

LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

jihō

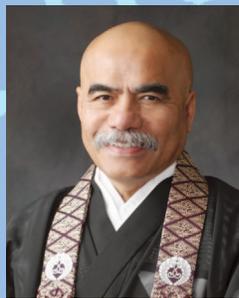
WWW

No. 473

July - August 2022

RIMBAN'S MESSAGE

THOUGHTS ON OBON



**Rimban William
Briones**

"I, Shinran, have never even once uttered the Nembutsu for the sake of my father and mother. The reason is that all beings have been fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, in the timeless process of birth and death. When I attain Buddhahood in the next birth, each and

everyone will be saved."

—Tannisho: Chapter 5

The season of Obon is upon us once again and once again COVID-19 restrictions have prevented us from gathering for our customary Obon of carnival games, food, bon odori, and of course a time to be with our friends and family. Many of us are disappointed that that we'll miss the festivities, especially the bon odori, but I believe it has given us an opportunity for all of us to listen and reflect upon the meaning of Obon.

Obon is a time to pay tribute to our loved ones who have passed away. It is a time for us to reflect upon all that continues to influence our lives and those benefits we have received from the lives of others. It is a time to express our gratitude for being given those conditions to live this life. It is an opportunity to truly reflect upon my life and it is with this understanding that we visit the graves of our loved ones and attend memorial services. So, when we visit the cemetery and conducting memorial services, it is no more than an expression of the gratitude that arises when we embrace the Truth of those causes and conditions of your life.

Yet the story of bon odori as an attempt to appease or petition the "gods" and the tale that

Obon is a time to welcome our ancestors back for a reunion with the living is continued to be perpetuated every year during the Obon season by many newspapers and even misinformed members.

The above reading I began with is from Chapter 5 of the Tannisho. Here, Shinran expressed his view towards filial piety towards his parents, in other words ancestral worship. Prior to and during Shinran's time it was customary to hold services, build temples and statues, chant sutras and recite the nembutsu for the sake of those who had passed on, in the hope of increasing their merits and securing for them a higher and happier state of existence. Shinran felt that these practices were superficial and unimportant. He discouraged the idea of saying nembutsu to gain merit for other beings, even for the sake of one's parents.

In Jodo Shinshu, Obon is a time to contemplate on impermanence as shown by departed ones, and it is also a time for self-reflection and a time for rejoicing in the nembutsu. And it is this overwhelming sense of joy and gratitude that is the source for dancing during Obon.

Unfortunately, like the LA Betsuin, many of our southern district temple Obons have downsized their festivals. However, most of the southern district temples are having limited bon odori for members and family only or by reservation. As of this writing, our Obon Committee has cleared it with our COVID Advisory Committee to have limited bon odori for its temple members and family on Sunday morning on July 10th, following the Sunday service. Proof of vaccination and booster is required and if you attend service, a mask is required indoors.

As we continue to be overshadowed by COVID, let's take a moment and reflect upon

(continued on page 3)

WE WILL BE BORN IN THE PURE LAND

by Rev. Hibiki Murakami



**Rev. Hibiki
Murakami**

A couple of weeks ago, I officiated a graveside funeral. The deceased did not have any children, but many relatives attended to say “goodbye” to their beloved Auntie. It was a beautiful sunny day and though the temperature grew hotter, after sutra chanting, each of the participants took their time to give eulogies, sharing their sweet memories of the

deceased. The eulogy given by a niece of the deceased resonated in my mind. In her remembrance, the niece said, “Auntie, see you again in heaven. I am looking forward to chatting with you.”

Christians believe their lives will continue in God’s heaven. Meanwhile, we, as nembutsu followers, will be born in the Pure Land. Though we hide in this world, we will become a bodhisattva in the Pure Land. This is the world revealed by the Wisdom and Compassion possessed by Amida Buddha. For those of us living where materialism plays a dominant role, I believe the presence of the place where we can meet each other gives us a sort of spiritual ease. When the niece said, “...see you again,” it was clear she was aware that her own death was inevitable as well. At the same time, however, she should be sure that another form of life awaits for them to emerge. There is nothing after death in materialism. She explained that place with a word of heaven but I see its significance is the same as the Pure Land.

The Japanese tomb sits vertical and the deceased’s ashes is enshrined under the tombstone. On the sides of the stone, normally the name of the family comes in front because the Japanese admit that grave is maintained by the household. Shin Buddhist families put a carving on the backside of their tomb quoting from the Smaller Sutra,

“Śāriputra, the people who hear of that land (the Pure Land) should aspire to be born there. Why? It is because they will be able to meet together (in the Pure Land).”

All beings are born as sages in the Pure Land who pursue completing Wisdom and Compassion. We imagine they

have a reunion to enjoy chatting with each other about their past life. They are, however, born to develop their self karma and cultivate other’s karma.

Here, I think there are two enjoyments to be in the Pure Land. One is meeting again beloved ones. The other is to pursue the same direction together. The latter is harder than just meeting because, in this life, each person has to proceed with his own life, individually, under each condition. In the Pure Land, conditions do not matter anymore. The sages unite toward the same object in harmony.

