

LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

jihō

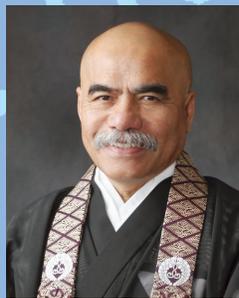
WWW

No. 468

September-October 2021

RIMBAN'S MESSAGE

THOUGHTS ON ESHINNI AND SHINRAN'S RELATIONSHIP



Rimban William
Briones

"Although I never told your father about the dream in which I saw him as an incarnation of Kannon Bosatsu, since that time I never regarded him as just an ordinary man and continued to serve him. I hope that you too will fully appreciate what I am saying."

As you may already know, my wife **Nobuko Miyoshi** is a minister at West Covina Buddhist Temple. If someone told me 27 years ago, when I began my studies at IBS, that I would someday be married to a Buddhist priest, I would have told them they were nuts! But here we are, having met over 25 years ago, sharing our life as Jodo Shinshu ministers.

As you can imagine, most of our time is taken up with temple work and activities. Even when we are at home, conversations are centered around work and the teachings. There is no doubt in my mind that Nobuko has been instrumental in my development and my understanding of Jodo Shinshu and she continues to influence me to reflect on the old adage, *"practice what I preach."*

So, I find myself trying to imagine what the dynamics were between Shinran Shonin and his wife, Eshinni, as they shared their life of Nembutsu but also living everyday in the mundane. It must be for certain that together they manifested the true intent of Nembutsu for the ordinary person.

In the month of October, Jodo Shinshu temples throughout BCA will be paying tribute to Eshinni. As we commemorate the life of Eshinni it gives us an opportunity to realize that despite

Eshinni's human frailties and suffering many hardships, she was able to live a life of gratitude and great joy, embraced by Amida Buddha's compassion.

Until early in the 20th century, very little was known about the life of Shinran Shonin and even less about his family. But in 1921, ten letters, written by Eshinni to their youngest daughter **Kakushinni**, were found. These letters had been tucked away in the archives of Nishi Hongwanji in Kyoto and forgotten for centuries. These letters attest to, not only of Shinran's profound devotion to the Buddha-Dharma, but also shed light on Eshinni, also as a devoted follower of the Nembutsu.

Eshinni lead a very turbulent life. She was born in Echigo and married to Shinran, who was exiled to that part of the country. Together they lived in Kanto for 20 years and then Kyoto for another 20 years. Later in life she returned by herself to her native Echigo, leaving behind her husband in Kyoto and, for more than 10 years, she took care of her property that she had inherited, in addition to taking care of her grandchildren.

The opening reading comes from Eshinni's third letter, a letter written to Kakushinni, revealing a dream that she had about Shinran.

Eshinni's dream takes place at a dedication ceremony for a recently completed temple. She sees huge images of the Buddha. One of the images is emanating bright lights and she is unable to see the face. The other image is clearly the face of Buddha. When she asks what is the name of this Buddha, there is a reply, *"The one with the light is Honen Shonin, he is none other than Seishi Bosatsu and the other is Kannon Bosatsu, he is none other than*

(continued on page 9)

Los Angeles
Homba Hongwanji
Buddhist Temple
815 East First Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

TEL: 213.680.9130
FAX: 213.680.2210

WEB: nishihongwanji-la.org

EMAIL: info@nishihongwanji-la.org

BE DILIGENT IN YOUR PRACTICE

by Rev. Hibiki Murakami



Rev. Hibiki
Murakami

A journey of a thousand miles beings with a single step

When I was seven or eight years old, I remembered this a poster pinned on an elementary school restroom wall with the proverb, “*senri-nomichimo ippoka-ra*” with a picture of a boy is stepping on the beginning of a long path running over the mountains. This poster made a great impression on me for which I am very

thankful. This is probably the first proverb that I remembered. I am recalling this proverb after decades as I work on my “cutie” MINI Cooper.

