

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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The Way

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June 2023

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

TEMPLE SCHEDULE

JUNE

- 4 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 11 10:00 am Sunday Service
Discussion Group
- 18 10:00 am **Father's Day/
Graduation Family
Service**
- 25 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 25 1:00 pm Lumbini Graduation

JULY

- 2 No Service
- 9 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 16 10:00 am Family Service/Pet
Memorial Service
- 22 LABCC Camp (to 7/29)
- 23 10:00 am **Obon/Hatsubon Service**
- 29 12:30 PM **OBON at the Ranch**
(tickets must be purchased
in advance)
- 30 No 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

SUNDAYS | 10 AM

OBON/ HATSUBON SERVICE

**SUNDAY, JULY 23
10:00 AM**

higashi honganji
OBON
RANCH EDITION

SEE UPDATES ON PAGE 4!



The Way



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My Friend from Ukraine

Rev. Harry Kigoshi

This article was adapted from a Dharma Talk given by Rev. Harry Kigoshi at a Sunday Service in October 2022.

I have a Ukrainian friend who I met at the Adult School English class in Berkeley. The sessions have been held as an in-person class since this fall semester, so I see him almost every weekday. The class consists of about 25 members, most of whom are young people. They are from all over the world, including China, Korea, Mexico, Guatemala, Brazil, Thailand, and Africa. My friend and I are the only old men in the class, so we usually work together.

He has a logical mind and is always asking the teacher questions about the structure of English sentences. He likes to talk and he usually says humorous things in the class. He makes everyone laugh, but sometimes we get in trouble with his "old man gags." He doesn't speak much English but is always eager to tell jokes. I don't know why, but it seems he can't stop doing so.

Sometimes I would talk about Buddhism, because he has an interest in Buddhism, and has asked me many times to explain the teaching to him. His first question was how to comprehend death in Buddhism. Once I invited him to a Sunday service at the Berkeley Higashi Honganji Temple. He came and attended the service. Of course, this was his first time attending a Buddhist service, so he told me that it was a very interesting experience. After the service, I invited him again and asked him to give a short speech about the difficult situation in Ukraine. He graciously accepted the invitation and gave a great speech.

He is a Ukrainian but before the Russian invasion, he had lived in Russia with his family. So, after the attacks began he moved from Russia to Israel

and eventually came to Berkeley. He has been in the Bay area since June. Now he lives with his family near our temple. He said many Ukrainian males who lived in Russia returned to Ukraine to protect their country. He always says they would "protect" the country, but never used words like "fight" or "struggle."

I wondered why he came to the United States and not to Ukraine, but of course, I could not ask him that. His father still lives in Ukraine. It seemed clear that he wanted to return to Ukraine and defend his homeland with other Ukrainians. However, the main reason was that he has a daughter. She is 14 years old. She is now attending high school in Berkeley. I know it was a hard choice for him, but she was probably the main reason he chose to move to the U.S.. If he had been single, he would have definitely gone to Ukraine.

I assumed that his wife was also Ukrainian. However, about a month after we met, I found out that his wife is actually Russian. I was surprised. He didn't mention that before. It was then that I understood the reason why he did not choose to go to his home country Ukraine to live. He just could not do that. Between protecting his country and protecting his family, he chose to protect his family first. Whenever the subject of Ukraine comes up, he always speaks as if he is distressed. He always remembers his father and friends and seems to be suffering when thinking about what they must be experiencing.

He says that there are many Ukrainians who can understand Russian and there is a lot of cultural and ethnic exchange. Historically, the two are deeply related and overlap. A symbol of this relationship is his family. But the difference is that his family no longer has borders or race. There is only perfect

harmony as a family. The best symbol of this is their daughter.

The hallmark of our Jodo Shinshu salvation is its commitment to the "Land." Originally, the hallmark of Buddhist salvation concerns the believer's inner self, his or her own mind. It encourages one to keep one's inner mind pure and peaceful, both in cause and effect. Such relief can therefore be described as a very personal event. However, our Jodo Shinshu is different from that. It is not a matter of good or bad, it is only a matter of character. The characteristic of Jodo Shinshu is salvation as a community, not as an individual. The translation of "Jodo Shinshu" as Pure "Land" Buddhism is a good example of this. We have the word "Land" in the name of our teaching. I would like to discuss this important issue of the salvation of "Land" in detail.

In general Buddhism, the following words are among the most famous teachings.

Cease all evil deeds.
Do all good things.
Make your mind pure.

This is a teaching common to all Buddhas. (Dhammapada)

This is called "The Poem of the Precepts Common to the Seven Buddhas." This verse is very old and important and is the most standard teaching of Buddhism. "Cease all evil deeds" and "Do all good things", and "make your mind pure" is the way to the enlightenment and salvation.

