

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

FEBRUARY

23 10:00am Sunday Service

MARCH

1 10:00am Shotsuki Service
2 9:00am Betsuin Golf
Tournament
8 10:00am Sunday Service
Discussion Group
15 10:00am Spring Ohigan Service
15 1:00pm Spring Seminar
22 10:00am Sunday Service
29 10:00am Sunday Service

APRIL

5 10:00am Shotsuki Service
5 1:30pm LABTF Hanamatsuri
12 10:00am Hanamatsuri Family
Service
19 10:00am Sunday Service
Discussion Group
20 World Dobo Gathering
(Kyoto) to 4/22
26 10:00am Sunday Service

HIGASHI HONGANJI
**20th ANNUAL
GOLF
TOURNAMENT**

VIA VERDE COUNTRY CLUB
MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2020
9:00AM

SIGN UP TO GOLF OR BE A TEE SPONSOR!

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2020

Spring
Ohigan Service
10:00AM

Spring Seminar
1:00PM

LABTF Hanamatsuri
Celebration

SUNDAY, APRIL 5 • 1:30PM
JACCC

hanamatsuri
family service
APRIL 12 • 10:00AM



The Way



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HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE • LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

The Teachings of Shin Buddhism and the History of the Honganji Sangha

Rev. Masashi Fujii

About three and a half years have passed since I came to Los Angeles. When I work at the temple, sometimes visitors ask me questions such as “What is the teaching of Shin Buddhism?” But I always have a hard time explaining to the visitors who are visiting the temple for the first time. According to the latest report of the Japan Policies of the Agency for Cultural Affairs in 2019, the Shinshū sect in Japan has about 188,000 temples and about 15.4 million followers in the Higashi and Nishi Honganji denominations. It is said to be the largest Buddhist denomination in Japan (Jōdo Shinshū has more temples and members because there are eight denominations in addition to Higashi and Nishi). However, even in Japan where there are many Shinshū followers, I think that the images of strict training, precepts, zazen, and meditation are generally stronger when speaking of Buddhism. In the United States where there is a small population of Buddhists and Zen is said to be especially popular, I think it is more difficult to understand Shin Buddhism for most of the people as well as in Japan. It is impossible to distinguish ministers of Jōdo Shinshū as ministers unless

they are dressed in black robes, because Shinshū ministers don’t have to shave their heads and do not have strict disciplined practices. Many people know that Buddhism is the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, but the temples of Jōdo Shinshū have usually only the statue of Amida Buddha and the hanging scrolls of Shinran Shōnin, Rennyo Shōnin, and the Seven Masters. There is no statue of Shakyamuni Buddha anywhere. Also, there are many people who come to the Los Angeles Betsuin asking, “Do you have a separate room for meditation?” But there is no such special room, so it seems for those who think that Buddhism is equal to zazen and practice, it can be difficult to understand what the teaching of Jōdo Shinshū is like.

The answer to the question of what kind of Buddhism Jōdo Shinshū is, I think, is found in the “Shōshinge,” which was written by Shinran Shōnin. It is the chant which I always read at Sunday Service with you. This is because it is generally said that reading “Shōshinge” gives us a perspective of the teaching of Jōdo Shinshū in Buddhism. This verse is composed of two main parts. The first part is the praise to Shakyamuni Buddha who introduced the teaching of Nenbutsu. “By saying the nenbutsu and entrusting oneself to the Primal

Vow, one attains Buddhahood.” And the second part praises the Seven Masters who faithfully accepted and revealed the Buddha’s teachings. The Seven Masters are Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu of India, the Tanluan, Dao-chuo, and Shan-dao of China, and Genshin and Honen (Genku) in Japan.

Buddhism was introduced to Japan via India, China, and the Korean Peninsula. But the teaching of Jōdo Shinshū was also transmitted to Shinran Shōnin by the Seven Masters through the Buddhist teaching of Nenbutsu. This is how the denomination called Honganji was formed and how the teachings have reached us through many followers and mentors.

Also, if people ask, “What kind of Buddhism is Jōdo Shinshū when it does not practice Zazen or do meditation?” I would say that one of the most important characteristics is that it is a denomination that values “listening to the Buddha’s teachings.” And in Jōdo Shinshū, it is said that listening to the Buddhist teaching, rather than just listening to anything, is the way of reflecting on myself and serves as a guide to the future.

