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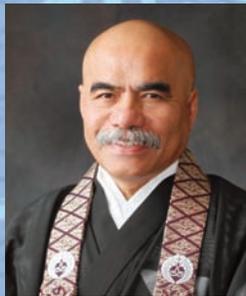
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RIMBAN'S MESSAGE

THOUGHTS ON THE SANGHA



I take refuge in Sangha. May we all together become units in true accord, in a life of harmony, in a spirit of universal brotherhood freed from the bondage of selfishness.

When we think of the Sangha, we usually think of Sangha as temple members. Sangha is one of the Three jewels ... the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Each are described as having certain characteristics.

Sangha is word in Pali or Sanskrit that is translated into "association" or "assemble". Traditionally in Buddhism the Sangha almost always meant the monastic Sangha of ordained monks and nuns. The Sangha of monks and nuns were originally established by Shakyamuni Buddha in the 5th Century BCE, with the goal of preserving the teachings, reinforcing discipline and serving as an example for the laity. The monastic life provided a more conducive environment to attain Enlightenment.

The Buddha placed great emphasis upon the Sangha. The Buddha felt that support of a Sangha is essential to progress along the spiritual path. The Buddha also warned against disharmony in the Sangha. Unfortunately there are always some problems in any spiritual community, but the Buddha felt that Sangha was so important that he made causing disharmony in the Sangha one of the three poisons. The Buddha compared causing disharmony in the Sangha to be as bad as

killing one's mother or father ... so you know it must have been very important in the Buddha's mind.

Since the time of the Buddha, there has been a tradition that those who teach the dharma are supported directly by their community. The monks do not ask for this, it is offered freely. In Asia, it is understood that the practice of generosity, or dana, forms the bedrock of spiritual practice.

Individuals who devote themselves to teaching are held in great respect, and their communities take seriously the reciprocal responsibility for supporting the teacher and the teachings. In turn, the teacher upholds the responsibility of living an exemplary life and making the teachings readily available. It is understood that to support the teacher is to support oneself.

During its 2500 year lifetime, Buddhism has adapted to many cultural traditions. essence land holdings. At other times and places, they took vows of poverty and refused to touch money.

Today, through generous donations, temple membership and fundraisers made possible by the dedication of hard working temple members and temple friends, our Sangha is able to sustain our temple and pay the salaries to the ministers. The continued support by our members and community is the heart of our Sangha. This is the very essence of dana that Shakyamuni Buddha spoke of ... when we have benefited from the teachings, we in turn

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THE MOMENT OF DEATH

by Rev. Koho Takata



REV. KOHO TAKATA

When I was on Kapaa, Hawaii, members often asked me regarding the service at the time of death. They asked me when to hold the service, before or after the death.

Most people tend to think that the service will be held only after the death. This is a misunderstanding.

The service can be held before the death occurs. The reason is that the service is not held as a means for the person to be born into the Pure Land or to wish the person's peaceful repose after the death. It is solely to hear the teachings of the Buddha and express our appreciation to the Buddha-Dharma for sustaining our lives even after our lives end. Even though the life of a person is about to end, he or she can hear the sutra chanting and voices of family members and a minister.

Frankly, there was a time when I did not think like this. I thought a person who was suffering on the bed and was about to pass, he or she could not hear the teachings. However, through my religious experiences with the teachings, I was made to realize that he can hear the teachings in spite of his conditions. At the same time, those who still remain can appreciate the teachings.

When I receive a call from a nurse or a family, I always recommend having a service before the death. However, the service also can be held after the death when they miss the opportunity to hear or appreciate the teachings before the death.

"The idea of Amida's coming at the moment of death is for those who seek to gain birth in the Pure Land by doing various practices, for they are practitioners of self-power. The moment of death is of central concern to such people, for they have not yet attained true shinjin. We may also speak of Amida's coming at the moment of death in the case of those who, though they have committed the ten transgressions and the five grave offences throughout their lives, encounter a teacher in the hour of death and are led at the very end to utter the nembutsu.

The practitioners of our true shinjin, however, abide in the stage of the truly settled, for he or she has already been grasped, never to be abandoned. There is no need to wait in anticipation for the moment of death, no need to rely on Amida's coming. At the time shinjin becomes settled, birth too becomes settled; there is no need for the deathbed rites that prepare one for Amida's coming."

--(The Collected Works of Shinran, P. 523)

Founder, Shinran Shonin, negated the thought of Amida Buddha's coming at the moment of death as the condition for the person's birth in the Pure Land. He emphasized that our birth in the Pure Land comes at the moment we are truly awakened to the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha. When we realize our true *shinjin* by the Buddha's Great Compassionate Mind, there is no doubt that the assurance of our enlightenment in the life to come, and we recite the Nembutsu in joy and gratitude for the Buddha's Great Compassion. It means that we had been already encompassed by the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life. It is neither our calculated workings nor the presence of Amida Buddha at the time of death. Shinran Shonin emphasized the importance of *shinjin*, awakening to the True Reality, in this present moment on how we live in the Dharma. In other words, Amida Buddha's coming at the moment of death does not determine whether we will be born in the Pure Land or not. It is our everyday life as a result of awakening to the *shinjin*. This is why Shinran Shonin said that there is no need for the deathbed rites that prepare one for Amida Buddha's coming and also the reason why I have a service before the person's death so that he or she can listen to the teachings and express their gratitude at the moment of their final stage of life, and not after the death for his or her peaceful repose.

