

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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The Way

Vol. 77 | No. 7
October/November 2025

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

TEMPLE SCHEDULE

NOVEMBER

- 2 *Daylight Savings Ends*
2 10:00 am Kaikyo-ki/Shotsuki Service
4 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
9 10:00 am Sunday Service
Discussion Group
15 12:00 pm Hoonko Gathering
16 10:00 am Hoonko Service
18 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
23 10:00 am Sunday Service
23 12:30 pm Autumn Seminar
30 10:00 am Sunday Service

DECEMBER

- 2 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
7 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
14 10:00 am Bodhi Day/Year-end Family Service
16 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
21 9:00 am Temple Clean-up
28 No Service
29 9:00 am Mochitsuki (Monday)
31 5:00 pm Year-end Service (Joya-e)

Hōonkō Gathering

(an informal gathering in English)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15
12:00 PM

Hōonkō Service

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16
10:00 AM

AUTUMN SEMINAR

Theme:

**THE BUDDHA'S
ASPIRATION FOR US ALL**

Guest Speaker:

REV. DR. TAKASHI MIYAJI

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23
SUNDAY SERVICE AT 10:00 AM
SEMINAR AT 12:30 PM

VISITING THE TEMPLE

The temple is currently open for private services and visitations 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



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HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE • LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

Greetings to the LA Betsuin

Rinban Kenjun Kawawata

Aloha, my name is Kenjun Kawawata, and I am the newly appointed Bishop of Higashi Honganji North America District and the Rinban, or Head Minister, of the Los Angeles Betsuin. I have been serving in Higashi Honganji Hawaii District for the last 13 years. I first came to serve as a resident minister at the Los Angeles Betsuin in 1984. I was the youngest minister at that time, serving alongside Rev. Gyoko Saito who was Rinban, and Rev. Tsuyoshi Hirosumi, Rev. Koen Mishima (Hosokawa), and our previous Rinban, Rev. Noriaki Ito, and his father, former Rinban, Rev. Horyu Ito. At that time, Rinban Nori and I used to have a lot of hair, and we were young ministers. Now, we have become old ministers.

I served under the guidance of Rinban Gyoko Saito until 1993 and worked with Rinban Noriaki Ito until 1998. Then I was transferred to West Covina Higashi Honganji as a resident minister and served there for 14 years. Then, on October 1, 2012, I was appointed as the Bishop of Higashi Honganji Hawaii District and the Rinban of Higashi Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin. With the cooperation of the members in Hawaii, I was able to work and listen to the Dharma, carry out district activities, and serve as the Rinban for 13 years. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone in the Hawaii district.

This year I became 73 years old. However, I humbly accepted this position of Rinban. Because I was raised as a minister in America at this Betsuin with my senseis and members, I would like to return my huge debt to the members and friends of this Betsuin, even if it is only for a short period of time. I don't know how long I will be able to work with you, but I will try my best for this Betsuin and the District. I will also keep

listening and sharing the Dharma with all members and Dharma friends.

Since I came back to Los Angeles from Hawaii, Jeanne and I have started a new life here. During the 13 years of my absence in Los Angeles, many things have changed here. I am just like Urashima Taro—a young fisherman who is a character in an old Japanese story. He helped a turtle and was invited to the Dragon Castle, and after spending a couple of hours there, he came back to his home village. He then realized many years had passed, and his village and people had completely changed. When he opened a gift box from the Dragon Castle, smoke came out from the box, and he turned into an old man.

For me, coming back to my old home with new assignments has made me feel like a newborn baby, starting my life from scratch here in Los Angeles. Therefore, I need your cooperation and your guidance as I reintroduce myself to this Betsuin and this district. I think that the place where we live is the center of our universe and where we listen to and share the Buddha Dharma and teachings of Shinran Shonin.

I am a new returning old sangha member. So let me join this Betsuin sangha again and listen and share the dharma with all of the members of the Betsuin and in this district. I would like to make Betsuin and the district more active with your support.

I am looking forward to seeing you soon at the Betsuin and other temples.

Thank you and *Yoroshiku onegai moushiagemasu.*

In gassho,
Kenjun Kawawata



A Wonderful Half Century

In Appreciation

Rev. Noriaki Ito

On Sunday, September 28, the Rinban Succession Service was held, marking my retirement as Rinban of the Los Angeles Higashi Honganji Betsuin. I've had the honor of serving in this role for 32 years, and as a resident minister for half of a century. It's been a deeply fulfilling journey.