One minister said that “learning Buddhism” is like “looking in a mirror.” When you say “look in the mirror,” I don’t think anyone would be satisfied with seeing only the appearance of the mirror itself. “It’s round or it’s large.” The mirror’s role is to “look at oneself in the mirror.” Learning the Buddha’s teaching objectively is just same as looking at the appearance of the mirror. He said that studying Buddhism allows us to see our true selves and that we should study it to determine the meaning and direction of our lives. I tend to study Buddhism so that I can

(Please see *TEACHINGS*, page 5)

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Onegai-shimasu!

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Betsuin News



HIGASHI HONGANJI 20th ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT



The 20th Annual Higashi Honganji Golf Tournament will be held on Monday, March 2nd at the Via Verde Country Club.

The tournament will have a shotgun start at 9:00am and the fee for this year is \$170, which includes green fee, cart, range balls, prizes, and a Western BBQ buffet. The Callaway System will determine the tournament's order of finish. In addition to what the fee covers, there will be special prizes announced during lunch.

This year's proceeds will go toward our youth programs and temple maintenance. You and others you know can support us by being a tee sponsor for the tournament. Tee sponsorships are \$125 per hole; Tournament sponsorships are \$1,500 and include a foursome of golfers, Gold level sponsorships are \$500, and Silver level sponsorships are \$300. If you would like any further information about the golf tournament or being a tee sponsor, please contact the temple office.

Spring Ohigan Service & Seminar

This year's Spring Ohigan Service will be held on Sunday, March 15th at 10:00am. The Spring Seminar will be held the same day as our Ohigan Service at 1:00pm. We welcome you to invite your friends and family to attend both of these important events!

Hanamatsuri Family Service

Our Hanamatsuri Family Service will take place on Sunday, April 12, 2020. Please join us as we celebrate the Buddha's birth with sweet tea offerings and reflections on the occasion of Hanamatsuri. We encourage you to join us for this festive occasion to celebrate the Buddha's birthday.

Temple Clean Up

Temple clean up is one of the most important events of the year. Members worked hard to clean the kitchen, social hall, classrooms, hondo, foyer, and outside to prepare the temple to look its best for our 2019 year-end events. Several temple members and friends came to help out at our Temple Clean up on the morning of Sunday, December 15th. With the hard work of our many attentive and hard-working volunteers, we were able to brighten the temple and prepare it for the New Year. Thank you to everyone who helped out at our Temple Clean up!

Joya-e New Years Eve Service

We ended 2019 with our annual Joya-e Service and Toshikoshi Soba. The ministers gave reflective messages about the past year and shared their challenges and accomplishments with the members in attendance. After service, everyone was invited downstairs for Toshikoshi Soba to tie us over to the New Year. After everyone had their share of noodles, they accompanied the ministers upstairs to take their turn at tolling the bell before midnight. Everyone who came that night enjoyed having a chance to share a fun evening on the last night of 2019.



Shusho-e New Years Day Service

The first morning of 2020, we gathered together for our Shusho-e New Year's Day Service. The ministers each shared special New Year messages to give the year a positive start. Afterward, we went downstairs to enjoy Oshogatsu oshiruko and otoso together after service. Everyone wore warm smiles as we greeted 2020 together.



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

*Mr. Yukio Mitsuuchi (94)
December 30, 2019*

*Mrs. Mineko Hirasaki Sakai (95)
January 27, 2020*

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 April/May 2020 Issue are due March 10th, 2020. Submissions may be subject to printing restrictions and staff approval. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!

Eitaikyo Service & New Year Luncheon

Our 2020 Eitaikyo brought out many of our family and friends to join us in remembering our temple members who have passed away. At our Eitaikyo Service, Rev. Peter Hata gave a Dharma Talk in English and Rev. Paul Imahara in Japanese.

This year, we had our 115th Annual New Year Luncheon and General Meeting in the social hall downstairs. The ceiling was decorated with lights and special tables were brought in to make the room feel festive. Attendees enjoyed a delicious bento by Chef Akira Hirose at Azay, in addition to appetizers, soup, and salad. There were also an assortment of beverages including iced tea and lemonade. Dessert was an assortment provided by ABA and other generous temple members.

We opened the luncheon with greetings from our Board President, Mr. Ron Sato and Rinban Noriaki Ito. Ron Sato opened the general meeting. A betsuin report, temple financial report, and the election of 2020 Board of Directors were presented by Rev. Peter Hata, Gary Kanemoto, and David Ikeda, respectively. We welcome Wayne Itoga as our new Board President. Penny Murata will serve as Vice President with Elaine Barbod and Ron Sato as treasurers.