I believe that the teachings of the Buddha propagated by Shinran Shonin are central to my life as well as yours. I share the Dharma with you based on my appreciation and understanding of the Dharma through various occasions such as Sunday, funeral, memorial, bedside, wedding, etc. They are also great opportunities for me to listen to the Dharma with you. Let us realize the importance of listening to the Dharma in our daily lives and reflect upon the meaning of this life given by our ancestors and interconnected relationship with others especially in this Ohigan season.



THE HEART OF INTERDEPENDENCE

by Rev. Kazuaki Nakata



REV. KAZ

I, Shinran, have lived for many years and finally reached the age of 90. Life and death is like a sea wave at a beach in Wakayama (Kataonami) ... coming and going... soon after I die, my body will be dissolved but I will become a part of others' lives and continue my life on... If you think you enjoy the compassion of Amida Buddha, but you feel alone, please know that you are not alone, because there is Shinran who en-

joys the compassion of Amida Buddha with you. If a couple enjoys the compassion of Amida Buddha, please know that there are three of them because one of them is Shinran who enjoys the compassion of Amida Buddha with the couple... Even if I disappear, Dharma will continuously reflect all sentient beings brightly and shiningly with its gentle light as long as they exist...

Ho-on Ko ~ The Jodo Shinshu founder, Shinran Shonin's Memorial Service ~ was solemnly conducted on January 19 with the participation of many.

The poem above was written, just before Shinran Shonin passed away. The letter simply captures how Shinran Shonin understood the essence of life and death after his 90 years of life. The poem is now used as "Ho-on Ko" song.

Records reveal that Shinran Shonin was born on April 1, 1173 and passed away on November 28, 1262. Why is it that we observe his memorial service in January, if he died in November? Historically, the Japanese official calendar was configured with the combination of the lunar calendar and the regnal calendar (ie: *Showa* and *Meiji*). Although the Gregorian calendar was first implemented in parts of Europe in 1582. The Japanese government did not adopt this calendar until 1872 in Meiji era. Currently the combination of the Gregorian calendar and the regnal calendar is used in Japan as the official calendar. Thus, when Shinran Shonin's birthdate and death date are converted to the Gregorian calendar, his birthdate has been calculated as May 21, 1173 and the date of death is January 16, 1263.

At the Betsuin, on the 16th of each month, a special service takes place. This service is the "Go-Meinichi Ko." *Go* is an honorific prefix. "Meinichi" refers to the memorial day and "Ko" is "a gathering." Hence, the life of Shinran Shonin is observed in two ways. The annual *Ho-on Ko* and monthly *Go-Meinichi Ko* where, at both services, the *Shoshin-ge* written by Shinran Shonin is chanted.

Following the death of Shinran Shonin, our ancestors and current *sangha* members have supported the Jodo Shin-

shu tradition for over 750 years and so both *Ho-on Ko* and *Go-Meinichi Ko* have been maintained until now, the 21st Century.

Today, we are beginning to see these traditions fading away. Several temples no longer have the *Go-Meinichi Ko* and our Betsuin *Ho-on Ko* has been gradually simplified over the last several decades.

Last year, the BCA Southern District temples came together at a joint *Ho-on Ko* service at the Betsuin. With Senshin's Kinnara Gagaku group beginning the service, the southern district ministers along with the sangha, chanted *Shoshin-ge*. There were five selected ministers who were scattered amongst the sangha in the *gejin* (audience seating area). They served as *Shoshin-ge Wasan* soloists and each *wasan* voice was heard from random directions in the *hondo*. It was a very impressive presentation and service. Since then, I, personally, have been reflecting upon the importance of the traditions in Jodo Shinshu and the Betsuin.

I, sometimes, hear and see the term "simple is best." Perhaps, because more people are tackling very complicated tasks or jobs in their everyday lives. However, I believe it is not suitable to apply such a concept to existing traditions or rituals. By simplifying the existing traditions, the importance of the tradition may be diminished and the history of the tradition will fade away. In general, I am not a nostalgic person. I am making this point, not because I am a minister, but because we have to maximize our imagination to consider why, over 750 years, the traditions have been preserved and all those individuals who have maintained the rituals.

My wife was born in Miyazaki, Kyushu Japan. In the history of the Kyushu region, there were many Jodo Shinshu followers who hid their Buddha statues and scrolls in caves, because the governmental persecution of Jodo Shinshu practices. If discovered, those individuals were punished with a sentence of death. As such, the devout nembutsu followers hid their Buddhist artifacts in caves. They would gather in the caves in the middle of the night to chant the sutras. These people were known as "*Kakure Nenbutsu Shu = Hidden Nenbutsu Sangha*". I consider their story is a part of our Jodo Shinshu tradition and history. They protected the tradition at the risk of their lives. By being aware such stories, can we justify and feel "There's no use in keeping the traditions?"

