

## HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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# The Way

Vol. 75 | No. 2  
February & March 2023

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

## TEMPLE SCHEDULE

### MARCH

- 5 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 6 9:00 am Betsuin Golf  
Tournament
- 12 Daylight Savings Begins
- 12 10:00 am Sunday Service  
Discussion Group
- 19 10:00 am Spring Ohigan Service
- 19 1:00 pm Spring Seminar
- 26 10:00 am Sunday Service

### APRIL

- 1 Shinran Shōnin's  
Birthday
- 2 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 8 Buddha's Birthday
- 9 10:00 am LABTF Hanamatsuri  
at Nishi Hongwanji
- 16 10:00 am Hanamatsuri Family  
Service
- Japan Tour 4/17-4/27
- 23 No Service
- 30 10:00 am Sunday Service

### 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](https://www.facebook.com/HHBT.LA)  
**SUNDAYS | 10 AM**

**LABTF**  
**HANAMATSURI**  
SUNDAY, APRIL 9  
10:00 AM

PLEASE JOIN US AT  
NISHI HONGWANJI  
815 1st Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2023  
**Spring Ohigan Service**  
10:00AM  
**Spring Seminar**  
1:00PM



# The Way



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HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE • LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

## The Deep Wish in the Temple's History

Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa

From March to April this year, the 850th Celebration of the Birth of Shinran Shōnin and the 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of Jōdo Shinshū will be observed at the Shinshū Honbyō, our mother temple in Kyoto, Japan. The celebration is one of the major events held once every fifty years by the ten major Shinshū denominations. Most of them will hold this event in 2023 but a few of them will hold their observances another year. Our Shinshū Ōtani-ha (Higashi Honganji) and the Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha (Nishi Hongwanji) used to be one temple named Honganji, one of the major Shinshū traditions. If we go back to the origin of the Honganji, it has about 750 years of history. During the long period of history, the fate of the Honganji has been tossed back and forth by the waves of the times and has gone through organizational changes according to social situations. But I think there is always an undercurrent of the deep wish flowing throughout the 750-year history that has sustained over time.

The origin of the Honganji can be traced back to a small memorial hall, which was built about 750 years ago in Higashiyama, the area on the eastern outskirts of Kyoto. Shinran Shōnin is believed to have spent his final years at a residence named Zenpōin in the city of Kyoto and his youngest daughter Kakushin-ni was taking care of him. In the eleventh month of Kōchō 2 (1263 by the Gregorian Calendar), he passed away at the age of ninety and his ashes were buried in a place named Ōtani, part of the Higashiyama area. About ten years after his passing, Kakushin-ni and her husband Ononomiya Zennen moved his grave to their privately-owned land in Higashiyama, where they later built a small memorial hall for the Shōnin with the help of his followers in the

Kantō region (the surrounding area of present-day Tokyo). They enshrined the Shōnin's lifelike wooden image called *goei* inside the hall. It eventually became a sacred place for the Shōnin's followers, who visited there from across the country. It was a place where they encountered the Shōnin again to express their gratitude toward him and to reflect on his teachings. A few years later, after Zennen passed away, Kakushin-ni donated this memorial hall and its land to the followers in Kantō.

Kakushin-ni entrusted the ownership and administration of the memorial hall to the followers in Kantō instead of retaining the property rights. She clearly stated in her letter addressed to the followers that the memorial hall should belong to all followers so that it would be a symbolic place for followers forever. She continued to live on the property to take care of the building on behalf of the followers in remote areas. Her position came to be called *rusushiki* (caretaker). Even though we do not know how deeply Kakushin-ni understood Shinran Shōnin's teaching, she embodied the spirit of the Shōnin, who shared the teaching of the Buddha with anyone regardless of any conditions or backgrounds. She sincerely wished that the memorial hall would become the place where anyone could meet Shinran Shōnin.

During the time when Kakunyo, the grandson of Kakushin, was the *rusushiki*, he started to call the memorial hall "Honganji," and later it was officially recognized as a Buddhist temple by the Imperial Court, though some followers did not welcome such a huge organizational change. Moreover, he declared himself as the direct and legitimate successor of the dharma tradition passed down through Shinran and his grandson

(Please see *WISH*, page 3)

## Life is Good but Painful too

Rinban Noriaki Ito

Years ago when I was serving as the advisor for the Buddhist group at Occidental College, one of the leaders of the group was a student from New York named Daniel who was a dedicated student of Buddhism. We used to meet once a week and on one occasion, I was wearing a hat that said "Life is Good." So as soon as I walked in, Dan saw the hat and said, "Hey Nori, what's with the cap? You always tell us that Buddhism says Life is Suffering." So I said, "Well, yes, but in the midst of that life of suffering, often something good comes out of it."