(Please see **UKRAINIAN**, page 3)

**PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING
TO HIGASHI HONGANJI
BUDDHIST TEMPLE AT
HHBT-LA.ORG**



Betsuin News



Mother's Day Family Service

Mother's Day Family Service was held on Sunday, May 13th. During the service, Heather Barbod shared a very special Mother's Day message. Thank you for your sharing your memories and messages about motherhood with us. Special thanks to Lisa Shimamoto for the mini bouquets and to ABA for the delicious strawberry manju for all the mothers. Thank you to everyone who attended. Mother's Day was made even more enjoyable by spending it together.

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

Mrs. Georganne Yoshie Lynch (76)
March 8, 2023

Mr. Saburo Niizawa (76)
March 28, 2023

Mrs. Fusako Egawa Kamahele (94)
April 5, 2023

Mr. Masami Nakayama (85)
April 17, 2023

Namu Amida Butsu

visit our website at
hhbt-la.org



facebook.com/hhbt.la



[@higashihonganjila](https://www.instagram.com/higashihonganjila)

What it Means to be a Human Being: Our Trip to Kyoto for the 850th/800th Celebration

Jason Wong

"Namu Amida Butsu: To discover the meaning of being born as human beings." This was the theme of the 850/800 celebration of the birth of Shinran Shonin and the founding of Jodo Shinshu at the Honzan in Kyoto. After our two-week tour with members from all the North America temples, I feel like we gained some true insight into what this question means to us.

Wednesday, April 19

Upon arriving in Kyoto, around 40 Higashi Honganji members from Chicago, Berkeley, West Covina, and Los Angeles all boarded our tour bus for our first temple visit. After about an hour bus ride out of Kyoto and near Lake Biwa, we ascended to the Enryaku-ji temple complex at the top of Mount Hiei.

Founded in 788 as a Tendai temple, this was a nice way to start the tour as monks from Enryaku-ji formed many of the later schools of Buddhism. Both Honen and Shinran spent time studying on Mount Hiei.

We were able to visit two of the main temple areas and enjoyed a delicious vegetarian lunch, the first of many fabulous meals during our trip.

Rev. Osa and Rev. Nagayama each told us many interesting stories about the monks and the temple. Their wealth of knowledge was amazing and much appreciated throughout the entire trip. Later in the trip, Rev. Hasegawa and Rev. Miyoshi would join the tour. It was great to get a chance to visit and learn from each of the ministers.

Although Leslie and I didn't know several of the participants on the tour, we found that it proved to be a reunion of sorts with others, especially following COVID. Many folks we'd only seen in zoom meetings were now here with us in person, especially Rev. Patti since Leslie has taken many of her Zoom seminars. Mealtimes gave us a chance to meet,

spend time revisiting the day's activities and often laughing and getting to know each other, occasionally a bit too loudly?

Thursday, April 20

Before our visit to the Honzan, we visited the Shosei-en- Garden located a couple blocks from the main temple grounds. Along the narrow streets, we passed Buddhist supply shops and nenju factories where we could see craftspeople making different nenjus in the window, some of which run into the thousands of dollars depending on the craftsmanship and materials. Rinban also informed us that many of the buildings we passed outside the main temple walls were various offices and apartments for the many temple organizations and ministers' residences.

As the morning progressed, we returned to the Honzan and entered the main grounds, marveling at the size of the Founders Hall (Goei-do), the largest wooden structure in Kyoto and one of the largest wooden structures in the world. We were met by Rev. Nagamine, who will be joining us at the Betsuin as staff minister and who is currently working as a guide during the celebration. We also saw Rev. Okada who was traveling with the Hawaii delegation

(Please see *KYOTO*, page 5)



(UKRAINE, cont. from page 1)

I like this teaching very much. The interesting part of this teaching for me is the first half where the Buddha taught the “behavior” and “practice” of disciples. The ultimate goal is to purify one’s mind, but there are two specific ways to achieve this. One is to stop doing evil, and the other is to do good deeds. We no longer have a pure heart, but we can gradually obtain this heart, step by step, by acting according to these two teachings. Since we do not have a pure heart, it is not easy for us to do good things. But we can do something good to obtain a pure heart. Through this teaching, we can try to do good things in spite of our impure hearts.

This is the most famous and orthodox teaching of Buddhism. However, in Jodo Shinshu we emphasize the salvation of the “Land,” not of the individual. We teach that salvation is not about purifying the mind of an individual, but about purifying the “Land.” This “Land” is, in other words, salvation as a community. We sometimes ask ourselves, “What is the Pure Land? How can I be born in the Pure Land?” However, we must know that these thoughts are actually quite different from Amida’s vow. Amida’s vow is to save all human beings and establish a “Land” of purity, not to save us as individuals.