My family and I were overwhelmed with the showing of support at my retirement celebration following the Succession Service. We were in awe of the number of you in attendance, coming from near and far and spanning over 50 years of my life. It was so heartwarming to see so many familiar faces, and I thank you all for your warm wishes, kind words, and generous gifts. Thank you to Susan Kashiwabara and the many other members and friends who made the event possible. We are so grateful to all of you.

My journey to becoming a minister began in September 1975 after completing my undergraduate studies at Occidental College and earning my Master's degree and full ordination in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism from Otani University in Kyoto. Encouraged by my professor at Oxy, I returned to Los An-

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Betsuin News



Autumn Ohigan Service

Held on 9/14

Autumn Seminar

Postponed to 11/23

Our Autumn Ohigan Service took place on Sunday, September 14th, at 10:00 AM. The speaker was Rev. Kenjun Kawawata, who has joined us from Hawaii and will soon become our new Rinban. Ohigan is held twice a year, around the equinoxes in the spring and fall.

The Autumn Seminar has been postponed until Sunday, November 23 at 12:30 pm. The guest speaker will be Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji, Dean and Professor at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley and minister at Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church. He will speak on the theme, "The Buddha's Aspiration for Us All." Please scan the QR code to sign up. Rev. Dr. Miyaji will also speak during our Sunday Service at 10 am. We hope you will join us.



CANNED FOOD & TOY DRIVES

Lumbini Child Development Center and Higashi Jr. YBA are hosting a Canned Food Drive and a Toy Drive! They will collect canned and non-perishable foods to donate to Food Bank outlets. Please be sure to check expiration and best-by dates before donating! If you would like to contribute, please bring your donations by **November 19th**. The toy drive will continue through December 18th. Please be sure that all toy donations are new and unwrapped. They will be collecting toys until **December 17th**. The toys will be donated to California Highway Patrol's CHiPs for Kids. Donations for both drives may be delivered to the temple. Both Lumbini and Higashi Jr. YBA are grateful for these opportunities to help others and hope you will join them in supporting those less fortunate. Thank you for your support!

Kaikyo-ki/Shotsuki Memorial Service

The Kaikyo-ki Memorial Service is a special service to honor the departed ministers of Higashi Honganji. It will take place in conjunction with the November Shotsuki Service held on November 2nd at 10:00 am. Please join us in expressing our gratitude to all the ministers who have served at our Betsuin over the years. Please note that Daylight Savings ends on Sunday, November 2nd, so you will need to move your clocks back one hour.

BIG BARGAIN SALE

A BIG THANK YOU to all temple members, relatives, and friends who donated, priced, provided security, and helped at our Big Bargain Sale. Also, thank you to all who helped with the cleanup afterwards. We could not have had such a smooth sale without all of your support!

Sincerely,

The Muratas and Oyamas



facebook.com/hhbt.la



@higashihonganji

Hoonko Observances

HŌONKŌ is the memorial service for Shinran Shōnin, the founder of our Jodo Shinshu denomination. The literal meaning of HŌONKŌ is "a gathering to repay a debt of gratitude." It is, therefore, an occasion to express our appreciation for having been given this opportunity to encounter the Buddha's teaching. According to Higashi Honganji tradition, the memorial date of Shinran Shōnin is November 28, 1262. This year, our HŌONKŌ Service will be held on Sunday, November 16th at 10 am. Speakers will be Rev. Nobuko Miyoshi in English and Rev. Ryoko Osa in Japanese. The Kikyōshiki (confirmation) ceremony will be held for those who have registered on Sunday, November 16th at 1:00 pm. The officiant for the ceremony will be Rinban Kenjun Kawawata. Kikyōshiki symbolizes one's confirmation of becoming a true follower of the Buddha by receiving his or her *Hōmyō* or Dharma name. The application period is closed for this year. Hōonkō Gathering will be held the day before on Saturday, November 15th. The speaker will be Rinban Kenjun Kawawata.

We hope that you can join us for this special annual observance.

visit our website at
hhbt-la.org

Thank You!

We wish to acknowledge Lin and Henry Miyake for the generous donation of the Takahari chochin from Japan. We will display the lanterns at our entrance to welcome attendees during our most important services. We are so grateful to them for extending this gift to us in memory of Lin's parents, Shigeru and Miyoko Nakagawa, who donated our previous lanterns. We will continue to cherish their legacy in the years to come.





