads and wiggle their faces with the goal of getting the cookie into their mouths. Only one person succeeded in two rounds and it was Rev. Hasegawa! In the end, everyone won and received prizes! In addition to our regular party activities, we had a photo booth again this year! The kids and adults all had a fun time posing for pictures with their costumes and other props. After all of our fun games and crafts, we finally got to go trick-or-treating and get lots of candy and prizes. We had a great time at our party and thank everyone for coming! Special thanks to everyone who helped with the games and cleanup!

In November, we are focused on being thankful for the people and things who make our lives meaningful. We're looking forward to Mochitsuki and all of the other year-end activities! We hope that you will join us!

Please join us for Dharma School on Sundays. Dharma School talks will be given by our ministers on Shotsuki Service and Family Service Sundays.



## MEMBER spotlight



**BABY ANNOUNCEMENT**  
 To Parents Hidemi & Paul  
 Grandparents Yoshitaka & Sylvia Ena  
 a New Baby Girl  
 Ena Reet Fallon  
 Born on October 28, 2016  
**CONGRATULATIONS!**

## Hanamatsuri Craft Fair

Calling all craft vendors! On Sunday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 10am to 3pm, we will have our Hanamatsuri Craft Fair at the Betsuin! We are looking for vendors who make and sell craft items and would like to be a part of our Craft Fair. For more information, please contact the temple office at 213-626-4200 or email [info@hhbt-la.org](mailto:info@hhbt-la.org). Vendor applications will be available early 2017 and due in March.

Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple

## Hanamatsuri Craft Fair

Sunday, April 23, 2017

10:00am - 3:00pm

We're looking for vendors!

Please contact the temple office for an application!

[info@hhbt-la.org](mailto:info@hhbt-la.org) • 213-626-4200

[www.hhbt-la.org](http://www.hhbt-la.org)



## LUMBINI CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

FOR CHILDREN AGES 2 1/2 TO 6 YEARS

TEL: 213-680-2976

FAX: 213-626-6850

EMAIL: [lumbini.missleslie@gmail.com](mailto:lumbini.missleslie@gmail.com)

WEBPAGE: <http://LumbiniCDC.org>

**OPEN YEAR ROUND:**

MONDAY through FRIDAY

7:30am to 6:00pm

closed national holidays

**APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE!**

Call today to set up a visit to the school!



## LITTLE TOKYO SPARKLE 2016

On November 5, 2016, Higashi Sangha members, ministers, and friends joined over 250 members of Little Tokyo organizations and businesses to clean up the sidewalks of Little Tokyo. The genesis for this event called Little Tokyo Sparkle came from community volunteers Steve and Patty Nagano who did a fabulous job organizing and coordinating this cleanup effort along with Brian Kito and Van Ogami.

Our group was assigned to clean Frances Hashimoto Plaza and the sidewalks around Higashi, Union Church, and Tokyo Towers on the south end, and Frances Hashimoto Plaza and the merchant sidewalks on Second Street. Volunteers worked hard to clean the sidewalks and planters and spent a long time scraping years of "ground in" gum on the walkways. Poles and utility boxes required putty knives to scrape off layers of slap tags and stickers. We were followed by the window cleaners who cleaned the merchant windows.

Upon completion of the cleanup, the community gathered for a group photo below the Central street mural to honor the "community service" of the late Nancy Kikuchi who passed away in September 2014 and whose funeral service was held at our temple.

Higashi members remarked how great it was to meet and work alongside other community volunteers. Mean-

while, back at the temple, our members and Teramachi volunteers worked hours to prepare pots of curry, rice, musubis, and bowls of salad for the hungry workers. At last count, over 240 bowls of curry rice were consumed.

In preparation for this event our Higashi members attended organizing meetings, ordered supplies, and collected dessert and many other donations from the Little Tokyo merchants and generous donors.

The late Nancy Kikuchi was the consummate community volunteer. She was always so positive, dynamic, and enthusiastic. She led by example. No job was too dirty for her. Wherever she worked, whatever position she took, if there was a light out, something to be cleaned up, she took responsibility for it and did it without complaint. It is so nice to see that her legacy lives on in our community!

Thanks to all of you and your example of *dāna* by working so hard for the community and giving so freely of your time.

In gassho



(SHINJIN, con't. from page 1)

*Shinjin* must befuddle us. It is Amida's entrusted heart to us that awakens our own hearts to the promise of the Hōgan – the Primal Acceptance of us all.

That is the gift of Hōonkō to us. The gift that becomes the gift of our everyday life. That is why for gratitude to Shinran for unveiling and yet not de-fining what is most real and true, and above all else, free.

*What is Shinjin?*

*I don't know.*

*Amida Buddha does it all.*

*Amida Buddha does it all.*



(GRATITUDE, cont. from page 2)

community in the ways that we wish. One new event this year was in collaboration with the Little Tokyo community called LT Sparkle. We had many members come out to do a thorough clean-up of our town, and also to serve some 240 participants lunch.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season. We hope that you will be able to join us for our Mochitsuki on December 27, and our special Year-end (12/31) and New Year services (1/1). We ask for your continued support and guidance as we prepare for 2017.

Gassho,  
Rinban Noriaki Ito  
David Ikeda, President  
Board of Directors



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

Mrs. Betty Nobuko Yagake (98)  
October 7, 2016

Namu Amida Butsu

## SUBMISSION DEADLINE!

Submissions for *The Way* are due the 10th of each month for the following month's issue. Articles and announcements for our February Issue are due January 10th, 2017. Submissions may be subject to printing restrictions and staff approval. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!

## 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!**

## Have you heard?!

We have weekly **YOGA & ZUMBA** classes at the temple!

**YOGA | WED 6:15pm**  
**ZUMBA | TUES 7:30pm**  
**FRI 6:30pm**

**JOIN US!**

