

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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The Way

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HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

TEMPLE SCHEDULE

Please note:

In-person Sunday Services have been temporarily discontinued. We will update you as our plans evolve. Thank you for your patience.

DECEMBER

- 5 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 12 10:00 am Bodhi Day/Year-end Family Service
- 26 No Service
- 31 6:00 pm Year-end Service (Joya-e)

JANUARY

- 1 10:00 am New Year Day Service (Shusho-e)
- 2 No Service
- 9 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 16 10:00 am Sunday Service Discussion Group
- 23 10:00 am Family Service
- 30 10:00 am Eitaikyo Service & General Meeting

JOYA-E | YEAR-END SERVICE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31 | 6:00PM

SHUSHO-E | NEW YEAR SERVICE

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1 | 10:00AM

Both services will be streamed on our Facebook page

If you would like to schedule a private memorial service or visit the ashes of your loved one at the temple, please call us to schedule an appointment at 213-626-4200.

FOR UPDATES, PLEASE
SUBSCRIBE TO OUR EMAIL LIST
BY VISITING OUR
WEBSITE AT

HHBT-LA.ORG

STREAM OUR SUNDAY SERVICES LIVE ON FACEBOOK

FACEBOOK.COM/HHBT.LA

SUNDAYS | 10 AM



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



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The Season of Hōonkō

Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa

This article was written in early November

Since November is the month of Hōonkō, I always talk about this topic during the month. The word *Hōonkō* means “the gathering for repaying our debt of gratitude to our spiritual forebear Shinran Shōnin” and it is the most important event for the Shinshū communities. Since Shinran Shōnin passed away on the 28th of the 11th month in the old lunisolar calendar, the week from November 21st to 28th in the current Gregorian calendar has been set aside for the observance of his *shōtsuki meinichi* at the mother temple of the Higashi Honganji in Kyoto. Throughout the week, they hold many services, lectures, dharma talks, and other types of events to repay our debt of gratitude to Shinran Shōnin for clarifying the essence of the Buddhist teaching for us.

We always sing a song titled *Ondokusan* to conclude a Sunday service. The song *Ondokusan* is an expression of our debt of gratitude to our encounter with the Buddha’s Compassion as well as to our teachers who have made the encounter possible. The lyrics of the *Ondokusan* goes like this: “I vow to repay my debt of gratitude for the Great Compassion that embraces me continuously, until my body turns to dust. I vow to repay my debt of appreciation for the guidance of my Dharma teachers, until my bones are shattered.”

This is Shinran Shōnin’s expression of how he appreciated his encounter with the Compassion of the Buddha as well as with the guidance of the Dharma teachers that made his encounter possible. This song is also our expression of how we appreciate them.

Shinran Shōnin was able to encounter the Buddha’s Compassion through his meeting with his teacher Hōnen

Shōnin that happened when he was twenty-nine years old. It was the most significant event in his ninety-year life.

Shinran Shōnin was born in 1173 in Kyoto, the capital of Japan. At that time, the entire country was in a chaotic situation due to the significant changes in the political system and social order of the country. The city was torn apart by many conflicts as well as by a number of natural disasters that struck the capital region. Many people lost their lives and their bodies were piled up on the streets throughout the city.

Probably due to a difficult family situation, Shinran Shōnin had to leave his home to become a Buddhist monk at the age of nine. We don’t know if his entering the Buddhist path was his own choice or not, but it is safe to say that to young Shinran’s eyes, the human life was nothing other than impermanence and suffering. And ordinary people, including himself, were desperately searching for the true meaning of life.

After ordination, Shinran Shōnin devoted himself to study and practice at the Buddhist monasteries on Mount Hiei, the most authoritative Buddhist learning center of the time, to find true liberation. But he could not find the answers to his questions in the teachings offered at the monastery.

At the age of twenty-nine in 1201, he “got out of the mountain” (this expression appears in a letter written by his wife Eshin-ni) to look for his answers. He was desperate. How would you feel if you dedicated your entire life to achieving your goal but are not be able to get anything from those efforts? I think Shinran Shōnin might have felt that he had wasted his entire life. Then he decided to go into a one-hundred-day religious retreat at a temple known as the Rokkakudō.

Having been inspired by a spiritual dream during the meditation, Shinran Shōnin finally decided to turn to a famous Buddhist teacher, Hōnen Shōnin, who was spreading the teaching of Buddhism from an entirely new perspective (which was viewed as radical by some traditional Buddhist scholars and fiercely criticized by them) in the midst of the capital. People from all walks of life gathered to listen to Hōnen Shōnin’s teaching. On the other hand, the traditional Buddhist teachings were only available to those who were capable of engaging in difficult practices and following strict precepts, such as aristocrats. The vast majority of ordinary people were out of the scope of the traditional teachings.

Shinran Shōnin did not seek his own liberation only. He discovered himself in the mass of ordinary people, who had no choice but to violate Buddhist precepts simply to make a living. Through encountering Hōnen Shōnin’s teaching, however, Shinran Shōnin rediscovered himself within the working of the Great Wisdom and Compassion of the Buddha, which would guide him to the true fulfillment of life without fail and that nobody was excluded from the unlimited scope of the working. At the same time, he realized the fathomless depth of his own blind passions and egocentricity, which made him the primal target of the Wisdom and Compassion.

Hōnen Shōnin’s teaching is often expressed simply as “Just say the Nenbutsu.” When I see the term, “Just say the Nenbutsu,” I always feel like I am told by Hōnen Shōnin that, “Don’t you
(Please see SEASON, page 3)

visit our website at
hhbt-la.org



Betsuin News



In Gratitude

2022 - HOPES FOR A RETURN TO NORMAL

2020 was certainly a year to remember. But this past year was an even more memorable year for our temple. Vaccines were finally made available in January for us over 65 and soon after for all adults. Although infection rates continued to be high, booster shots were made available that made everyday life even more safe. Hopefully, the temple can get back to a semblance of normal soon.