I purchased this 2009 MINI last fall for my new hobby — working on cars. I drive it to figure out what’s wrong with it. It now has 140,000 miles on it. I drive it ... then fix it...drive it some more and fix it... and repeat. My childhood dream of becoming a mechanic has come true. It is, however, not as easy as that young boy had dreamed it would be.

This fact opened my eyes once starting to work on a project for each. For almost a year, I’ve worked on a lot of different projects on this MINI. As a beginner mechanic, determined to conquer this German complex engineering of this small car, I cried alot. Yet, I was sure that I could handle these difficulties and learn something new from them. I continued to work patiently. Fortunately, I haven’t had any critical failures with the repairs I’ve made so far and my MINI can still be driven today.

Recently, I came upon another problem. I had to replace a stretched timing chain with a new one. The timing chain’s role is transmitting the drive power from a crank powered by some pistons in the chambers (cylinders) to the valves lifting and closing to control airflow into the chambers in order to have the sequential explosions. Even though I am an amateur mechanic, I’ve been dealing with my MINI for almost a year. Under the hood, I now know that what each components’ roles are and how they’re mounted or installed to the body. From all these experiences I have had many happy and frustrating moments. Though I may not always do everything perfectly, it is enjoyable dealing with a project car.

While working on my MINI, I became curious as to how many bolts I touched. I’m guessing, I’ve loosened about 75 bolts and fasten them again in the same places with appropriated torque. Considering all of the work I’ve done so far, I’ve probably touched approximately 100 parts of

the car. I have this sense of pride when I think about what I have done because each component is essential so that my MINI can drive safely.

Working on a car requires the mechanic to have some engineering knowledge but it also requires sufficient skills to manage the work. Sometimes I need to lift my MINI (which is a small vehicle but weighs more than 2200 pounds) with a car jack and stands. If I don’t do this correctly, I could break something which would be a great loss of time and money. I am well aware of these risks but I still hang on to this hobby because I love cars and it was my dream.

This brings me back to the proverb, “*A journey of a thousand miles beings with a single step.*” I’ve learned how important it is to take careful steps, not only for restoring an old car, but also in my life. The outcome of my work on my MINI is evident. Sitting behind the wheel, if I sense something not right on how it’s running, turning, or stopping, what I did with the car must have not been correct. Even one loose bolt among the 75 pieces may trigger a problem. A seemingly insignificant error can cause a serious problem. This logic parallels the Buddhist teachings.

Suttanipada, which is one of the oldest Buddhist texts of the three Pure Land Sutras, tells of Shakyamuni Buddha in the sangha. In *Suttanipada*, he frequently encourages his disciples to practice diligently to obtain liberation. He recommends to be diligent in practice. It could be rephrased as be mindful of your practice. This teaching is a hidden message of Shakyamuni’s last teaching, “*make yourself a light, make your light the Dharma,*” too.

In conclusion, I’d like to share a remark that was spoken and written in the front page of my English copy of *Pure Land Sutra* by Rev. Dr. Zuio Hisao Inagaki. He was a great scholar and translator, introducing Shin Buddhism to the western world. Sadly, he passed this past Spring. A couple of years ago, my friends and I attended his private study session. He exclaimed, “*You, young students, need ‘Samadhi’.*” The meaning is fixity (self-discipline), meditating on the object.

We all have to multi-task in our daily lives. To maintain your quality of life—be mindful. How to accomplish this is to take careful step-by-step movements forward.



BETSUIN BOARD PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Pam Tabata

Greetings,

I played basketball, as a Wan-jette, for 10 years. I made a lot of friends. Some are lifelong. It was a part of my life lessons that I learned to work as a team member and it takes the whole and not just a part.