After Rev. Takata joined the Betsuin last August, the min-

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SPRING OHIGAN SERVICE

by Rev. Koho Takata

The Buddhist communities in Los Angeles are reminded of the coming **Higan**, a time to reflect on the human condition and examine the options open to us through the Infinite Wisdom and Compassion of Amida Buddha.

Higan is considered to be amongst the Six Major Services in the Hongwanji tradition.

The members of Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple and their families are invited to attend the Spring Higan Rededication Service which will be held on Sunday, March 16 at 10:00 AM. The guest speaker for the service will be **Rev. Nobuo Miyaji** of the Gardena Buddhist Church for English Service and **Rev. Shousei Hanayama** of the Watsonville Buddhist Temple for Japanese Service.

Higan is an abbreviation of *To-Higan* which literally means "to reach the other shore." In Buddhism, the world of suffering is referred to as "this shore" and the world of Enlightenment is called "other shore."

The term Higan comes from the Sanskrit word Paramita - "gone to other shore," and suggests the Six Paramitas of charity, morality, patience, effort, meditation, and wisdom. Various sutras teach that six paramitas or perfections of practice are the way of reaching the other shore from this shore.

In Jodo Shinshu, the observance of Higan is simply the expressing of our gratitude to Amida Buddha for awakening us to Boundless Compassion and Wisdom. Our part in this observance would be to put into action the Compassion which comes to us vertically from Amida Buddha and to apply it horizontally in our relation with man and other living beings on this earth. This appreciation in our daily life is the Jodo Shinshu way of expressing our gratitude and thanksgiving for the wondrous virtues extended to us unconditionally and equally for all just like the sun's ray which falls on the earth.

In conjunction with Spring Higan Service, we are fortunate to have a **Spring Higan Seminar** entitled "Sharing Our Life Stories As Buddhists" on Saturday, March 15 from 9 am to 4 pm. This is the same theme as the 2014 Southern District Buddhist Conference to be held in October 10-12 in Hotel Irvine Jamboree Center.

For English speaking attendees, Rev. Nobuo Miyaji will be speaking in the morning session and Rev. Shousei Hanayama in the afternoon session. For Japanese speaking attendees, Rev. Shousei Hanayama will be speaking in the morning session and Rev. Nobuo Miyaji in the afternoon session.

The registration is available at temple office. The deadline for registration will be March 7. The registration fee is \$15.00 which will include lunch and refreshments. We encourage all of you to hear the teaching of Shinran Shonin. 

HANAMATSURI SERVICE

by Rev. Koho Takata

The members of Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple and their families are invited to attend the annual **Hanamatsuri Service**, which is the observance of Sakyamuni Buddha's Birthday Service to be held on Sunday, April 6. The guest speaker for the service will be Rev. Rev. Tetsunen Hirota of BCA Minister Emeritus for Japanese Service and English speaker has yet to be determined.



Hanamatsuri is a day of joy and a great significant for all Buddhists. We call the observance "Hana-matsuri" which means a "flower festival".

Sakyamuni Buddha was born in India on April 8th about 3,000 years ago. At that time, the earth was said to have shaken in six directions (north, south, east, west, up, and down), flowers blossomed everywhere, Devas, or gods, filled the air with music. Heavenly beings scattered flowers from sky. The newborn infant Buddha immediately stood up and then took seven steps to the north. Then he pointed his right hand to the heavens above and pointed his left hand to the earth below and, with the voice of a lion, spoke the following words; "In the heavens above and on earth below, I alone will become the Honored One." With each step that he took, a lotus flower blossomed under his feet. This is why we call this celebration "Hana-matsuri" or a "flower festival."

Many of the rites that are observed during Hanamatsuri are based on the events we are told happened at the time of Prince Siddhartha's birth. The *hanamido* or miniature floral altar of bright flowers provides the setting of the beautiful Lumbini Garden where he was born. The statue of the baby Buddha with its arm extended illustrates the virtues of Amida Buddha reaching out to all beings and

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KICKOFF FUNDRAISER FOR THE 50TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY

by Rimban William Briones

2019 will mark the Los Angeles Betsuin's 50th year at its current locations! Presently, we have been located at 1st and Vignes longer than at any other location during our 109 years of Betsuin history.

Commemorating this milestone, a committee has been assigned the task to put together sub-committees to organize fundraisers, events, projects, special seminars, lectures and study classes all leading to the 50th anniversary celebration.

As we embark on this five-year journey to our 50th year, we will have a special service to commemorate the return of our three scrolls, Rennyō Shonin, The Seven Pure Land Masters and Myōnyō Shonin to the Betsuin. The scrolls are returning after a six month period in Japan during which time they were being restored after they were damaged by vandals.

