

# HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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# The Way

Vol. 71 | No. 4  
June 2019

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

## TEMPLE SCHEDULE

### JUNE

- 2 10:00am Shotsuki Service
- 9 10:00am Sunday Service  
Discussion Group
- 16 10:00am **Father's Day/  
Graduation Family  
Service & Lunch**
- 23 10:00am Sunday Service
- 30 10:00am Sunday Service  
1:00pm **Lumbini Graduation**

### JULY

- 7 10:00am Shotsuki Service
- 14 10:00am **Obon Family Service  
Pet Memorial Service**
- 21 9:00am Coffee & Dharma  
10:00am Sunday Service
- 27 1:00pm **OBON FESTIVAL**
- 28 11:00am **Obon/Hatsubon Service**  
1:00pm **OBON FESTIVAL**

### AUGUST

- 4 10:00am Shotsuki Service
- 11 10:00am Sunday Service

60TH ANNUAL  
HIGASHI HONGANJI

# OBON

SATURDAY + SUNDAY

JULY 27 + 28, 2019



# The Way



Volume 71 | Number 4 | June 2019

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## The Great Path of Attaining Buddhahood as a Bonbu

Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa

Many people say our life is like a journey, with each one of us being a traveler on it moving toward a particular destination. Some people go in the fast lane and rush toward their destinations. Others go slowly, taking their time and enjoying their journey. The destinations might be social success, longevity, prosperity, or a happy family life. Whatever it might be, our life's journey is unique in its own way.

However, in a physical sense, our final destination is exactly the same. It is death. Every being has to die someday. All of us are aware of that but not all of us anticipate that death can happen anytime, possibly today. Actually, we tend to avoid thinking about our own death, so that we can maintain a peaceful state of mind and enjoy the journey of life. But death is the definite destination for all of us. From the Buddha's perspective, our journey of life is described as "birth and death," which is the most fundamental reality for us all, and that we are traveling together on and sharing that journey of "birth and death." There is a parable, which symbolically describes the Buddhist's journey to awakening. This is called "River of Fire, River of Water," or "The White Path." I would like to talk about this parable today.

A traveler is journeying thousands of miles toward the west. Suddenly, along the way, he comes across bands of bandits and wild beasts. Seeing the traveler alone, they compete with each other in order to kill him and so start pursuing him. Extremely frightened, he runs toward the west to escape from them, but he unexpectedly finds himself on the bank of a strange and vast river. In fact, it is two rivers in one and both are immeasurably deep and endless. Flowing to the north is a river of water, and to the south is a river of fire. Dividing these two rivers is a single white path about four or five inches wide. This path is about one hundred steps in length, joining the two shores. The narrow path is constantly being swept by surging waves and burned by scorching flames. At that moment, the traveler is left standing there with the vast and solitary wilderness behind him, and with no prospects of being helped by anyone. It seems that he is facing death on all sides.

The vast and solitary wilderness the traveler has been passing through in this parable symbolizes our being lost in the delusion created by our own ego-self. Even if we are enjoying a happy life, as long as we avoid facing the reality of "birth and death" and put our ego-self at the center of our lives, we are lost in

delusion. The vast river that the traveler comes upon is the symbol of the reality of each of our lives. The river of water is our greed and that of fire is our anger. The two endless rivers mean that our minds are nothing but greed and anger. And the bands of bandits and wild beasts stand for the pride in our minds that shut our eyes to the truth. Our pride is so destructive to our lives that it is described as "bandits and beasts" here. The reason why the traveler suddenly comes across this river of fire and river of water (the true reality of himself, which is filled with his greed, anger and pride, etc.) is that he has faced the reality of "birth and death" and sought for the truth in life. The more we seek the truth, the more we have to face our greed, anger, and pride in our minds. The meeting with the endless river symbolizes the realization that we are so ignorant that we are totally unable to overcome it by our own powers. In other words, it is an awakening as ordinary, unenlightened beings.

Seeing the river of water and fire, and the bandits and beasts pressing closer and closer, the traveler realizes that there is no way for him to escape death. Although he is extremely frightened and desperate, he reflects within himself: "If I turn back now, I will die. If I remain here, I will die. If I go forward, I will die. There is absolutely no escape from certain death. Therefore I choose to go forth, venturing on this path. Since this path exists, it must be possible somehow to cross the river."

When he is determined to walk on the path, he suddenly hears an encouraging voice of someone on this shore, "O traveler, make your mind up to follow this path forward! You will certainly not encounter the grief of death. But if

(Please see *PATH*, page 4)

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### SUBMISSION DEADLINE!