When I was in high school, Mas Hori was our coach. He taught me a lot about myself. There was something

that he said that has stuck with me: *"The win belongs to the players, the loss belongs to the coach."* This statement has always made me think about decisions that I make, as a leader. For me, it's very easy to accept responsibility for a failure or a decision that goes wrong. It's even easier to proclaim that a positive outcome is due to the players/workers because, without everyone's hard worker, it's all a total failure. It's making that decision, however, that sets me in turmoil because I can't foresee the future. So, I write this as we complete our *"abnormal Obon"* and I cannot thank everyone for their work in making it successful. The BWA had the initiative to decide to have an online auction. They were able to gather many different items and bring in over \$20,000 to start our Obon fundraising. Then, there are the many that worked to put together the many facets of the *Drive-Thru* to make it such a success. The event concluded with the raffle after the Obon Service. So, I am always thanking everyone for all your support, whether it be monetary, physical or both. I accept the responsibility of the losses but applaud the successes to all of you.

...and thank you, Mas.

In gassho

2021 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Valid from January 1 through December 31, 2021

\$250 FOR EACH ADULT FAMILY MEMBER

CHECKS ARE PAYABLE TO:
L.A. HONPA HONGWANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Payments may be made in full or by installments
throughout the year of 2021

WELCOME BACK TO THE TEMPLE FALL OHIGAN SERVICE AND SEMINAR

Our last in-person service before we closed our temple doors was almost 19 months ago, March 8, 2020 to be exact. That following Sunday we canceled our Spring Ohigan Service and Seminar due to the precautionary measures taken to curb the spread of the COVID-19. Little did we know how long this pandemic would be with us. Since then, our temple has adjusted and adapted to new ways to bring you the dharma. Unfortunately, after 19 months are still plagued with COVID-19 and its new variants.

However, with the success of COVID-19 vaccines and its ability to protect against the new variants, along with the Los Angeles Health Department and the regulations, our COVID-19 Advisory Committee has given the green light to begin in-person services. However, we will ask for **proof of vaccination** (your vaccination card or copy or digital proof of vaccination) and face masks are required indoors. We will continue to provide services virtually for those who might still feel uncomfortable meeting in person.

Our first Sunday in-person and virtual service will be our **Annual Fall Ohigan Service** on September 19 at 10:00 AM. Our guest speaker "in person" will be **Rev. Yuki Sugahara** of Oregon Buddhist Temple. Sugahara Sensei, will also be our lecturer both in English and Japanese on Saturday, September 18 for our **Fall Ohigan Seminar**. (Japanese portion begins at 9:00 AM and English starts at 12:00 PM. Registration for either in-person or virtual is \$10.

For those of you who would like to attend the Ohigan Service and/or Ohigan Seminar virtually (via Zoom), please email Rev. Briones at malik615@msn.com or call the office and leave your email address.

Please join us in the kaikan for light refreshments and entertainment after the service. This is a wonderful opportunity to see your temple friends that you haven't seen for a while albeit via a computer screen.

Please remember proof of vaccination is required and masks are still required indoors if you attend in-person.



NISHI ABA “SPRING THING”



“Spring Thing” ABA Attendees along with Rimban Briones

Aloha! Nishi ABA celebrated their "Spring Thing" with a Hawaiian theme on Saturday June 5th. Members and friends gathered at the Nishi kaikan for their first in person event of the year, adhering to Covid safety protocol.

This event was chaired by Karen Escano and Cindy Nakamura. The festivities began following a delicious lunch provided by "Aloha Cafe". Games, line dancing (taught by Barbara Okita) and a dance circle of *Tanko Bushi* to the tune of Justin Timberlake's "Can't Stop the Feeling" was led by Lonny Quon. Music entertainment was provided by the talented **ABA Sonics**. Vocalists Denise Nakamura (ABA President), Eric Quon, Lonny Quon and Kenji Hatakeyama, drummer, Roy Yamatoku, wind instrumentalist, Yoshi Ono and lead guitar player, Thomas Mochizuki played and sang a medley of popular songs.



Karen Escano (left) and Cindy Nakamura organized the Spring Thing

The rhythm and the tempo of the music captivated the audience. Every-one's smiles and laughter filled the room with jubilation. The ambiance was absorbed with feelings of gratitude and friendship. This was a successful and memorable first in-person gathering!