To commemorate the return of the scrolls and to kick off our 50th anniversary fundraiser, the Betsuin ministers are

preparing a special service on Sunday, March 30, 2014 at 10:00 AM.

Not only will we be returning the scrolls to their appropriate location on the *naijin*, (altar) but we will also be debuting our new robes that are replacing our badly worn and tattered robes. The new robes and *gojo gesa* were purchased through the Etaikyo Fund.

Following the service, there will be a presentation on what major repairs need to be undertaken and an explanation of the restoration of our *naijin* and the reason why we are sending them back to Japan for refurbishing.

Please plan to attend this Fundraiser Kick-off Service on Sunday, March 30 at 10:00 AM. Light refreshments will be served afterwards and at that time you can ask the ministers and/or committee members of the 50th Anniversary questions or concerns you might have about the repairs, *naijin* restoration or fundraiser. 

(Rimban Briones - continued from page 1)

naturally want to give back.

Yet, often times we hear members or potential members say, "what do I get for my membership"? Within our Teachings we are encouraged to look beyond our self-centeredness, the "what's in it for me" attitude ... to realize that our ego encourages us to seek happiness through the satisfaction of our wants and desires. And that *dana* provides us the opportunity to realize that true happiness arises with nonattachment.

I believe this was the understanding of our Issei and Nisei pioneers. They built our temples in the worst of economic times. Through financial and personal hardship they endured and generously gave back to the temple. *dana*, was the foundation of their spiritual life.

As the Issei pioneers built the foundation of the Los Angeles Hōmpa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple almost 109 years ago in downtown Little Tokyo, the Nisei in 1965 with foresight and a vision purchased one and one-half acre at 1st and Vignes to relocate the Betsuin from the Central/1st Street site. With the generous support of the temple members they were able to raise \$2,000,000 to complete the construction of the new Betsuin in 1969.

Forty five years have since passed, and we find the Betsuin in need of major repair. Air conditioning, crumbling concrete porch, leaking roof and much more wear and tear. Also the *naijin* (altar) is in need of refurbishing. Much of the furnishing and "ornaments" are damaged or just worn out. Obviously, the Betsuin doesn't have sufficient funds to cover this entire project. Subsequently, at our Annual General Meeting held in October of last year that we unanimously approved a major fundraiser to raise 2 million dollars to make the major repairs to the temple and to refurbish the altar. The Fund Raiser will be in conjunction with our 50th Year Anniversary in 2019. It is with great optimism and enthusiasm that we begin forming committees to coordinate the activities and events that will lead a successful campaign and 50th Anniversary Commemoration in 2019.

So once again we look to the generosity our Sangha to help raise funds to undertake this expansive project. The practice of *dana* encourages us to reflect upon what is really important to us. As life gives generously to us, so we give generously back to life. We belong to what we support, and what we support nourishes us. 

Namo Amida Butsu

DID YOU KNOW?

by Eiko Masuyama

"Intimate Ties with U.S. Buddhists"

by Seishin Yamashita

WHEEL OF DHARMA June, 1980

In postwar Japan, young people, in general, manifested little interest in religion and in moral values. There were no organizations similar to the YBA in the U.S. There were no regular religious services, weekly, or otherwise.

General speaking, people did not go to the temple except for memorial services, and only occasionally for funerals because funerals were usually held at the home of the deceased. In Japan, religion was considered something personal and profound, often sought in solitude. It was not a social activity. For these reasons, "going to the temple on Sundays" was not a customary practice at all, especially in the cities. For Americans, who were accustomed to going to church on Sunday, there was a void. There was no organized activity to meet their religious needs. This was the situation which existed despite the seemingly fertile postwar conditions in a defeated, civilized nation, where a spiritual and moral uplift would seem vital. Such was the setting for the establishment of the International Buddhist Association [IBA].

In 1949, after the inaugural services were held and services on the weekends firmly organized similar to YBA services in the United States, a full slate of officers were installed in a special candlelight ceremony. The president, Toru Kakimoto and his cabinet members, took office on December 20, 1949: vice-president Kiyoshi Yamashita [became Numata Center minister], recording secretary Rosie Yabe, corresponding secretary Masaye Masuyama, and treasurer Joe Sasaki, committee chairmen were Rev. Yoshihiko Fujimoto (religious), James Nakagawa (social), Rev. Shuei Iwai (music), and coordinating chairman Sam Isono.

A major fund-raising event took place on March 25, 1951, at the Tsukiji Betsuin [Tokyo] when the IBA sponsored an American-style carnival-bazaar which, at that time, was a novelty to the Japanese. Approximately 2,500 people participated in purchasing clothing, chinaware, and souvenir items, and enjoying American and Japanese snacks, carnival-style games, raffle, and educational films. The affair

proved to be tremendously successful and the money raised was to serve as the principal source of funds for various activities of the IBA for years.