Submissions for *The Way* are due the 10th of each month for the following month's issue. Articles and announcements for our August/September Issue are due July 10th, 2019. Submissions may be subject to printing restrictions and staff approval. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!



# Betsuin News



## *hanamatsuri craft fair*

The temple hosted a Hanamatsuri Craft Fair on Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup> 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, Yuri Kanamaru with Joy & Sky handmade soaps and Higashi kumquat marmalade, Kisa & Janet Ito with Kisanoreen handmade jewelry, Shari Sato-Iwasaki with Origami Owl jewelry and charms, 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 concession stand to help raise money to attend Southern District Jr. YBL events. Lumbini sold baked goods, drinks, salads, 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, and Stacey Gomez-Webb for donating salads. Special thanks also to Trish Nicholson, Kazuko Kawada, Pattie Kasahara & Lorraine Shimizu, Kisanoreen, Ru Chen, Kaz Ota, Joy & Sky, and Hakko 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!



## Mother's Day Breakfast & Family Service

We had a very fun Mother's Day Breakfast on Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. Many members came early in the morning to cook breakfast for all of the mothers and their families. We enjoyed a delicious selection of pancakes, sausage, bacon, ham, scrambled eggs, fruit, yogurt, oatmeal, orange juice, and coffee. All the meals were served warm and fresh and the social hall was full of smiles and happy bellies.

During the service, Brent Isaacs shared a very special Mother's Day message. Thank you for your sharing your memories with us.

Thank you to everyone who helped cook and serve Mother's Day breakfast! We received support from several of our organizations, including ABA and YABA. Special thanks to Laura and Jennifer Yamashiro for making the pancakes, Elaine Harada, and Janet Ito for making sure everything was ready for Sunday! Thank you to the Murata Family for their donation of avocados and Glen Hasegawa for donating strawberries. Thank you to the Higashi youth groups for providing chocolate gifts for all of the mothers. We appreciate everyone's support!



## DID YOU KNOW?

In 1976, our current temple opened. That year, people made an offering of a dollar as they approached the altar to burn incense. Most of us still do. But that dollar has been eroded by inflation. Now, in 2019, to match the dollar from 1976, the offering would need to be \$4.42.

Everything is more expensive these days: a cup of coffee, a movie ticket, a dinner out. This is also true for everything the staff must purchase to keep the temple operating.

Some habits are hard to break, but this one can be easy. When you approach to oshoko, remember the cost of your last cup of coffee or movie ticket, and keep in mind that the temple, too, must keep up with inflation.

Thank you.



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

Mr. Shotaro Dofuku (90)  
March 19, 2019

Namu Amida Butsu

# 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL OBON FESTIVAL SATURDAY & SUNDAY | JULY 27<sup>TH</sup> & 28<sup>TH</sup>

The Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple and the 2019 Obon Festival Committee would like to invite all members and friends of our Betsuin to join in the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Obon Festival. This year's celebration will be on Saturday and Sunday, July 27 and 28 from 1:00 to 9:00pm.

This Buddhist Celebration is a traditional religious observance that honors our ancestors. Our temple grounds will be decorated with hundreds of Manto-e lanterns for the two-day festivities.

The Obon Hatsubon (First Obon) Service will be held on Sunday, July 28 at 11:00am. The traditional Manto-e Services will be held outside at 6:00pm on both Saturday and Sunday.

The festival will begin at 1:00pm. Come enjoy a variety of ethnic foods such as sushi, udon, chicken and beef teriyaki, chili rice, tamales, kurimanju, and shave ice, as well as hamburgers, hot dogs, corn, and baked desserts. There will be plenty of food for everyone to enjoy during all of the festivities.

Festival-goers of all ages can enjoy games, Bingo, and fresh fruits, vegetables, plants, and cut flowers at the Farmer's Market.

There will also be plenty of entertainment with cultural performances throughout the festival. The program will include taiko, musical performances, and much more.

In the evening, the festival grounds will be full of dancers to join in Bon Odori. Everyone is encouraged to join in and dance whether you're experienced or not! Bon Odori will be both days from 6:30pm to 8:30pm.

Wrapping up the event on Sunday at 8:30pm will be the raffle drawing. There will be valuable and exciting prizes to win.

We are all very excited about the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Obon Festival and hope you will accept our invitation to join us for this very special celebration.

Obon Festival Committee

## BON ODORI

Please join us for our upcoming Bon Odori practices! Everyone is welcome, whether you want a bit of aerobic exercise or just want to dance!

At the end of June, we will begin evening practices in preparation for Obon. Practices will be held on the following days from 7:30 to 9:00pm.