ABA is looking forward to supporting the temple and it's members and strengthening our temple's purpose and preservation. New members are always welcomed.

Save the Date!

It's FINALLY time...

Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple
presents

*You Make Me Feel
Like Dancin'*
Benefit Dance

With music performed by



Saturday, October 9, 2021
Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple "Kaikan"
815 East 1st Street, Los Angeles

DID YOU KNOW?

by Eiko Masuyama



Eiko Masuyama

Addition to July-August 2021 JIHO article:

The photo on the first page, taken by Toyo Miyatake Studios, was of the "1957 Sunday School Teachers." Omitted from the caption was **Reverend Masami Nakagaki** of Osaka, Japan. He is remembered as an enthusiastic leader full of energy and many ideas.

He arrived in the United States in January of 1954, and was assigned to the Los Angeles Betsuin in February of 1954. He took a leave of absence to attend the University of Michigan in 1957. He married local girl, Sachiko Gotanda of Los Angeles in 1958. They had two children, son, Masayuki, and daughter, Maya. He was assigned as Pasadena Buddhist Church's first minister in September of 1958. Rev. Nakagaki returned to the Los Angeles Betsuin in September, 1961, and became Associate Rimban in March of 1962. He resigned and returned to Osaka in August of 1966. He passed away in May of 2020.



Rev. Masami Nakagaki

* * * * *

SANGHA

Published Monthly by the Los Angeles Young Buddhist Association, December 8, 1946, p. 4

"New Chairs for Church"

Blueprints have been completed for the installation of 413 new American plywood theater chairs for the worship hall (*hondo*) in approximately 2.5 months. They will replace the chairs which were borrowed from the Senshin Buddhist Church recently and set up for temporary use. Regular church benches (wooden pews) which were used before evacuation were sold in order to make room for storing evacuees' property.

Because it is felt that the YBA members will be frequent users of the new chairs, a \$7.50 per chair donation is being asked and it will be accepted from anyone wishing to do so. For each \$7.50 donation, tags will be placed on (back of) chairs indicating the name of the contributor.

* * * * *

Where have all the benches gone? Now we know, they were sold in 1943, each and every one!

Actually, not all were sold. The ones in the balcony seemed to have been left there and used by the temple, who left the location in 1969. For fifteen years or so, the abandoned location was empty and neglected. The benches remained, some taken, some used as "beds" for transients... until the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) leased and renovated and retrofitted the building, calling it their Historic Building. They still have two-three of the original benches, one of which is sitting in the corner office, the northwest corner of East First Street and Central Avenue ... old and worn, faded with the bottom legs shaved at a slight angle, reflecting the slanting floor of the *hondo*. There is a *manji* (Sanskrit meaning auspicious, but made infamous as a swastika) carved on the ends. The building is now subleased to the **Go For Broke Education Foundation**. The floor of the *hondo* was leveled and raised and remodeled. The original basement is still used by JANM.

On May 15, Rimban Briones received an email from **Anthony Thompson**, who wished to return one of the benches he had acquired from the abandoned building (balcony) in 1981. Mr. Thompson was a neighbor of the late Mr. and Mrs. Richard/Fujiko Izumi, who were temple members and familiar with the benches from the pre-war days. Rimban accepted, and the bench was delivered by Mr. Thompson. This bench was shorter in length, its base was



Bench with "manji" carving from former Nishi Hongwanji on Central Ave.



Anthony Thompson (right) returns bench to Nishi Hongwanji, having acquired it from the old, abandoned temple 30 years ago. Rimban Briones accepted the delivery of the bench.

[Bench photos courtesy of Bruce Hatakeyama]

(continued on page 9)

OBON DRIVE-THRU FUND RAISER



Symbolizing Obon — Chochin for those who have passed



Check In Booth: (l-r) Ken Kawasaki, Marley Uye-mura, & Christine Furusawa (Obon Chair)



(l-r) Jean Kawakami and Karen Okumoto



(l-r) Glen Tao, Judy Izumo, & Jill Terry



Dharma School Parents and containers of kalua pork (l-r) Stacy Nakano Ross, Terrie Itomura, & Kenny Itomura



Eiko Masuyama checks names of deceased on chochin.