During the past week, we experienced sadness and pain when violence came close to our neighborhoods. Many of our members live in the Monterey Park, Montebello, and other parts of the San Gabriel Valley. On January 21 Saturday night, right after the festive events of the Lunar New Year, a group of people were dancing at a hall when a lone gunman entered and eventually killed 11 people and injured 9 others. The tragedy was not labeled an Asian Hate Crime since the gunman was of Chinese origin, the same as almost all of the victims.

Two days later, 7 farm laborers were killed in Half Moon Bay up north. The perpetrator there was also Asian. There were also the deaths of two black individuals, Tyre Nichols in Memphis, Tennessee and Keenan Anderson here in Los Angeles among others who died

(Please see *LIFE*, page 3)

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# Betsuin News



## Spring Ohigan Service & Seminar

This year's Spring Ohigan Service will be held on Sunday, March 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am. The Spring Seminar will be held the same day as our Ohigan Service at 1:00 pm. Attendees must show proof of vaccination or negative test and masking is required for everyone. Please note that there will not be refreshments after the service. If you are unable or choose not to join us in person, please join us for the Ohigan Service live stream on Facebook and the Spring Seminar on Zoom. We welcome you to invite your friends and family to attend both of these important events!

## LABTF Hanamatsuri Celebration

Please join Higashi Honganji and the temples of the Los Angeles Buddhist Temple Federation for a Hanamatsuri Celebration at Nishi Hongwanji on Sunday, April 9 at 10:00 am. Jodoshu will host the event and the guest speaker will be Rev. Kodo Tanaka in both English and Japanese. We encourage you to attend the service at Nishi that day, so we will not have service at Higashi. We hope you will join us.

**visit our website at  
hhbt-la.org**

## 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!**

## 2022 Year-end Events

We ended 2022 with our annual Temple Clean Up on December 18<sup>th</sup> thanks to help of many dedicated members who came to prepare our temple for 2023. Members worked hard to clean the kitchen, social hall, classrooms, hondo, foyer, and outside to prepare the temple to look its best. 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 at our Temple Clean up!

Unfortunately, we had to cancel our Mochitsuki again this year, but we hope to bring it back in the future. Our annual Joya-e Service was held in person as well as streamed online, but we missed enjoying Toshikoshi Soba together again this year. The ministers gave reflective messages about the past year and shared their challenges and accomplishments from 2022 as well as their hopes for 2023.

## Shusho-e

The first morning of 2023, the Shusho-e New Year's Day Service was held in person at the temple. The ministers each shared special New Year messages to give the year a positive start. We were unable to toast together again this year, but we wish everyone a happy and healthy 2023!



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@higashihonganji

## 2023 Eitaikyo Service & General Meeting New Year Luncheon

Our 2023 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, guest speaker, Rev. Yasushi Kigoshi gave Dharma Talks in English and Japanese.

This year, we had our 118<sup>th</sup> General Meeting and, for the first time in three years, our annual New Year Luncheon. The general meeting and luncheon were held in the Aratani Hall at the Japanese American National Museum. Attendees enjoyed a delicious char shiu and kalbi chicken combination lunch by Aloha Cafe. There was a bar serving beverages of choice. Board members and other generous temple members provided a delicious selection of desserts.

We opened the luncheon with greetings from our Board President, Wayne Itoga and Rinban Noriaki Ito. Wayne Itoga opened the general meeting. A betsuin report, temple financial report, and the election of 2023 Board of Directors were presented by Rinban Noriaki Ito, Gary Kanemoto, and David Ikeda, respectively. We welcome Penny Murata as our new Board President. Irene Ota will serve as Vice President with Jason Wong as a treasurer. We welcome Heather Barbod and Laura Yamashiro to the board.

Presentations were made by Rinban Ito, Wayne Itoga, and Penny Murata to temple volunteers to honor their hard work over the course of the past year. A special presentation was made to Wayne Itoga to honor his years of service as Board President. After the presentations, Shin Ito hosted a year of the rabbit game. The slideshow was presented reflecting on the past three years beginning with our last New Year luncheon in 2020. Door prizes were given out during the program.

We want to send a special thank you to Mr. Shin Ito for acting as Master of (Please see EITAIKYO, page 4)



(LIFE, cont. from page 1)

in police custody.

The end of February will be the one-year anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine. Innocent people continue to be killed and seriously injured and so many towns and homes destroyed. Whether it be in our country or faraway in Ukraine, we must do what we can to stop the violence, limit the ease of obtaining guns in general and specifically to stop the sale of assault weapons.

It is extremely depressing to see and to hear such news both near and far on an everyday basis. But it reinforces the teaching that reminds us that along with joy of living, life is filled with sad and painful experiences as well. The Buddhadharma teaches us to accept whatever negative or hurtful things that happen. But it also reminds us that life is changing from moment to moment. So the negative experiences could be regarded as our lessons in life. We can also learn from positive things that happen. But it is the painful, the sad occurrences that serve as dynamic lessons from which we can grow. So, as I told my student years ago, all experiences, both positive and negative, are to be accepted, perhaps, gratefully received.