### WEDNESDAYS

6/25 · 7/3 · 7/10 · 7/17

### FRIDAYS

6/28 · 7/12 · 7/19 (NO CLASS 7/5)

All lessons are taught in the social hall. Please bring your uchiwa and kachi-kachi to practice if you have them. If not, please come and we'll share!

## OBON GIFT CERTIFICATES

Obon gift certificates can be purchased for \$5.00 each. They are great to give to friends and family to use over the weekend. Gift certificates can be used toward the purchase of food at our Obon only and are available through the temple office. If you would like your gift certificates mailed to you, please be sure that we receive your payment by Friday, July 19<sup>th</sup>.

## MANTO-E LANTERNS

Orders are now being accepted for Manto-e Lanterns for our Annual Obon Festival. If you would like an order form, they are available in the temple office. Please call to reserve your lantern at your earliest convenience. The cost is \$25 per lantern. Please let us know if you would like to pick up your lantern after the Obon Festival so that we can be sure to set yours aside. We will hold all reserved lanterns until September 1<sup>st</sup>.

### 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.

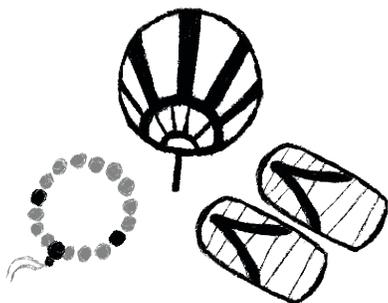
**Onegai-shimasu!**

### HELP AT OBON!

we're looking for volunteers to fill various roles at our Obon Festival! If you would like to help out, please contact the office!

213-626-4200

info@hhbt-la.org



# HOONKO HOSHIDAN TOUR

Nicole Shrieves

It feels like it was only a dream. I often ask myself if my visit to Kyoto for the 2018 Hōonkō Hōshidan Tour really did, in fact, happen. My pictures, videos, and some mementos I brought home to Los Angeles confirm that it did. I am still processing my experience.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be sent to the Higashi Honganji mother temple. I was joined by fellow followers of the Dharma, Lynell of Chicago, Phil of West Covina, and Joey from Berkeley. Our tour guide, and interpreter was Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa.

The mother temple was beyond amazing. Walking through the Founder's Hall Gate to see the Founder's Hall itself allowed for feelings of excitement and curiosity to build within me. As you walk in, you see a statue of Shinran Shōnin in a sitting position on top of the altar. It is fascinating as you can feel the karmic energy of Shinran Shōnin, his descendants, and his followers here. I appreciated the ways in which the Higashi Honganji members from throughout Japan united to rebuild the Founder's Hall from 1880 to 1895 after it had burned down. Women had donated their hair to create ropes strong enough to assist with the construction. One of those ropes is preserved outside of the Founder's Hall for all to see. A reminder of interconnectedness.

Rev. Hasegawa took us to several historic points that allowed us to walk the paths of Shinran Shōnin and learn more about the founder of Jōdo Shinshū. We visited Shōren-in, a Tendai Buddhist temple where Shinran Shōnin was ordained as a Monk at 9 years old. There, we viewed the paintings around the inside of the hall that depicted the story of Shinran's life. I was quickly

able to recognize and understand the story thanks to the discussions during Wednesday Night Study Group, led by Rev. Peter Hata, here in Los Angeles. The gardens of Shoren-in were breathtaking. The fall colors of the leaves were a gentle, yet beautiful reminder of impermanence. From there, we walked to Otani Mausoleum where a portion of Shinran Shōnin's ashes were located. It was a place to acknowledge our founder and another reminder of our impermanence.

I had the opportunity to break bread, or tempura, with the Higashi Honganji Diet Members. We each discussed our causes and conditions that led us to Buddhism. Despite our cultural differences, we had found some similarities. Rev. Hasegawa did most of the talking as he had to translate 90 percent of our conversations. I was pleased to meet the Rev. Keiko Mochizuki as she is the first woman bishop of Higashi Honganji. Rev. Yasushi Shimoya made sure we stayed fed with his deliveries of the most amazing tasting bread during the retreat. I appreciated the opportunity to spend time with Rev. Toshirō Sakamoto, Rev. Ken'ei Takatsuki, Rev. Bun'e Higashino, and Rev. Kōi Sato'o during dinner as well.

We enjoyed classroom discussions with Rev. Michael Conway, Rev. Kenshi Ise, Rev. Hasegawa, Rev. Takanaru Suwa, Rev. Takafumi Bansaka, and Rev. Kōjin Saitō. Rev. Conway explained Hōonkō as a "gathering to repay a debt of gratitude" and a memorial for Shinran Shōnin who founded Jōdo Shinshū. I also learned that Shinran's great grandson, Kakunyo, started the observance.