Photos by
Glen Tao



Contactless delivery of food.



“The Gals” (l-r) Cindy Nakamura, Karen Escano, Suzy Saita, Nancy Hayashibara, & Dianne Odagawa



“The Guys” (l-r) Grant Hayashi, Edd Hayashibara, Thomas Mochizuki, Rimban Briones, Kenji Hatakeyama, Roy Yamatoku, & Jerry Naito



“The Girls” (l-r) Tatsumi Capela, Samantha Hayashi, Casey Murase, & Shanti Takata

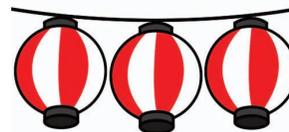


Additional photos
on next page

(Obon Drive-Thru Fund Raiser continuation)



*BWA Silent Auction Pick-Up booth
(l-r) Junie Obi, Judy Ida, Judy Izumo, Suzette Kawaguchi, & Sherry Watanabe.*



*Final Booth—offering raffle tickets, expressions of appreciation, and a bidding “farewell.”
(l-r) Linda Inagaki, Eiko Masuyama, & Rev. Hibiki Murakami*

BETSUIN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 05 Regular Service 10:00 am
- 06 Labor Day (Betsuin Closed)
- 12 Regular Service 10:00 am
Dharma School Registration
Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm
- 18 Fall Ohigan Seminar 9:00 am (Jpn)
& 12:00 pm (Eng)
- 19 Fall Ohigan Service 10:00 am
- 26 Regular Service 10:00 am

OCTOBER

- 03 Eshinni/Kakushinni Memorial Service 10:00 am
- 10 Regular Service 10:00 am
Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm
- 17 Regular Service 10:00 am
- 24 Regular Service 10:00 am
- 31 Regular Service 10:00 am

NOVEMBER

- 07 Regular Service 10:00 am
- 14 Regular Service 10:00 am
Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm

For information to view/participate in any of the temple services, virtually/Zoom, contact the temple office at:

213-680-9130 or
NishiDharmaCenter@gmail.com

Due to the upsurge of the COVID Delta Variant, in-person services have been suspended until further notice. Zoom services will continue. If there are questions, please call the temple.



BETSUIN'S HISTORY — 52 YEARS AGO



Los Angeles Betsuin Board of Directors 1969

[Note: Some individuals could not be identified and, therefore, skipped.] Bottom/left: Masashi Kawaguchi, Masaharu Yamano, Noboru Ishitani, James Watamura, Dr. Ryo Munekata, Tetsujiro Nakamura, Eijiu Sasajima, Rev. Ryuei Masuoka, Masami Sasaki, Kyuji Hozaki, Keiichiro Sayano, Yutaka Kaku, Yoshi Inadomi, Fred Yoshimura Row 2: Dr. Masatoshi "Duke" Itatani, Kaoru Inouye, Frank Tanaka, Sadao Sadamoto, (X), (X), Miyako Masuda, Tadao Yoshimura, Rev. Sensho Hida, Masao Nii, (X), (X), (X), (X), Dr. George Yamaguchi Row 3: (X), (X), (X), (X), (X), (X), (X), Tsune Tokunaga, Michie Nakamura, Tane Tamari, Fujiko Yamaguchi, Miyo Sayano, Masaye Miyamoto, Lily Nakamura Row 4: Tsutomu Maehara, George Waki, Kay Hara, (X), (X), (X), (X), Kazuo Yamamoto, (X), (X), (X), Reiko Kondo, Bessie Tanaka, Yoshio Otani, Mits Sakaniwa Row 5: Ed Yoshimoto, Yoshio Shibata, Shig Sugimoto, Kazuo Shimizu, Howard Takata, Mas Okino, James Kato, Isao Hatakeyama, Yasuo Ohata.