It was on evening of February 25 that we experienced the vandalism by an intruder at the temple. The damage was not too severe, but the pain we felt having our precious temple attacked like that took time to overcome. The outpouring of support from the community and our members made the experience easier to bear. The funds received enabled us to put in two new types of security, a more efficient inside alarm system, a live monitoring system to protect our exterior, and a new perimeter fence and gates to enter our parking lot.

In this way, we will be able to provide a safer environment for our students of our Lumbini Child Development Center as well as our temple staff and members. We take this opportunity to thank you for your generous contributions.

For almost the entire year, we have had to stay closed. Even though members and friends cannot attend our Sunday services, we have acquired equipment and a capable staff of Jason Wong, Gary Kanemoto, and Shin Ito who have been streaming our services every Sunday.

Our garden has been beautifully maintained primarily by Mr. Tadahide (Tad) Kawahira who comes several times a week to care for it. We also thank Mr. Hirokichi Maehara for his support as well. We also express our gratitude to the many volunteers who come to help with whatever needs to be done. They

lend office support as needed and also come for "omigaki," the polishing of the articles such as candle holders, vases, and so forth in the altar.

We wish to thank Rev. Peter Hata for his service to our Betsuin for nearly a decade as staff minister. As you know, he retired at the end of August. Rev. Hata was an invaluable member of our staff, and since we had to close our Sunday services, he streamed many of the gatherings from his home. We wish him well in his future endeavors. We continue to receive support for our religious activities from our North America District ministers, Rev. Masashi Fujii who returned to Japan in late May, Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa, and Rev. Kensho Goto who arrived in mid-October. We have also received support from other ministers, Revs. Brenion, Miyoshi, Osa, Toyoshima, and Yamada for presenting Dharma messages for our Sunday services. And finally, a big *arigato* to our office staff, Susan Kashiwabara, Mika Ito, and Nancy Kurihara-Johnson.

This year again, we had to settle for a virtual Obon Festival. We thank Lindsay Kashiwabara doing so much of the preparations, Gaku Ito for his work on the video, and also the many other volunteers who worked to create as good a substitute for Obon as possible.

We are hopeful that 2022 will be the year in which we return to the normal temple life we enjoyed up until the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. We look forward to seeing you all at the temple as soon as possible.

Gassho,
Rinban Noriaki Ito
Wayne Itoga,
President, Board of Directors

**The temple will be closed
December 24-26th.**

If you would like to schedule a private memorial service or visit the ashes of your loved one at the temple, please call us to schedule an appointment at 213-626-4200.

Joya-e New Year Eve Service

Come celebrate the end of 2021 at our Year-end Service on the temple's Facebook page to be held on Friday, December 31st at 6:00 pm. It is an opportunity to reflect on the past year and to prepare to welcome in the New Year, so please join us!

Shusho-e New Year Day Service

Shusho-e is the first service of the New Year. It is a tradition in Japan to visit nearby temples and shrines on New Year Day. Unfortunately, we are not able to meet in person, however, we welcome you to join us to greet the New Year on the temple's Facebook, on Saturday, January 1, 2022 at 10:00am.

Eitaikyo Service & General Meeting

The Eitaikyo Service will be held on Sunday, January 30th at 10:00am on the temple's Facebook page. This service is held in memory of all temple members who have passed away. It is also held to remember those who have been placed into the Eitaikyo register.

Following the service, the 117th Annual General Meeting will be held after the service by Zoom. Further information will be mailed to you in January.

Our deepest condolences

to the family and relatives of ...

Mr. John Motoki Kawano (93)
September 14, 2021

Mrs. Atsuko Fukuda (87)
October 29, 2021

Mrs. Hisako Iwakuma (94)
November 18, 2021

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 February / March 2022 Issue are due January 10th, 2022. Submissions may be subject to printing restrictions and staff approval. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!

visit our website at
hhbt-la.org

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BECOME A MEMBER!

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.

We no longer send out membership cards. Please keep your receipt as proof of membership. Thank you for your continued support.

(SEASON, cont. from page 1)

see the broad path? Just let go of your attachments. You're already within the working of the Buddha, which will surely guide you to Buddhahood. Just live your life to the fullest." When we walk the broad path, we can appreciate every experience in our lives as a signpost to Buddhahood and discover everyone we meet as a potential Buddha. How wonderful it is if we can!

Meeting with Hōnen Shōnin was such a life-changing experience for Shinran Shōnin. Later, he wrote about his encounter with his teacher in his major work *Kyōgyōshinshō* as:

I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Shakyamuni, discarded sundry practices and took refuge in the Amida Buddha's Original Vow in 1201.

At the Hōonkō service, I'm always reminded about how Shinran Shōnin lived his life and how profoundly he appreciated his encounter with his teacher Hōnen Shōnin. Reflecting on his appreciation of his life-changing experience at the age of twenty-nine has also given me a chance to re-appreciate my life from the broad perspective of Mahayana Buddhism and to renew my commitment to live as a Shinshū follower.



LUMBINI CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

FOR CHILDREN AGES 2 1/2 TO 5 YEARS

TEL: 213-680-2976

FAX: 213-626-6850

EMAIL: lumbini.missleslie@gmail.com

WEBSITE: LumbiniCDC.org

FB: facebook.com/lumbinidc

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

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closed national holidays

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information!



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!