I appreciated the many opportunities to engage with others at the retreat. We gathered in the classrooms, during  
(Please see *HOSHIDAN*, page 5)



(*PATH*, cont. from page 1)

you stay where you are, you will surely die." Then he hears another voice calling from the further shore, saying, "O traveler, come straightforward with single-mindedness and right-mindedness. I will protect you. Have no fear of plunging into the water or fire." Having heard the encouragement on his side of the river and the calling from the other shore, the traveler steadfastly follows the white path without any doubt, having no fear. When he has gone a few steps ahead, the bandits try to persuade him to turn back, but he does not pay any attention to what they say. Single-mindedly he proceeds ahead, thinking only of the white path. After some time he reaches the other shore, where he meets good friends, and his joy is boundless.

The encouraging voice on this shore symbolizes the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha. The calling from the other shore signifies Amida Buddha's summoning those with a sincere heart to the Pure Land. Shakyamuni's teaching gives us the direction to the Pure Land, the symbolic world of supreme nirvana. If we truly listen to his teaching and entrust ourselves to Amida's calling, the white path certainly leads us to the Pure Land, without our being afraid of falling into the rivers of water and fire. The most important thing here is that, in the middle of the water and fire is the white path. Simply put, if we sincerely entrust ourselves to Amida's calling, we have to face the reality of ourselves, but at the same time, the white path appears in the middle of our realization as an ordinary, unenlightened being. In other words, everything in our everyday life can be a signpost to the Pure Land. We do not have to look for it anywhere else or remove our greed or anger to walk along it. All we need to do is sincerely listen to the teaching and entrust ourselves to Amida's calling as the parable explains. With a true entrusting mind, the seemingly narrow white path will become a broad way along which everyone can walk, and it will surely lead us to supreme nirvana.



## TAIKO NEWS

Members of Bombu Taiko worked hard upstairs preparing for our Hanamatsuri Family Service. Under the floral expertise of Lisa Shimamoto, Bombu members decorated the temple's hanamido with an abundance of beautiful flowers. The temple is extremely grateful to Lisa and Bombu for their donation of many of the flowers along with the many hours of time and effort put into making our Hanamatsuri beautiful. Thank you, Lisa and Bombu Taiko!

## BIG BARGAIN SALE DONATIONS NEEDED!

This year, TAIKOPROJECT is partnering with the temple to coordinate the **HIGASHI BIG BARGAIN SALE** on **SUNDAY, AUGUST 18 from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm** in the Social Hall. We will close for a half-hour break from 12:30 pm - 1:00 pm to prepare for the 50% SALE from 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm. This day coincides with the closing weekend of the Nisei Week festival.

Thank you to all temple members and friends for your generous donations in the past! While you are doing your Spring cleaning, please set aside your special items to donate for this event. A simple rule is to ask yourself if you would be happy to buy something you're thinking of donating.

For this first year, we are following guidelines that have been set in past years. The temple office will accept donations only during a 11-day period from **Thursday, August 1 to Sunday, August 11**.

This year, we will only accept **brand new clothing with tags attached**.

### WE ARE HAPPY TO ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

ONLY CLEAN AND GENTLY USED ITEMS THAT ARE READY TO SELL

Chinaware, Glassware  
Polished Silver items (no tarnished items)  
Kitchen utensils and clean small appliances, general housewares  
Decorative items  
Vintage Japanese ceramic ware, lacquer ware, etc.  
Kimono, yukata, obi, geta, zori, etc.

Jewelry, hair accessories  
Office and school supplies-file folders, stationery, scissors, desk accessories  
LP Records, DVDs, and CDs (only commercially made, no homemade items)  
Fabric, aprons, scarves, gloves, new socks, towels, linens  
Purses, wallets, luggage  
Clean and complete games and puzzles (no missing parts)  
Battery-powered items-flashlights, toys (please provide a fresh battery)  
Homemade craft items  
**WE HAVE DECIDED NOT TO ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING ITEMS**  
Torn, chipped, broken or faded items  
No cushions, pillows  
Cosmetics, shoes, hats, etc.  
Books  
Cassettes and VHS tapes  
Personalized items - "Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Susan and Tom," etc.  
All Food items  
Baby items (clothing, car seats, strollers, high chairs, mattresses, etc.)  
Large items such as furniture - chairs, tables, large pictures or artwork etc.  
Large sport items - bicycles, skis, golf clubs, etc.  
Electronic items-computers, printers, telephones, DVD players, etc.