RINBAN SUCCESSION SERVICE & RINBAN NORIAKI ITO'S RETIREMENT CELEBRATION



On Sunday, September 28, a special Succession Service was held to mark the passing of the Rinban position from Rinban Noriaki Ito to Rinban Kenjun Kawawata. Ministers from across the district gathered to participate in this significant occasion. Messages were shared by both Former Rinban Noriaki Ito and newly appointed Rinban Kenjun Kawawata.

The service was further honored by the presence of representatives from the Honzan. Rev. Yoshiyasu Nobesawa delivered a message from Overseas District Abbot Yul Otani, and Bishop Wataru Kigoshi, Chief Administrator of Shinshu Otani-ha, also offered heartfelt words. On behalf of the temple, David Ikeda shared a message of appreciation.

Following the service, nearly 700 attendees gathered at the Quiet Cannon for a joyous retirement celebration honoring Rinban Noriaki Ito. The program began with a welcome by emcee traci kato-kiriyama, followed by dynamic performances from Bombu Taiko and TAIKOPROJECT. Ron Sato, President of the Board of Directors, introduced

the many special guests in attendance.

Touching messages were delivered by Kisa, Gaku, and Mika Ito on behalf of the Ito family; Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa and Rev. Kensho Goto representing the Higashi Honganji USA Headquarters; and Ron Sato, one of Rinban Ito's long-time friends, speaking on behalf of the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple. Rinban Kenjun Kawawata led Shokuzen no Gassho before lunch. In a moment of humor and affection, Shin Ito offered a champagne toast—complete with both a toaster and a literal piece of “toast”—in honor of his brother.

Guests enjoyed a delicious lunch, featuring a salad starter and choice of prime rib, salmon, or vegetarian pasta. Children were served chicken strips, French fries with ketchup, and fresh fruit. Dessert was a crème brûlée with fresh berries.

After lunch, Rev. Mayuki Nagamine led Shokugo no Gassho, followed by a beautiful koto performance by June Kuramoto. A touching tribute video, created by John Esaki and Amy Kato, was presented. Various organizations took

the stage to express their gratitude and admiration for Rinban Ito and his wife, Janet, for their years of devoted service.

The day culminated with a final, heartfelt gift presented by Susan Kashiwabara on behalf of Higashi Honganji, along with several organizations and friends: a bucket list trip to Japan for Rinban Ito, Janet, their children, their spouses, and their seven grandchildren—a long-held dream Rinban Ito was unable to pursue while serving as Rinban.

The celebration concluded with Rinban Ito expressing deep appreciation to all who supported him throughout his 50 years as a minister of Higashi Honganji.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who made this day possible—with special recognition to Susan Kashiwabara for coordinating the celebration with care and dedication.



(ITO, con't. from page 1)

geles to begin ministry at our temple. At the time, there were already three other ministers serving: my father, Rinban Horyu Ito, Rev. Tsuyoshi Hirosumi, and Rev. Koen Mishima (now Hosokawa). I think I was hired mainly because I was fluent in English (something my father wasn't).

Although I hadn't planned to follow in my father's footsteps, I grew into this role with the support of our community and fellow ministers. Now that I am at the crossroads of my life, I am grateful for the life I have been granted. I'm sure I could have done a much better job, but I hope I was alright—I wasn't that great, but I enjoyed all of the days and all of the experiences. I'm especially grateful to have walked the path of Buddhism with you all, learning from the teachings of Shinran Shōnin along the way.

Now, as I step away from my full-time position as a minister, I hope to

continue supporting the temple when needed. I'm grateful to our ministers, office staff, board of directors, and temple members for your support, encouragement, and friendship. Special thanks to Kazue Funai-sensei, Jason and Gary for their technical support, our weekly chairpersons, and especially the members who attend weekly and help this temple thrive.

Under the guidance of Rinban Kenjun Kawawata, Rev. Mayuki Nagamine, and our North America District ministers, Rev. Kensho Goto and Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa, I'm confident the Betsuin will continue to grow in the years ahead.

You have all helped to make this journey as wonderful as it has been. Thank you so very much for your friendship, your support, and your guidance.

In Gassho,
Noriaki Ito

Our deepest condolences

to the family and relatives of ...