Why does Amida Buddha make such a vow? Why does his vow concern “Land” rather than individuals? This is because, there is no true salvation in the purity established in the heart of an individual. There is no true salvation without the salvation of others. Our true salvation always depends on the salvation of others.

You probably think you are not a very good person. I guess, you think you are a bad person who usually only thinks about your own happiness. That is how we actually live. I don’t think it’s much different from the truth, especially about me. We can never be free from our own self-centered minds. But at the same time, we ourselves know that if our parents are unhappy, we cannot be happy either. If our brother or sister is unhappy, we worry about them. If my children seem depressed, I get depressed too. We can’t be happy when we think about our family’s unhappi-

ness. We may not be good people, but we also possess that kind of compassion. It is not just for our families. We sometimes do feel compassion when we see innocent children crying in fear and old people weeping in sorrow. In the “Vimalakirti Sutra” the main character speaks of the Buddha’s compassion in this way.

Because sentient beings are sick, the Buddha is also sick. For example, suppose a person has a child. When the child becomes ill, the parents also become ill, and when the child’s illness is healed, the parents are also healed. (This is the Buddha’s compassion). (Vimalakirti Sutra)

We are not Buddhas. So, we don’t care if someone we don’t know gets sick. We feel nothing when someone we have no relationship to is unhappy. And sometimes we even feel happy when people we dislike are unhappy. If you find your wife’s or husband’s unhappiness secretly makes you feel very happy, then you should probably get divorced.

Compared to the Buddha, we are selfish and inferior. However, we are not the kind of beings who can be happy independently of the unhappiness of others as symbolized by our compassion for our families. It is not possible that I am the only one in my family who is happy. It is impossible for us to be happy while the rest of our family is suffering. My happiness comes with the happiness of my family. We can know that our true happiness and salvation is not only about ourselves but also about the happiness of others. The vow of Amida Buddha to purify the “Land” teaches us this fact. We sometimes wish for only our own happiness or only our family’s salvation. But if we can get this salvation quickly through our selfishness then we cannot find true peace of mind.

In the “Larger Sutra,” the “Pure Land” is preached in several specific contents by the Buddha. He said the pure land is the world where there is no struggle to fight each other, and all inhabitants can brighten their own characteristics freely. Moreover, the pure land is the world where you can understand other’s minds well. In closing, I would like to introduce one important content of the “Pure Land” which is wished upon

us by Amida Buddha. This is the same wish of my Ukrainian friend.

If, when I become a Buddha, the sentient beings in my land comes from different origins and essences, and everyone is regarded as equals, if that does not happen, then I will not be enlightened.

It is said that the Pure Land is a world in which there is no discrimination of any kind, even if each of us comes from a different background. The Pure Land is a world in which a peaceful relationship that transcends all values is realized. Even if the origins and nature of the inhabitants are different, there is no distinction anymore. This is the Buddha’s land.

For us, it is important to identify with different things. Identification can be national, racial, linguistic, historical, and many other things. They sometimes work well, but at the same time they can turn a multicultural society into a world of ugly discrimination and even war. That is why the Buddha wished for a “Pure Land” where we can be united as we are identified. The Pure Land is a world where those who are different from each other can transcend discrimination and everyone can live purely with compassion. It is just like my Ukrainian friend’s small family. He told me that the current terrible conflict is not Ukraine versus Russia. I would like to end today’s talk by wishing with you all that a world where people of different backgrounds can live in mutual respect will be realized as soon as possible. Let us listen carefully to the Jodo Shinshu teaching that true happiness can only be realized when the Pure Land is realized.



higashi honganji OBON RANCH EDITION

OBON AT THE RANCH!

Join us for bon odori and food at the Murata Family Ranch in Camarillo on Saturday, July 29th.

\$30 per person (includes meal)
\$15 for children 10 and under
(includes a special kid's meal)

Save the date! Tickets will be required to attend! Tickets will be sold online, please stay tuned for updates!

OBON T-SHIRTS

We will be selling our Obon at the Ranch t-shirts for pickup. The price will be \$20 per shirt in adult sizes only. Shirts can be ordered for pickup at the temple only.

MANTO-E

We will not have manto-e lanterns available this year. Memory tags will be offered at Obon at the Ranch.



HATSUBON SERVICE

Our Hatsubon Service will be held on Sunday, July 23rd at 10 am to honor those who have passed away in the past year. The service will be held in person for those families to honor their loved ones and streamed online for anyone to watch.

OBON RAFFLE

Raffle tickets coming soon! Our annual Obon raffle is returning! We will be sending out tickets soon. We appreciate your support!

please stay tuned for more details & updates

More information about our 2023 Obon events is coming soon! Stay updated by signing up for our email list! If you are not already on our list, please contact us at info@hhbt-la.org to be added or visit our website or Facebook page to sign up.