The former Monshu Kosho Ohtani in his warm support of the International Buddhist Association had expressed his fervent wish "that young Buddhists, both in Japan and abroad, would join hands in efforts to make the sacred teachings of Shinran Shonin flourish so that it could bring salvation to mankind." The IBA has further been honored by having his daughters, Miss Atsuko Ohtani and Miss

Kimiko Ohtani become members, and even hold office. Their gracious assistance helped make IBA history what it is today.

The IBA sponsored a major educational program and English classes were continued for a number of years, with varying numbers of student enrollment. The first classes were begun in September, 1950, under such teachers as Reverends Hogen Fujimoto and Tesshin Kakimoto, David and Margie Iwamoto, Masaye Masuyama, and Kiyoshi Yamashita. From January, 1951, with greatly increased interest, three levels of classes were formed with about forty students: elementary, intermediate and advanced courses. Other volunteer teachers included William Nakatani, Rosie Yabe, Sam

Isono, and Norito Nagao. During recent years, English classes have been formed on an "as needed basis".

There were many advantages in participating in the IBA for the Nisei and Japanese ministers in training. Through their attendance of devotional services and participation for further missionary activity, they had access to Shin doctrinal scholars and had been immeasurably assisted in deepening their understanding and faith in Jodo Shinshu. Among these Japanese priests were Shuei Iwai, who first served the Buddhist Federation in Hawaii for several years and then the BCA, in Seattle and in Salinas. While at Salinas, he was instrumental in the construction of the new temple. He passed away suddenly just before the completion of construction. Other ministers included Rev. Koyo Okuda, who served at the Seattle Betsuin and in Canada prior to his return to Honzan, where he now heads



Seated L-R: Kiyoshi Yamashita, Mieko Kono, ?, Lady Yoshiko Ohtani, Monshu Kosho Ohtani, ?, William Nakatani Standing: ?, David Iwamoto, ?, Margie Iwamoto, Laverne Sasaki, ?, ?, Mrs. Fujimoto, ?, ?, Norito Nagao, Masaye Masuyama, and Rev. Toru Kakimoto

This early photo of an IBA activity in the post-war period was graciously provided by William M. Nakatani. [Identifications by Masaye Masuyama Shigemura]

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(Did You Know? - continued from page 6)

the Overseas Department; Rev. Yuko Tamamitsu, who served in Hawaii prior to his return to the Jikoin Temple in Tsukiji; and Rev Yugen Kikuchi who had been assigned to temples in California [including Los Angeles] before his return to his own temple in Kumamoto.

A number of Nisei members of the IBA studied in Japan and became fully ordained. These people included the Rev. Rikishin [David] Iwamoto, Rev. Norito Nagao, Rev. Seishin [Kiyoshi] Yamashita, Mrs. Kayoko Fujimoto, and Masaye Masuyama. Other Nisei ministers who were matriculating at Tokyo University and who assisted in IBA services for a number of years in the 1950s were the following: Rev. Taitetsu Unno, Rev. LaVerne Sasaki, and Rev. Akira Hata.

It is unlikely that the interchange of religious influence will ever end. With the academic interest in the United States increasing and the foundation of living Shin practices in Japan, we will always need intimate ties and appreciation for advancement of the Nembutus in the international world of faith.

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When I went to work in Japan (on a base, an hour and a half outside Tokyo, in Saitama-ken), in the mid 1960s, with the U.S. Department of Defense, I, too, missed going to the temple on Sundays. My uncle, Hisao Masuyama, was stationed in occupied Japan, and I stayed with his family for a few days during my first visit to Japan and was taken one Sunday, via train and subway, to an IBA service. When I returned to Japan to work, relying on memory, I ventured on my own one Sunday and managed to find the Tsukiji Betsuin. It was a huge Indian style temple resembling the Taj Mahal. It was located a few of streets down from the old Kabukiza and nearby the Ginza.

Once at the temple, I had to find the service room. The building contained a basement, the main floor, and the second floor, which were all full of rooms. The service room had a small altar, a small piano or pump organ, and rows of chairs, perhaps 25 or so. I saw an old lectern used by the speakers, that had written on it by hand, *"Donated by Masaye Masuyama."* The format of the service was similar to what I knew – singing familiar gathas and listening to dharma messages in English and Japanese.

The English messages were given, alternately, by Rev. David Iwamoto and Rev. Kiyoshi Yamashita. These ministers were civilians working for the Navy and had their families with them in Yokohama or Yokosuka. Their wives were lovely and made me feel very much at home. They had been there since the 1940s and probably stayed until the 1980s.

The Japanese message was given by a visiting dignitary. Unfortunately, I had a difficult time understanding what he was saying. I probably missed some terrific messages due to my lack of language skills. I should have studied Japanese more seriously, when I went to Japanese school. For nearly two years, I was allowed to go to temple, whenever I could, and connected with home temple experience. It was like a home away from home and I was most grateful. Home and loved ones were never very far away via the nembutsu.

IBA, at Tsukiji Betsuin in Tokyo, continues to have services on Sundays. Rev. David Iwamoto returned to Salinas area and passed away some time ago. Rev. Yamashita returned and worked at Numata Center in Berkeley and continues to live in area.