Presentations were made by Rinban Ito and Ron Sato to temple volunteers to honor their hard work over the course of the past year. A special presentation

was made to Ron Sato to honor his years of service as Board President and also to his wife, Becky Sato for her support. After the presentations, Shin Ito hosted a year of the rat/mouse game. The women of ABA performed a "Dance Extravaganza" showcasing their dance moves through various decades. The slideshow was shown in the background before the program and during lunch. Door prizes were given out during the program and a special raffle of two Disney park hopper tickets helped raise money for the temple.

We want to send a special thank you to Mr. Shin Ito for acting as Master of Ceremonies during the luncheon and ABA for hosting the luncheon and assisting with the caterer. Thank you to Elaine Harada and Sharilynn Jung for coordinating the gifts for members over age 80, the beautiful floral centerpieces, and tables and linens and ABA for covering all of the costs. Thank you to Elaine Harada, Sharilynn Jung, Irene Ota, Becky Sato, and Susan Kashiwabara for donating prizes for the raffle. Thank you to Kazuyo Nagata for the beautiful cyclamen flowers. Thank you to the Lumbini staff and our many members and friends for volunteering to set up and clean up after the luncheon. Without the help of so many generous members and friends we could not have enjoyed such a delightful luncheon.

LABTF Hanamatsuri

The 2020 Los Angeles Buddhist Temple Federation's Hanamatsuri will take place this year on Sunday, April 5, at 1:30 pm, and will be held at the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC).

This year's Hanamatsuri theme is "Buddhism: Practice of Eating."

For more information, please call the temple office (213) 626-4200 or the host temple, Zenshuji Soto Mission at (213) 624-8658. We hope to see you all there.

MOCHITSUKI

Our annual Mochitsuki is known for its sticky fingers and abundant smiles and this year was no exception. On Friday, December 27th, temple members, family, and friends came out to enjoy steaming, pounding, shaping, and eating delicious mochi. We began by preparing Okasane for the temple altar and smaller ones to decorate our home obutsudans for New Years, then we made tiny komochi for New Years Day oshiruko and also an-filled mochi. Some of our more adventurous mochi-makers and shapers (and tasters!) also enjoyed making mochi in various colors and filling them with special surprises like chocolate and peanut butter to eat fresh! We helped the Lumbini children make Okasane to take home. Thank you to our mochi-making temple members who helped prepare for the event and make it fun and successful for everyone. Special thanks to Grace Yamashiro for chairing the event and Fugetsu-do for their generous donation! We hope to see all of you (and many more) back again next year!



Hoshidan Adventure

Penny Murata

When Rinban Ito invited me to attend the Hōonko Hoshidan Retreat in Kyoto from November 24 to December 1, 2019, I hesitated since I already had a work trip to Japan scheduled in October and I would miss Thanksgiving (turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing...and family, of course). In retrospect, these were minor inconveniences compared to the amazing time I had. Rev. Fred mentioned that, in 2019, Hōonko and Thanksgiving would be on the same day, so it was, indeed, a special time to make this trip. Rev. Hasegawa had the admirable task of keeping track of the other North America District members – Anna Hightower (Berkeley), Shigeo Nagayama (Newport Beach), Tanya Kato (West Covina) – and me throughout our trip.

During the three days and two nights of the Hōonko Hoshidan Retreat, we stayed at the Dōbō Retreat Center on the grounds of the Honzan, the head temple of Higashi Honganji. We joined the eight members of the group from Hawaii, including Rev. Kikuchi. Founder's Hall and Amida Hall are so impressive; pictures really don't convey the large spaces and the beauty of the altars. At night, we slept on futons. In the mornings, we were awakened by a gentle gong sound before 6 am to start days of service, discussions, and tours of the grounds. The participants from Japan attended separate lectures, but all of us attended the same services and meals. Our cleaning responsibilities were vacuuming our room, sorting dishes after meals, and a special cleaning of the main entrance gate (which is otherwise not accessible to the public). Rev. Conway conducted lectures for our North America and Hawaii District groups. It was inspirational to hear each person's story of how he or she became involved with Higashi and the Hoshidan Trip. Some had been involved for many years while others became involved in the past one to two years. Rev. Miyoshi's mother sent a box of snacks for us to enjoy. During services, I was taken with how enthusiastically participants chanted. The Bando-bushi, a special style

of chanting with movements conducted by trained chanters, was just as striking as the reverends described. It was also very striking how painful it was to sit in seiza style, sitting on the floor with your legs folded underneath. Ouch! There are chairs available, but sometimes there are not enough. At one point, I was "seiza shamed" by a participant from Japan when I was sitting with my legs to the side, but she later brought a chair for me – happy ending! Rev. Ise, the Assistant Minister for our group, took pity on us and found small chairs that we could carry with us. Also, our group had a special meeting with the Overseas District Abbot Chōyū Ōtani and his son.