OBON/HATSUBON SERVICE

Sunday, July 23rd | 10 AM
at HHBT

OBON AT THE RANCH

Saturday, July 29th
Murata Family Farm
in Camarillo
12:30 P - 6:30 PM

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!

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.

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. Submissions may be subject to printing restrictions and staff approval. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!

(KYOTO, cont. from page 2)

as well as Rev. Fujii. We were happy to hear that Rev. Fujii, Mimu and the children are all doing well. Rev. Fujii regretfully informed us that since he was not assigned to the international office upon returning to Japan, he has not been able to keep up with the news from the United States as much as he would have hoped.

Those members who were participating in the Kikyoshiki ceremony were whisked away to get ready while the rest of us entered the main hall and watched the end of that morning's celebration service. Filled with over a thousand people, the Honzan was holding daily celebration services simultaneously in both the Founder's Hall and Amida Hall and the entire street outside the temple complex was filled with buses bringing members from all over each day.

Nine members participated in the confirmation ceremony with the Overseas District Abbot presiding over the ceremony and delivering the ritualistic shaving of each participant's head.

Following the Kikyoshiki, Leslie and I got a chance to see Rev. Goto in his environment as he whisked us off to Kyoto Train Station for a nice ramen lunch. The restaurant used a vending machine to select your dish and without him, I think we might have been too intimidated to give the place a try. He also discussed and demonstrated the proper technique for eating ramen. Slurping.

Following lunch, we returned to the Honzan and enjoyed a Rakugo (solo actor storytelling show) and Shinran exhibition at the auditorium complex. A single actor sitting atop a podium recounted a dramatic and comedic story of a person learning about Shinran Shonin and coming to understand concepts of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.



Friday, April 21

At 11AM, we gathered again at the Honzan for the morning Celebration Service. It was a nice surprise to bump into Tad and Rosa Kawahira who were already in Japan and came for the special service. We were also joined by Elaine and Heather Barbod who had already been in Japan for a week as well.

The service began in Japanese with Rev. Hasegawa providing English translations through individual radio earphones. Following the chanting that began in the Amida Hall, everyone joined in chanting of the Shoshinge which was a familiar and enjoyable experience in such an amazing setting. However, what followed afterwards was something to really behold. All the ministers and the sangha began chanting the Shoshinge Nenbutsu yuri-mitsu and the speed and volume of hundreds of ministers chanting in unison joined by close to a thousand members in the hall was a powerful and moving experience. To be honest, I couldn't keep up and just focused on taking everything in.

After the service, all the overseas district attendees gathered for an amazing vegetarian lunch with Abbot Choyu Otani and his son, Overseas District Abbot, Yul Otani. Both Abbots gave nice welcome messages and later graciously posed for many group pictures. All the different overseas districts also brought local treats to share for dessert.

The rest of the afternoon was spent visiting the Kyoto National Museum with Rev. Miyoshi to view the special Shinran Shonin Exhibition. A collaboration between Nishi, Higashi, and other temples, we viewed a very comprehensive exhibit covering his life through rare scrolls, statues, and special manuscripts.

Saturday, April 22

On our final day in Kyoto, we visited the Otani Sobyō, the Mausoleum where Shinran Shonin's ashes are interred. Once at the gate to the mausoleum, it was explained that the ashes of successive generations of Monshus and Shinshu followers are also interred at this mausoleum. However, no visitor or even minister or staff is allowed to cross past the gate and view what is beyond it.

We stopped next at Chion-in, the mother temple of Jodo-shu then continued to Sotai-in (Moto-Otani), said to be the birthplace of Rennyo Shonin and the ruins of the former Otani Mausoleum. A minister was there to greet us and give a nice talk. He showed us a scroll that is believed to be in the actual handwriting of Shinran Shonin as well as a barefooted statue of Shinran that people touch for healthy feet.

Following another fantastic traditional Japanese lunch where Leslie and I peppered Rev. Hasegawa with our morning's questions (Now a familiar experience for him), we boarded the bus for a quick visit to Hino Tanjo-in, the birthplace of Shinran Shonin. The temple had been recently renovated in anticipation of the 800/850 celebration. The afternoon ended with one last stop visiting Choho-ji (Rokkaku-do), a temple said to have been established by Prince Shotoku and instrumental in the development of Jodo Shinshu. It was at this temple where Shinran had a dream of Bodhisattva Kannon and then sought out Honen and became one of his disciples. That evening, we enjoyed a little free time in Kyoto and then gathered for a final dinner as the group would split up in the morning.



This article will be continued in the next issue of The Way. Please stay tuned for Part 2 in our July issue.