Kazuko Matsunaga Kato (94)
May 24, 2025

Yoneko Matsumoto (103)
August 19, 2025

Frank Toshio Tanji (73)
October 1, 2025

Craig Masaru Takemoto (59)
October 2, 2025

Namu Amida Butsu

Jr. YBA News

Yuna Kanamaru,
Jr. YBA President

Imagine a room full of teens dancing, jumping, screaming, and laughing under a disco ball-lit room. Not exactly the first thing someone would think of when you mention a Buddhist conference, right? But that's exactly what happened at the 75th annual Southern District Jr. YBL Conference, "Studio Shinran: Living in the NOW" and it showed me that Buddhism isn't just chanting and meditating; it's about friendship, joy, and community.

I didn't know what to expect, but the moment I stepped inside, I saw a bright interior with all these posters and decorations based on Studio Ghibli, hence the name, "Studio Shinran." Volunteers and friends I met at past seminars welcomed me with warm energy as they handed out name tags, hotel room numbers, schedules, and our very own Monto Shikishos. Opening service began shortly after I arrived. The dharma talk given was called "Living in the Now." The speaker was Koichi Mizushima, and he made the long talk so funny. He explained to everyone that the phrase YOLO! - "You only live once" isn't a saying that should be taken too lightly. He joked, "You only live once" doesn't mean to eat as much as you can physically stuff into your mouth at an all-you-can-eat sushi buffet without thinking about the aftermath. "You only live once" means to take in as much joy as you can and live your life in the most meaningful, fullest way possible. You're eating at a buffet with all your friends that you're not going to see for a long time. Maybe instead of shoving down multiple tuna rolls because the buffet was expensive, and you want to eat as much as possible, so the money wasn't "wasted," you eat another tamago sushi to savor the precious time you're having, laughing with all your friends. Maybe you have another California roll to keep on having a good time with all these people around you. Mr. Mizushima explains that instead of screaming YOLO! and doing whatever stupid things teen-

agers do, we should take the time and think, "Is the consequence worth the action? Were those extra sushi worth the amazing time I had laughing with my friends? Was the stomach ache I had worth the memories I made?" YOLO is not the same as "living in the Now." The talk made me realize that the true way of living your life to the maximum, to be present, to enjoy the little things, and to value the people around you.

After the amazing Dharma Talk, everybody split into four groups to go do different activities that tested our leadership and communication skills, while keeping with the "Living in the Now" theme, including the basics of Taiko drums, games that made us communicate with people we've never met before and murder mysteries, arts and crafts, and escape rooms. In the communication game, we had to stack wooden numbers in groups of four, but two members of the group only had one hand (the other was taped together to another person's hand), one member was blindfolded, and the last person wasn't allowed to talk. Everyone was cheering and laughing, dropping the wooden numbers, colliding into other teammates, and laughter echoed throughout the room; it was hilarious! I met the kindest and funniest people there, and we ended up hanging out together for the entire night! The game highlighted the fact that even in the silliest moments, I can practice mindfulness and enjoy the "now" fully. The night of the conference was scheduled for an end-of-the-year banquet. There was a raffle (I won a Labubu!), dinner, Kahoot games, thank you speeches, and a temple poster design contest, and the one that I made for Higashi won (which was made the night before at my kitchen table)! The banquet ended in a dance with two DJs, flashing lights, so much candy and snacks, a photobooth with the longest line ever, and all the teenagers huddled together in the middle of the banquet hall, jumping and singing, screaming at the top of our lungs. The dance really wasn't about who could show off and sing the prettiest or who could do a backflip; it was the moments of shared joy and memories that we'll never forget. We truly were "Living in

the Now." Moments like these are exactly why the Jr. YBA is so special: you can learn Buddhist values while having fun and making new friends.

I'd like to thank Susan Kashiwabara, Rev. Mayuki Nagamine, and my mom, Yuri Kanamaru, for their support. They chaperoned and stayed during the 2-day conference to make all this possible for me.

I really felt like I was able to live in the now and experience this conference to the fullest. I walked out of that conference with new leadership skills, communication abilities, Buddhist knowledge, and best of all, memories with my new friends. This same spirit of friendship and growth could be achieved at Higashis Jr. YBA through games, volunteering, learning, and more activities. If you want to make friends, have fun, and grow as a person while learning valuable lessons, come join Jr. YBA at our temple. Your next exciting adventure is waiting at Higashis Jr. YBA!