Rev. Conway explained the meaning of Hōonko, a gathering to repay our debt of gratitude to Shinran for the teachings. Other concepts that he mentioned were the "adamantine" mind (referring to a diamond-like mythical element that won't react to any other elements), how the world constantly pushes us around, and a resolve to be in a state of constant contentment whatever the world throws at us. That was the biggest take home message and aspiration for me.

Among the many other highlights: Shoren'in, the temple where Shinran was ordained at age 9 years old; Ōtani Sobyō, the mausoleum where (some of) Shinran's ashes are located;

Anyoji Temple, where Honen and Shinran trained; Shosei-en, the Higashi Honganji garden; Ryoanji Temple, with the famous rock garden; Matcha ice cream with gold flakes at Golden Pavilion; View from Kyoto Tower. Now add images of beautiful autumn foliage with red, yellow, and orange leaves in the background!

Low points: Jet lag and falling over while taking off my shoes.

A frequent phrase that other attendees used to describe the experience was "once in a lifetime." I have to agree. Thank you for the invitation, Rinban Ito. Thank you for taking care of all of us during the trip, Rev. Hasegawa. Thank you for the chairs, Rev. Ise and lady. Thank you for helping me up, Tanya. Thank you for the lectures, Rev. Conway. Thank you for sharing your stories, fellow travelers. Thank you for the teachings, Shinran.



higashi craft fair

The temple hosted the Higashi Craft Fair on Sunday, November 24th and raised money for youth programs and temple maintenance. We are grateful to our many temple friends and volunteers who helped out at the event by setting up on Friday night, working our various tables on Sunday, and cleaning up after the event. Several of our members hosted vendor tables at the Craft Fair. Among them Trish Nicholson with amigurumi creations, Kisa & Janet Ito with Kisanoreen handmade jewelry, Susan Kashiwabara with SusiElaine Sweets, Namiko Ishii-Danganan with essential oil products, and Mika Ito with handmade sewn and paper products. We were happy to support our many creative members and appreciate them all coming out with their crafts and other items.

This year, the Jr. YBA hosted the con-

cession stand to help raise money to attend Southern District Jr. YBL events. Lumbini sold baked goods, drinks, and various other food items.

Special thanks to Steve Murata for his donation of avocados, lemons, and lemonade and Glen Hasegawa for his donation of strawberries. Special thanks also to Trish Nicholson, Kazuko Kawada, Kisanoreen, Anne Mizutani, Mayo Yerington, and Irene Takaki for generously donating a portion of their proceeds to the temple.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the fair possible and came out and supported the event! We look forward to seeing you at our next temple fundraiser!



(TEACHINGS, cont. from page 1)
explain it to others, or study it as mere knowledge. As a Buddhist minister, I should value “Listening to the Buddha’s teachings” and reflect on myself through Buddhism as if I am looking in a mirror at myself. I should listen to the Buddha’s teachings as a guide for my life. I guess we become more confident as we get older and more experienced, and as we age, it becomes more difficult to admit to our mistakes. Therefore, recognizing and correcting those mistakes or problems through “Listening to the Buddha’s teaching” may be the practice of developing our hearts and minds for us Shinshū followers.

When I chant “Shōshinge” every Sunday with everyone, I chant it by memory. But since I do not know Chinese, I sometimes read the English translation included in the service book. This is one of the ways for me of learning the teaching. However, even if I understand the superficial meaning, it is difficult to read “Shōshinge” itself without the commentary of a teacher.

This year, an English translation of a book published by Honzan titled “The Teachings of Shin Buddhism and the History of the Honganji Sangha – A Handbook for Shinshū Followers” will be published by the Shinshu Center of America. It contains details of Shinran Shōnin’s life, the teachings of Shin Buddhism through the Shōshinge and nearly everything necessary for understanding the Jōdo Shinshū tradition. Included is the history of the Honganji Sangha from when the Honganji Temple was established.

This book is used in learning sessions for Japanese Shinshū followers, and its contents are summarized in plain language. The North America District will be using this as a textbook for the third-generation members of the Dharma Seeds program, starting in 2020. I believe that it is a useful book to study on your own and to introduce the teachings of Jōdo Shinshū to others. It will be available soon. I hope that all of you will consider purchasing a copy to learn more about our tradition.

THANK YOU for supporting the
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