\*\*\*\*\*

Please wrap breakable items and pack sets of cups, glasses, mugs, plates in the same box. Please pack small items (necklaces, bracelets, earrings, keychains) in separate bags or envelopes to prevent tangling or loss.

The committee does not have the time nor the manpower to wash or clean items for sale, so please bring in "ready to sell" condition.

**Again, donations may be brought to the temple office during the 11-day period from Thursday, August 1 to Sunday, August 11. After August 11, we cannot accept any more items. Now is the perfect time to look through your homes and start packing items to set aside to bring to the temple.**

Because of limited storage space, we are requesting that all donations be brought in a box with a top so that it can be stacked. Please label "BIG BARGAIN SALE" or "BBS" on the front of all donations so we will find them when we go to price and organize your donations. This will be from Thursday, August 8 to Thursday, August 15.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call TAIKOPROJECT's leader Bryan Yamami at (213)268-4011. And, wish us luck in our first year coordinating the Big Bargain Sale!

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!!**

(HOSHIDAN, con't. from page 4)

coffee and tea breaks, during service, and as we ate. It was beautiful getting to know people that I could not hold a long conversation with due to our language barriers. I realized it wasn't really a barrier at all because our attempts to verbally communicate led to laughter as we tried, allowed for a connection. I welcomed the friendly smiles and bows as we passed each other in the hallways. This is all because of Shinran Shōnin bringing the Dharma to us "ordinary" people.

The chanting of the priests performing Bandō Bushi was a spectacular sight. They chanted the Nenbutsu and Wasan (the poems created by Shinran) while moving their bodies back and forth, side to side. It is difficult for me to chant, sit straight, with my feet on the floor, and measure my breaths. I could only imagine the difficulty and skill it takes for them to perform.

We supported the community by cleaning and serving the food at the temple. We got to participate in the upkeep of the temple garden. I learned quickly that the moss was to be admired for its beauty and was not something to be raked.

A highlight of the Hōonkō Hōshidan tour was the opportunity to participate in the confirmation ceremony, Kikyōshiki. It is a ceremony of taking refuge in the Three Treasures. Days prior to the ceremony, Rev. Ise asked who would like to be responsible for holding the Dharma names. I raised my hand as I assumed it was not part of the ceremony. I was wrong. If I had known it was something much more significant, I would have been more hesitant to volunteer. As the ceremony began, I became nervous as they called my name to sit in the first chair. They continued to call the names of others, eventually calling Lynell's and Joey's who sat in the row behind me. Associate Abbot Yul Otani began the ceremony. It was primarily in Japanese; however, Rev. Hasegawa prepared us with a handout of what was to happen. I fought back tears and as I was overwhelmed with emotion and did my best to be in the moment. I finally relaxed as the officiant, Associate Abbot Yul Otani performed the symbolic shaving of my hair and later presented me with all the

(Please see HOSHIDAN, page 6)

(HOSHIDAN, cont. from page 5)

Dharma names.

Together, we confirmed that we are true followers of the Buddha, vowed to remember our heartfelt commitment to study the Buddha Dharma, and to walk the path of the Nenutsu in our daily lives as members of the Higashi Honganji. My Dharma name is Shakuni Seishin, which translates to "female disciple of Shakyamuni with sincere mind."

After the ceremony, we had the opportunity to meet with Overseas District Abbot Choyū Otani and Associate Abbot Yul Otani. It was there that Associate Abbot Yul informed me that he had been surprised to see a woman sitting in the head chair during the confirmation ceremony. He explained that he had never seen that before and wondered if I had been the first woman to do so, but emphasized that he had welcomed the surprise.

We left the temple for the last time, did additional sightseeing, and went our separate ways. I had a moment of suffering as I wanted to hold on to all that happened a bit longer. I found a deep appreciation for the moments that happened and the interconnectedness that was felt.

In addition to showing gratitude and appreciation to Shinran Shōnin for his teachings, I'd heard the story



of how Shinran encountered a woman who was walking up the trail. Because of the regulations of the temple, he had to tell her that she was not allowed to enter the monastery to study Buddhism because of her gender. I wanted to show my appreciation to her because I'm not sure she ever had the opportunity to walk up Mount Hiei again. I wanted to pay tribute to her and all women of Japanese Buddhism by going to the top of Mount Hiei. I stood at the bottom

of Mount Hiei thinking about how essential she was in planting the seed in the heads of the leaders of the temple that Buddhism should be available to everyone, including women.

When I got to the top, I tried to see as many temples as I could as I followed the paths that Shinran once took. I always kept that woman in my mind as I believe she played a big role in why I was able to be on top of that mountain and study Buddhism today.

## GO GREEN!

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## THANK YOU!