VEHICLE DONATION



Donate any vehicle

Funds received will go to the Betsuin general fund and donors can get full amount credit towards income tax.

Contact the Betsuin office: 213-680-9130

amazonsmile

You shop. Amazon gives.

You can shop and donate all at the same time

smile.amazon.com

**Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji
Buddhist Temple**

(KNOW? continued from page 5)

level, and was probably located flush with a wall, with a *manji* carved on one end only. The bench was in very good condition... well taken care of... and is placed in the hallway near the Wisteria Chapel.

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*

May 2021

16	Kiyoshi Nishimura	3	Viola Sadako Nakagawa
19	Keisuke Nagai	9	Tamiko Goto
19	Diane Kikuyo Wright	16	Mitsuye Misawa
23	Sumie Haraguchi	30	Sayuri Oba
24	David Masaru Nishimura		
26	Jessie Akiko Shimasaki		

June 2021

1	Paul Tatsushi Nakamura	12	Kazuo Furutani
3	Hisako Mori	13	Allan Hideki Tokunaga
		13	Keiko Nakamura

July 2021

2	Katie Tomatani
2	Matsuo Shimomaye
7	Kathleen Chiyeko Kow
12	Kazuo Furutani
13	Allan Hideki Tokunaga
13	Keiko Nakamura

HONGWANJI

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FYI

In 1984, through the cooperative efforts and support of the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, the Jodo Shinshu members in Mexico began their efforts toward establishing a Hongwanji organization within their area. In 1993, the Mexican government recognized the organization and in the following year, Hongwanji recognized Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Mision de Mexico as an affiliated regional district.

Betsuin Jiho

Editor-in-Chief: Rimban William Briones

English Editor: Elaine Fukumoto

Japanese Editor: Rev. Hibiki Murakami

Photos: Glen Tao

(Rimban - continued from page 1)

Shinran"

She awakens from her dream and she vows not to tell anyone of the dream fearing no one would believe her. She does, however, tell Shinran about seeing Honen Shonin in her dream. Shinran acknowledges the significance of the dream, but she never tells Shinran that she saw him as an incarnation of Kannon Bosatsu.

Because of this dream, Eshinni regarded Shinran as an incarnation of a Bodhisattva of Compassion and assured Kakushinni of his exemplary religious life.

For Shinran, dreams and visions also played a significant role in his religious development. In one such dream, while Shinran was staying at Rokkakudo in Kyoto, he dreamt that Kannon Bosatsu appeared to him and told him that because he was driven by sexual desire, that he would indeed be with a woman. Kannon Bosatsu said that he would transform himself into the woman that Shinran would embrace. This woman would adore him through out his life and at death lead him to the Pure Land.

It was this dream that ultimately drove him to abandon the monastic life at Mt. Hiei, convert to Honen's teachings and eventually marry Eshinni and have a family.

Little is written about the relationship, the interaction between Shinran and Eshinni. But one can only imagine the devotion and dedication they had for one another, since they both considered that their mate was the incarnation of a Bodhisattva. Together, they help propagate the Nembutsu teachings, through drought, famine, disease ... no doubt an inspiration to each other.

Truly, they were a unique couple, united in a deep and enduring faith. Together and apart they lived a life of deep gratitude manifesting the ideal of Nembutsu practitioner.

As I reflect on Shinran and Eshinni's life and their deep commitment to the Nembutsu, I can only dream, that someday I too will awaken to the same great joy and gratitude that Shinran and Eshinni shared.

Please join us in-person or virtually for the BWA sponsored **Eshinni and Kakushinni's Memorial Service on October 3 at 10:00 AM**. Rev. Nobuko Miyoshi of West Covina Buddhist Temple will be the guest speaker in both English and Japanese. Proof of vaccination is required and face masks are required inside the temple. For those who would like to join us virtually, please contact the office or email me at malik615@msn.com to request the Zoom link.

Namo Amida Butsu