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Thank you to Grace Maruki Wertz and Rosie Maruki Kakuuchi for photos and books with identifications donated to Nishi archives. 



(Hanamatsuri - continued from page 4)

the pouring of sweet tea on the statue represents the gentle rain that fell in Lumbini Garden and bathed the baby Buddha. May we all realize the meaning of his appearance in this world, so that we may humbly accept and understand his teaching as a way of our lives. Let us all gather to celebrate the birth of Sakyamuni Buddha, who guided by Wisdom vitalized by Compassion continue to aspire to develop the person, both ourselves and others, that we may all fulfill the ultimate meaning of life.

This celebration of the Buddha's birth will bring together a diverse group of Buddhists from many rich traditions who share in the single purpose of celebrating the birth of Siddhartha Gautama who became enlightened as Sakyamuni Buddha.

The Hanamatsuri Service, sponsored by the Los Angeles Buddhist Temples Federation, will be also held on the same day at 1:00 pm at the Higashi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. 

(Rev. Nakata - continued from page 3)

isters have discussed on a number of occasions, "How we can revert back to Jodo Shinshu traditions here at the Nishi Betsuin?". Our first experiment in "bringing back tradition" was Rimban's Accession Service. When Rimban Abiko's retirement was announced, we started to discuss how Rimban Abiko and Rev. Briones's Accession Service could be presented and made memorable for everyone. We selected the traditional Hongwanji style service as the format of the Accession Service along with the traditional gagaku music in the background.

Last January, the *Ho-on Ko* service took place with two guest speakers, Rev. Kusunoki and Rev. Fujikawa. During the service, that the "Betsuin Trio Amigos" (Rimban Briones, Rev. Takata and me) were wearing the dress ceremonial robes. They are known as *hichi-jo kesa* (robe). *Ho-on Ko* is the most important service in the Jodo Shinshu tradition. As such, we wore the *hichi-jo kesa* in respect and honor of this auspicious occasion.

On June 5, 2014, our mother temple Nishi Hongwanji temple's resident minister, **Monshu Koshin Ohtani** will be

retiring from his Monshu (Hongwanji resident minister) position and his son **Shin-Mon Kojun Ohtani** will succeed to the Monshu position. When Monshu Koshin Ohtani announced the date of his retirement last year, Bishop Giko Sonoki (who visited our Nishi Betsuin last November) answered an interview with Sankei Newspaper. He said "*When I think of the history of Hongwanji, I personally felt desolation and tense from the retirement announcement. Monshu Accession service (Hoto Keisho) is not like a replacement of CEO or president of a company, a successor takes over not only organization, but also teachings, and Nembutsu.*"

As I explained in the previous issue of the Jiho, "Betsuin" means a temple which is under the direct control of Monshu, therefore "Rimban" means "Monshu Deputy". To maintain our temple with a Betsuin quality, sure we should keep the tradition alive and we ask each of your help and support to this important matter. 

Gassho

NISHI CENTER CELEBRATES A MILESTONE: 30 YEARS AND COUNTING

by Elaine Fukumoto

December 2013 marked the 30th year of the opening of the Nishi Hongwanji Child Development Center, nicknamed "Nishi Center."

"Nishi Center" was established more than 30 years ago thanks to the late former Rimban Shoki Mohri, the late Rev. Russell Hamada, Mr. Tetsujiro Nakamura, the late Kaoru Inouye, Mrs. Sami Kushida....and many others... The board of directors who have volunteered from the beginning of the 30 years are Bessie Tanaka, June Kondo, and Bruce Shinohara.

To celebrate this milestone, an anniversary-reunion was held in the Nishi Hongwanji kaikan. There were well over 300 guests, including alumni, their parents, and former staff who had been a part of the Nishi Center family during the span of the 30 years.

Lunch was catered by Feast From the East, a beautiful cake was donated by Akira Hirose of Maison Akira, and the group photo was taken by Alan Miyatake of Toyo Miyatake Studios.

The former students were able to reacquaint themselves with former classmates and teachers from their preschool

years. There was evidence of friendships that developed while at Nishi Center and have continued on through many years.

Reunion attendees were able to tour the school facilities, which were, in some ways, the same as 30 years ago and also new in other ways, including the expanded play area. There were opportunities for everyone to design a commemorative ceramic tile that will be kiln-fired and installed onto a wall in the school's play area.

Nishi Center is a state-licensed and accredited day care facility that operates under the umbrella of the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. The school had its humble beginning in December of 1983 with six preschool students and two teachers. Over time, a well-rounded, comprehensive curriculum was developed to provide a preschool education that prepares children academically and emotionally for entry into the elementary school system. Over the three decades, Nishi Center has provided a solid foundation for hundreds of young children. 

(see photo on page 10)

BETSUIN ACTIVITIES PHOTOS



HO-ONKO SERVICE MINISTERS

L-R front: Rev. Orai Fujikawa, Rimban Briones, Rev. Katsuya Kusunoki. Back: Rev. Seikan Fukuma, Rev Nakata, Rev. Takata, Rev. Harold Oda, & Rev. George Matsubayashi.