At my age, (almost 75) I can remember so many failures and difficulties over the years. But it's been a great journey so far. I'm hoping to enjoy at least a few more years with my family and with all of you, my Dharma friends. I look forward to the 850<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration of Shinran Shōnin and the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Jodo Shinshū Tradition in Spring of this year. I also want to think more deeply about the theme, "*Namu Amida Butsu – To Discover the Meaning of Being Born as Human Beings*"

I believe that the teachings point us in the direction to come to understand what it means to live our lives as human beings together with other people and other living things. I feel as though this will be the important question I live with through the rest of my life. May 2023 be a wonderful and awakening year for all of us.

Gassho,  
Noriaki Ito



(WISH, cont. from page 1)

Nyoshin (a nephew of Kakushin-ni). The effects of those changes might not be entirely positive from the standpoint of Shinran's teaching, but I think we can say that Kakunyo tried to preserve the genuine teachings from inconsistent understandings by making those changes. He and several generations of his descendants continued to travel to remote regions to propagate the teaching, and because of those efforts, the Honganji tradition gradually took root in those areas. However, when Rennyo was born in the early 15th century, the Honganji was far behind other Shinshū groups in popularity. In such a difficult situation, Rennyo became the *rusushiki* of the Honganji. Because of his vigorous propagation efforts, the scale of the organization was dramatically expanded even though the original place of the memorial hall was later destroyed by monks of Mount Hiei. Rennyo is well known as the second founder of the Honganji, but one of his greatest achievements was reviving the spiritual core of Kakushin-ni by making architectural changes to temple buildings and creating service formats of chanting Shōshinge and wasans so that anyone could gather at temples and have direct access to Shinran Shōnin's teaching. More than a century later, Kyōnyo carried on the spirit of Kakushin-ni and established Higashi Honganji as the place where anyone could meet Shinran Shōnin and listen to his teaching despite tremendous hardships in the turmoil of the warring state period. The tradition of the Honganji has been passed down while experiencing several changes to meet the demands of the ages. However, Kakushin-ni's spirit to build the memorial hall has been alive at the foundation of our history.

Today, the small memorial hall once tucked away in the foothills of Higashiyama has become the massive building called Goeidō (Founder's Hall) as seen at the Higashi and Nishi headquarters. The Goeidō of the Higashi Honganji is one of the world's largest wooden structures. It was destroyed by fire four times since it was first built in the early 17th century but was rebuilt each time thanks to the tremendous efforts made by the followers. The current building was rebuilt in 1895 by the hands of

followers who gathered from all over the country when neither construction machinery nor modern technology was available. The construction of such a huge building was made possible by tens of thousands of followers' deep wish that the Honganji would continue to be where anyone can meet Shinran Shōnin. We can see that the Shōnin's youngest daughter Kakushin-ni's wish is still alive in their efforts in reconstructing the Goeidō.

I think it is very important for us to look back on our temple's history and reflect on the spiritual core underlying the organization. I believe that we can awaken to the true meaning of life through reflection.

I am looking forward to observing the Celebration together with you and renewing our commitment to walking the nenbutsu path.



## Our deepest condolences

to the family and relatives of ...

Mrs. Natsue Sheppard (56)  
December 15, 2022

Mr. Iwao Nakanishi (83)  
December 17, 2022

Mrs. Satsuki Mary Tsuyuki (99)  
January 15, 2023

Mrs. Sumiko Tokunaga (96)  
January 28, 2023

*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 June Issue are due May 10th. Submissions may be subject to printing restrictions and staff approval. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!





## BECOME A HIGASHI MEMBER IN 2023!

Membership dues are \$350.00 for dual/family (includes children of the primary member under age 22) and \$175.00 for individual members. Paid Temple Members may receive 10% off coupons from Fugetsu-Do and Toyo Miyatake Studio upon request from the office.

(EITAIKYO, con't. from page 2)

Ceremonies during the luncheon and the Board of Directors for hosting the luncheon. Thank you to Elaine Harada and Sharilynn Jung for coordinating the gifts for members over age 80 and the beautiful floral centerpieces. Thank you to Elaine Harada, Sharilynn Jung, David & Kathy Ikeda, Janet Ito, Grace Yamashiro, Irene Ota, Lisa Shimamoto, Penny Murata, Mika Ito, Susan Kashiwabara, Ron & Becky Sato, Kisa Ito, Trish Nicholson, Mr. Danny for donating door prizes. Thank you to Wayne Itoga, Grace Yamashiro, Irene Ota, Kisa Ito, Steve Nakasone, Penny Murata, Susan Kashiwabara, Janet Ito, and Lisa Shimamoto for contributing to the dessert bar. Thank you to the Lumbini staff (Ms. Leslie, Mr. Jack, and Mr. Danny) 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.

## LUMBINI CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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