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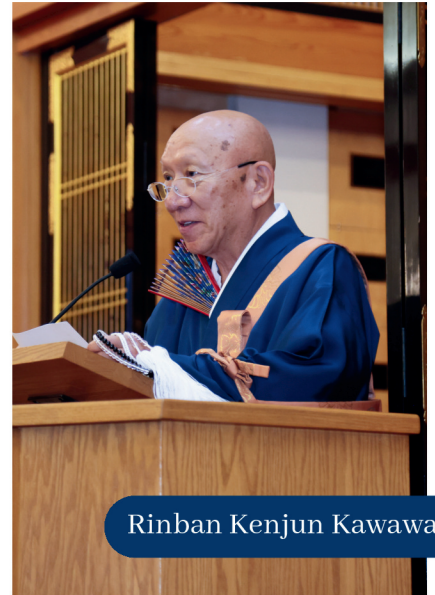
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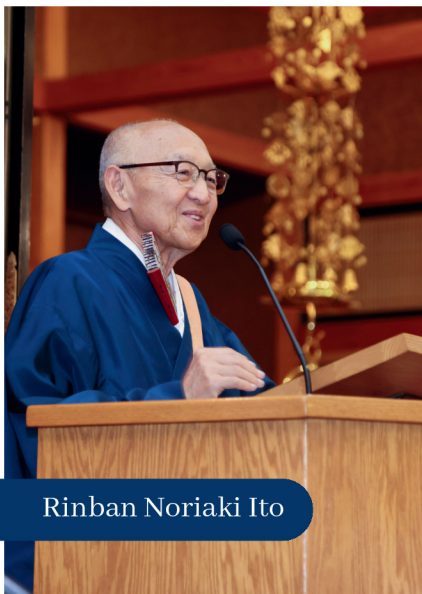
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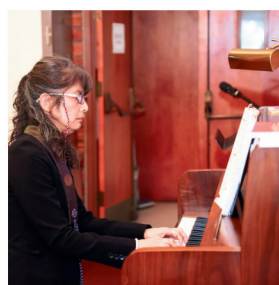
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2025 | 10 AM



Rinban Kenjun Kawawata



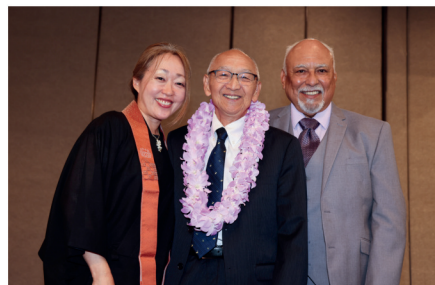
Rinban Noriaki Ito



HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION LUNCHEON HONORING RINBAN NORIAKI ITO | 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025 | QUIET CANNON



HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION LUNCHEON
HONORING RINBAN NORIAKI ITO | 50 YEARS OF SERVICE
SEPTEMBER 28, 2025 | QUIET CANNON



HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Autumn Seminar



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2025 | 12:30 PM

The Buddha's Aspiration for Us All

GUEST SPEAKER

Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji

In this talk, I will discuss the meaning of Amida Buddha's hongan 本願, when we can encounter this, and how our worldview can change with this teaching. In our 21st-century American society, there are many different schools of Buddhism that are being shared. As Jodo Shinshu Buddhists, we should remember what is fundamental to this teaching and why we should be proud of our religious doctrine. Understanding and sharing Amida Buddha's wish for all beings is how we can contribute to this pluralistic society.



Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji has been serving as the Dean of the Institute of Buddhist Studies located in Berkeley, California, since August 2024, and is on the core faculty. He has also been the minister of the Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church since August 1, 2020.

He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley with a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy and Japanese language and literature, Institute of Buddhist Studies at Berkeley, California with a Master's in Buddhist Studies, Ryukoku University in Kyoto, Japan with a Master's Degree in Shin Buddhist Studies, and completed the doctoral coursework at Ryukoku University in 2019. He specializes in the areas of Japanese Buddhism and religion, translation of Buddhist scripture, and Jodo Shinshu doctrine and ethics.

Miyaji received his Tokudo and Kyoshi qualifications at the Honpa Hongwanji school located in Kyoto, Japan. He also obtained the academic ranking of hokyō, recognized within Hongwanji. He most recently completed his doctoral dissertation at Ryukoku University. His dissertation is entitled, "Shin Buddhist Ethics."

**HIGASHI HONGANJI
BUDDHIST TEMPLE**

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**This seminar is FREE to attend,
however an optional bento lunch
will be available after service for
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