BETSUIN MINISTERS HO-ONKO SERVICE

L-R: Rev Nakata, Rimban Briones, & Rev. Takata



Former Betsuin minister, Rev. Kojo Kakihara and his family. Sensei served as the guest speaker at the BWA Kisaragi-ki service.



Installed temple and affiliated organization leaders.



New Temple Members

L-R: Christina & William Safranek, Rimban Briones, and the Yumori Family.



Masue Tanaka was recognized by the BWA for her 99th birthday - "Haku ju"



During the Hoon-ko Seminar, with the assistance of Rev. Takata, Rev Kusunoki explains the significance of the "hichijo kesa" worn by a minister during special services.

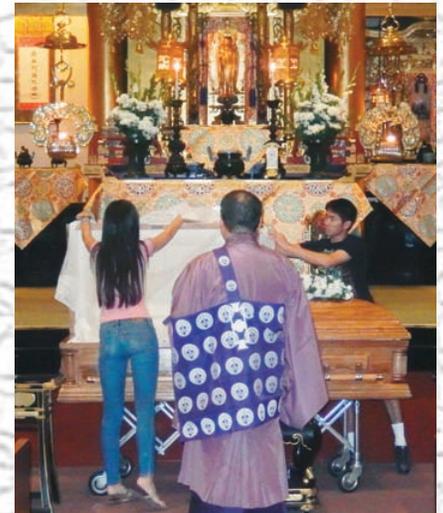


Participants in the 43rd Annual Kohaku Utagassen

BETSUIN ACTIVITIES PHOTOS II



*More than 300 were in attendance at Nishi Center's 30th Anniversary-Reunion.
Photo courtesy of Toyo Miyatake Studios*



Rev. Kaz oversees the Jr YBA members as they set up for a mock funeral during their seminar.



Boy Scout Venture Crew from the Sacramento Betsuin



Special service candles that emit unusually large flames.

GUESS WHO?



Michelle, Rev. Nakata's younger daughter

**INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM
AND JODO SHINSHU**

1st & 3rd Mondays 6:30-7:30 pm Study Class
ANNON CAFE 7:30-8:30
Q&A/Fellowship
LED BY: Rev. Koho Takata

**BEGINNING BUDDHISM
STUDY CLASS**

1st & 3rd THURSDAYS from 6:00 PM
3rd TUESDAYS from 7:00 PM
for age 30s/40s
LED BY: Rev. William Briones

HATSUMAIRI

INFANT PRESENTATION

Hatsumairi is translated as the “First Visitation” and is often referred to as the *Infant Presentation Service*. During this ceremony, parents bring their child before the Amida Buddha and the *sangha* to pledge a commitment to raising the child with the *nembutsu*. The *sangha* community’s presence is to witness the ceremony and to support the parents’ endeavor.



The LA *Betsuin* will conduct its annual *Hatsumairi Service* on **Sunday, May 18th** in conjunction with the *Gotan-ye Service* which is the observance of the birth of the *Jodo Shinshu* founder, Shinran Shonin.

The ministers and the *dharma* school teachers will be conducting the *Hatsumairi Service* for any infant up to one (1) year of age. Participating families will receive certificates including the infants’ footprints and and photographs. To those who are interested in participating in the *Hatsumairi*, please submit the registration form below by May 4th, 2014.

See REGISTRATION FORM below

**HATSUMAIRI
REGISTRATION FORM**

NAME OF CHILD: _____

BOY ___ GIRL ___ BIRTHDATE: _____

NAME IN KANJI	
------------------	--

PARENTS’ NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____

TEL: _____

ADDRESS: _____

ZIP: _____

PLEASE SUBMIT THIS FORM TO THE BETSUIN OFFICE BY:
MAY 4, 2014

IN MEMORIAM

The *Nishi Betsuin* extends its deepest condolences to the families of the following members who have recently passed away. May the family members find solace and comfort in the *Nembutsu*.

--*Namo Amida Butsu*

December, 2013

- 1 Tatsuo Toyota
- 1 Dawn Sugiyama-Sanchez
- 2 Roy Itsuki Yoshimura
- 5 Alice Ideishi-Greenburg
- 6 Masaye Mary Miyamoto
- 9 Bradley Shigeo Hayata
- 19 Isamu Yoshimi
- 20 Rose Yoshiko Watamura
- 22 Takuji Don Yano
- 22 Sadao Furutani
- 30 Kiyoharu Keitch Kurokawa
- 30 Katsumi Richard Takai

January, 2014

- 5 Harriette Haruko Kiyabu
- 12 Alyce Kasue Takemoto
- 12 Mitsue Yamachika
- 22 Chiyoko Okawauchi
- 23 Saburo Hasegawa



SPRING OHIGAN SEMINAR

SHARING OUR LIFE
STORIES AS BUDDHISTS

Saturday, March 15, 2014 9:00 am- 4:00 pm

GUEST SPEAKERS:

