

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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The Way

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October & November 2022

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

TEMPLE SCHEDULE

OCTOBER

- 23 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 30 10:00 am Sunday Service
- 30 10:00 am Dharma School
Halloween

NOVEMBER

- 6 10:00 am **Kaikyo-ki/Shotsuki Service**
- 6 *Daylight Savings Ends*
- 13 10:00 am Sunday Service
Discussion Group
- 19 6:00 pm **Hōonkō Gathering**
- 20 10:00 am **Hōonkō Service**
- 27 10:00 am Sunday Service

DECEMBER

- 4 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 11 10:00 am **Bodhi Day/Year-end Family Service**
- 18 9:00 am **Temple Clean-up**
- 25 No Service

HŌONKŌ

Hōonkō Gathering (English)
Saturday, November 19, 2022
6:00 pm | Zoom

Hōonkō Service
Sunday, November 20, 2022
10:00 am | HHBT & Facebook Live

VISITING THE TEMPLE

The temple is currently open for private services and visitations by appointment only. 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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Beyond Birth and Death: Awakening as a Sentient Being

Rev. Tomoyuki Hasegawa

Next Spring in Kyoto, a big celebration will be held for the 850th anniversary of Shinran Shōnin's birth and the 800th anniversary of the establishment of Jōdo Shinshū. It is a major event held once every fifty years, just like the *Goenki*. We usually observe more funerals or memorial services than celebratory events such as birth anniversaries or weddings at a Buddhist temple. It is no wonder many people associate Buddhist temples with the image of death. However, from the perspective of the Buddhist teaching, there is not much distinction between birth and death. Actually, they are the two sides of the same coin. When we think about our birth, we inevitably think about our death as well, and vice versa. Shinran Shōnin is believed to have been awakened to the meaning of birth and death at an early age, and this awakening laid the foundation of the teaching of Jōdo Shinshū in later times, even though Shinran himself didn't mention it in his works. Therefore, the 850th celebration of Shinran's birth and the 800th anniversary of the establishment of Jōdo Shinshū are not two different events. Actually, I think they are closely connected with each other.

Shinran Shōnin was born in 1173 in Kyoto, the capital of Japan. At that time, the entire country was in total chaos due to significant changes in the political and social systems of the country. The region around the capital was ravaged by armed conflicts as well as by natural disasters, and as a result, many people lost their lives. Shinran's family was also in a difficult situation probably due to political reasons and he had to leave his home to become a Buddhist monk at the age of nine. I don't know if the choice of becoming a monk was his own or not, but I think it is safe to say that he had to face the reality of life's impermanence at

an early age, and those experiences led him to open his eyes to the deep meaning of birth and death. And I believe because of those experiences he was led to awakening as a sentient being beyond the consciousness as an individual as *Matsuwaka-maru*.

Legend has it that after ordination, Shinran devoted himself to study and practice at the Buddhist monastery on Mount Hiei, the most authoritative Buddhist learning center of the time. 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" to look for his answers. He was desperate. He decided to begin a one-hundred-day religious retreat at a temple widely known as the Rokkakudō.

Having been inspired by a spiritual dream during meditation, Shinran finally decided to turn to a famous Buddhist teacher, Hōnen Shōnin, who was spreading the teaching of Buddhism from an entirely new perspective among the locals of the city. People from all walks of life gathered to listen to Hōnen's teachings. On the other hand, the traditional Buddhist teachings were only available to the privileged and talented. Most ordinary people were out of the scope of the traditional teachings.

The most important thing here (and it is the focus of this article) is that Shinran sought neither the achievement of his liberation as an individual nor overcoming his blind passions. Through the experiences in his childhood and at the Buddhist monastery, he deepened his awareness as a sentient being who was nothing other than a product of karmic conditions. In other words, he discovered himself in the mass of ordinary, unenlightened people, who had no choice but to violate precepts to make a

living. Through encountering Hōnen's teachings, however, Shinran also 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. It also means that nobody is excluded from the unlimited scope of the Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion. At the same time, he realized the depth of his own blind passions and egocentricity, which all the more made him the primal target of the Wisdom and Compassion.