JPN/ENG	JPN/ENG
Rev. Nobuo Miyaji	Rev. Shousei Hanayama
<i>Gardena Buddhist Church</i>	<i>Watsonville Buddhist Temple</i>

Registration Fee: \$15 Includes Obento Lunch
To reserve a seat and to order a bento lunch, please send in your name & check payable to:

LA Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

Mail to: LA Betsuin Higan Seminar 815 E. 1st St. Los Angeles, CA 90012

Deadline **March 9th**

This seminar has been made possible by the
LA Betsuin Buddhist Education Committee

TUNE IN TO

KTYM AM 1460

Sunday 12:50 PM Dharma Message

Betsuin Jiho

Editor-in-Chief: Rimban William Briones

English Editor: Elaine Fukumoto

Photos: Koichi Sayano and Glen Tao

THE INSTITUTE OF BUDDHIST STUDIES & BCA CENTER FOR BUDDHIST EDUCATION PRESENT



PACIFIC SEMINAR - 21ST CENTURY - SPRING SESSION



“The Benefits of a Life of Shinjin”

Guest Speaker:

Prof. Nobuhiro Fukagawa

Department of Shin Buddhist Studies, Faculty of Letters -
Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan
Resident Minister, Sainen-ji Temple, Yamaguchi Prefecture

Saturday, March 22, 2014

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Doors open: 8:30 am

Gardena Buddhist Church

1517 W. 166th Street, Gardena, CA 90247

Ph: (310) 327-9400



Keynote Presentation by Prof. Fukagawa - Japanese -

English translation by Rev. Mutsumi Wondra

Afternoon Sessions:

Lecture by Dr. Fukagawa Moderated by Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara - Japanese -

Lecture by Rev. David Matsumoto Moderated by Rev. Marvin Harada - English -

Dialogue with Dr. Fukagawa - Japanese/English -

Registration: \$30 (Includes lunch) Deadline: March 8, 2014

Southern District Temple members: Please register through your temple.

Please make checks payable to “SD BEC” Memo: “Spring Pacific Seminar 2014”

Mailing address: Los Angeles Betsuin, 815 East First St., LA CA 90012 Attn: Spring Pacific Seminar

Contact: Rimban William Briones Email: malik615@msn.com Ph: (213) 680-9130

Visit: www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org Click on CBE

Email: cbe@bcahq.org Ph: 510.809.1460

Hosted by the BCA Southern District Ministers Association & Buddhist Education Committee

NOTE: Spring Pacific Seminar

The seminar title "The benefits of a Life of Shinjin" is intended to be a general reference to the "ten kinds of benefit realized in the present life (by the person of shinjin)" (現生十種の益), the primary one being the "entry into the ranks of the truly settled joy are quite different from the notion of seeking to obtain "worldly benefits" (現世利益). Prof. Fukagawa's talks will discuss the meaning and significance of the first two ideas, while contrasting them with the third.

MARCH 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Bon Odori Exercise 8:30 am Regular Service 10:00 am	3 Study Class Rev Takata 6:30-7:30 pm Annon Cafe 7:30-8:30 pm	4	5	6 Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class 6:00 pm	7	8 Surf and Turf Dinner
9 Regular Service 10:00 am	10	11 Bon Odori Exercise 6:30 pm	12	13 Board Meeting 7:30 pm	14	15 Ohigan Seminar 9am-4pm Speakers: Rev. Shousei Hanayama Rev. Nobuo Miyaji
16 Bon Odori Exercise 8:30 am Ohigan Service 10:00 am Speakers: Rev. Nobuo Miyaji Rev. Shousei Hanayama	17 Study Class Rev Takata 6:30-7:30 pm Annon Cafe 7:30-8:30 pm	18 Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class for 30s & 40s 7:00 pm	19	20 Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class 6:00 pm	21	22 Spring Pacific Seminar @ Gardena Buddhist Temple
Regular Service 10:00 am 23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 BEC Breakfast 9:00 am Scroll re-installation Special Service @ 10:00 am Fundraiser Kick-Off	31	Bon Odori Exercise 6:30 pm				

APRIL 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
				Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class 6:00 pm		
Bon Odori Exercise 8:30 am 6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Hanamatsuri Service 10:00 am Butsuren Hanamatsuri Service @ Higashi 1:00 am	Study Class Rev Takata 6:30-7:30 pm Annon Cafe 7:30-8:30 pm	Bon Odori Exercise 6:30 pm		Board Meeting 7:30 pm		
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Boy Scout Pancake Breakfast Regular Service 10:00 am			Go-Meinichi-ko 1:30 pm	Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class 6:00 pm		
Bon Odori Exercise 8:30 am 20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Regular Service 10:00 am	Study Class Rev Takata 6:30-7:30 pm Annon Cafe 7:30-8:30 pm	Bon Odori Exercise 6:30 pm Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class for 30s & 40s 7:00 pm				
27	28	29	30			
Regular Service 10:00 am						