The essence of Hōnen's teaching is often expressed as "Just say the nenbutsu." Through saying the nenbutsu, we can rediscover ourselves as sentient beings within the *nen* (the "calling" or "mindfulness") of *butsu* (the Buddha). The nenbutsu is not a one-time experience but a lifelong process of deepening awareness as an ordinary, unenlightened sentient being. Through this awareness, we can appreciate the existence of each other as fellow seekers sharing the way to the Pure Land. On the way to the Pure Land, we can deepen our understanding of the meaning of being born as human beings and dying as well.

The major event in Spring 2023 is not merely a celebration of the birth of a historical person named Shinran and of his achievement of establishing a Buddhist school. It is also an opportunity for all of us to reconfirm our commitment to walk the path of the nenbutsu, while deepening our awareness as sentient beings.



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BUDDHIST TEMPLE AT
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Betsuin News



Reopening for Sunday Services

After a long hiatus from in-person Sunday Services, we welcome you to join us back in person at the temple effective Sunday, October 16th. In an effort to remain as safe as possible, we will continue to keep our covid protocols in place. We strongly encourage you to be fully vaccinated or show proof of a negative test when you arrive. All attendees must be masked throughout the service and inside the temple. Please do not attend if you are ill or have any COVID-related symptoms.

Our parking lot gate may be closed upon your arrival, but we will have someone onsite to open it as needed. If you have trouble getting in, please don't hesitate to call the office at 213-626-4200.

For those who are immunocompromised or unable to attend services in person for any other reason, we will continue to stream our services online. Thank you for your cooperation and welcome back!

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 6th at 10:00am. This service will be held both in person at the temple and virtually on Facebook live. 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 this day, so you will need to move your clocks back one hour.

**FOR UPDATES, PLEASE
SUBSCRIBE TO OUR EMAIL LIST
BY VISITING OUR
WEBSITE AT
HHBT-LA.ORG**

HŌONKŌ Service & Gathering

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 20th at 10 am in person at the temple and also streamed on Facebook live. HŌONKŌ Gathering is an informal service and discussion held in English. It will be held on Saturday, November 19th at 6 pm on Zoom. Bishop Kenjun Kawawata from Higashi Honganji Mission of Hawaii will be our guest speaker for HŌONKŌ weekend. Please subscribe to our emails for service and gathering links. We hope that you can join us for this special annual observance.

Our deepest condolences

to the family and relatives of ...

*Mr. Jimmie Yoshio Yamashiroya (97)
July 7, 2022*

*Mr. Hiroshi Omori (65)
July 18, 2022*

*Mrs. Fumiko Teraoka (98)
August 21, 2022*

*Mr. Yoshio Taniguchi (93)
August 25, 2022*

Namu Amida Butsu

**HIGASHI HONGANJI
GOLF
TOURNAMENT**

**SAVE THE DATE
MARCH 6, 2023
VIA VERDE COUNTRY CLUB**

BECOME A 2022 HIGASHI 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.

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



facebook.com/hhbt.la



@higashihonganjila

SUBMISSION DEADLINE!

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

2023 TOUR TO JAPAN

For the 850th Celebration of the Birthday of Shinran Shōnin and the 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of Jōdo Shinshū

Similar to the 750th Goenki memorial service for Shinran Shōnin that was held in 2011, the special birthday celebration occurs only once every 50 years also and is considered to be a once in a lifetime opportunity. The celebratory services will be held in the Spring of 2023 every day from March 24 through April 29. Our headquarters is hoping that many members not only from areas throughout Japan but also from our overseas districts join in the celebration at our mother temple in Kyoto.

The service that will take place on April 21 has been designated for members from overseas and so we have organized a tour group so that our North America District will be well-represented.

As of now, the dates for our tour will be from April 19 through April 27. Four plans are being considered.

#1 – San-in area which is the south-west region of the main island, Honshū, facing the Japan Sea. #2 is to visit Shikoku Island, #3 is to visit Okinawa

and Nagasaki, and #4 is basically the Tokyo region. All tours will of course include Kyoto.

Prices are between \$4,550 to \$4,900 for the Okinawa tour. 15 participants will be required for any of the tours. Price includes round-trip airfare on ANA and all travel in Japan.

We hope that you will consider joining us for this historical event and represent our district to participate in one of the grand celebration services at our Kyoto mother temple.

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OPEN YEAR ROUND:

MONDAY through FRIDAY

7:30am to 6:00pm

closed national holidays