There are people who are saved by knowing a supreme world where each life vividly shines after death. Otherwise, if we only know this world is the only place, it remains only sadness for those who say goodbye and those who are said by goodbye. Luckily, for us, Amida Buddha made the Pure Land in order to embrace all life. Once beings are born in that land, they become one with Nirvana. Its quality of life is totally different from the life we’re experiencing. That’s another form of life. Though, they greet us from that land announcing their presence with the nembutsu for keeping in touch and for hoping to complete perfect Wisdom and Compassion together.



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**Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji
Buddhist Temple**

BETSUIN BOARD PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Pam Tabata

As we begin summer, I hope everyone continues to be well and safe. With summer comes Obon season. At the temple, we have made small steps towards going back to what we know as normal. I foresee, however, that normal will be different in the future. I believe that one of the ideas is that it's the one time we gather to see one another annually. Our loved ones that passed before us gave us

this opportunity. You may be tired of hearing me say this, but it's a feeling I really believe is true.

We are told that our loved ones pass away and go to the Pureland only to immediately return. In my head, they return to our hearts and minds. As we pass on the legacy that they gave to us, they continue to live in our children and everyone we meet. Meaning some part of them is in us and as we share those thoughts and ideas, our loved ones continue on. I am comforted in that thought and so that is why I believe this, right or wrong.

I hope this is our last Obon drive thru — as I have been saying for a couple of years. It has served us well and I am grateful to all that have worked on this for the many years. Thank you to all that have supported and continue to support us.

One more thank you. BWA has been hosting our Silent Auction, chaired by Junie Obi, with her crew. They have solicited donations and you have supported the auction with your purchases and donations. It's a lot of work and the temple has benefited so much. Thank you everyone for your continued support.

In gassho



(Rimban - continued from page 1)

all that continues to influence your life and those benefits that you have received from the lives of others. In doing so, one can't help but be overcome by joy, and it is this joy that manifests in bon odori.

Namo Amida Butsu

BETSUIN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JULY

- 04** Independence Day Betsuin closed
- 09** Obon Drive-Thru Pre-order only
- 10** Regular Service 10:00 am
- 16** Hatsubon Services 10:00 am & 1:00 pm
- 17** Hakamairi 9:00 am @ Evergreen Cemetery
Obon Service 10 am @ Betsuin
Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm

AUGUST

- 07** Atomic Bomb Memorial 10:00 am
- 14** Regular Service 10:00 am
Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm
- 21** Regular Service 10:00 am
- 28** Regular Service 10:00 am

SEPTEMBER

- 05** Labor Day Betsuin closed
- 11** Regular Service 10:00 am
Dharma School Registration
Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm

In order to access any of these events virtually, contact the Betsuin for information:

213-680-9130 or

NishiDharmaCenter@gmail.com



NISHI ABA CELEBRATES 25 YEARS



DID YOU KNOW?

by Nancy Hayashibara

It has been 25 years since the re-establishment of the Nishi Adult Buddhist Association (ABA) in 1997 by members who felt that the temple needed an adult affiliated organization. It began under the leadership of Kenji Hatakeyama, the first ABA president. ABA was established with the purpose of supporting the Betsuin in all of its projects, conducting informative seminars, supporting the community, and enjoying fellowship activities with our members and ABA members of other temples.

The original Los Angeles Betsuin Adult Buddhist Association was organized in 1956 as the Young Adult Buddhist Association (YABA) with Jack Iwata as its first president. The purpose was to keep former YBA members (pre-World War II) active at the Betsuin and to bridge the gap between the Issei leaders and the younger Nisei and Sansei generations. The Southern District YABA was unofficially formed in 1956. In February of 1957, the L.A. Betsuin YABA requested admission into the Western Young Adult Buddhist League (WYABL). Immediately thereafter, the Southern District YABA Council was formed

which included Gardena, Senshin, West Los Angeles, Pasadena, and the L.A. Betsuin. Eventually WYABL became the Western Adult Buddhist League (WABL) and in 1964, the name YABA was changed to ABA. ABA remained active for 32 years, sponsoring seminars, study classes, and ti-sarana services; participating in our Obon and Nisei Week carnivals; and visiting Keiro homes. In 1988, the original ABA officially disbanded.

In its 25 years, the re-established Nishi ABA has held religious seminars, participated in social activities with ABA organizations of other temples, and supported the Betsuin during its obon and other projects. In 2019, the band ABASonics was formed with Thomas Mochizuki (vocalist and guitarist), Denise Otani (vocalist), Eric Quon (vocalist), and Lonny Quon as manager. Since its formation, the band has added four new members: Roy Yamatoku (drummer), Yoshi Ono (electric saxophonist), Kenji Hatakeyama (vocalist) and Gerard Fella (bass guitarist).



(continued on page 5)

NISHI ABA 25 YEARS...

(continuation)

ABA EXCURSIONS

by Joanne Nakamura

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL MORNING...

On a Saturday in April, some Nishi ABA members met at the Carbon Canyon Regional Park in Brea for a day hike. This was a much needed escape from pandemic isolation.

There we saw the tallest Redwood trees hidden in Orange County. Walking through the green space that included recreational amenities and a serene lake was very relaxing. The wide dirt nature trail was well signed and we meandered through dense shrubs and walnut trees. Many bird watchers witnessed and listened for the California Towhees chirping.

The hike provided the experience of enjoying the giant arboreal wonders of nature. Walking just half a mile, there was the grove of 241 coastal redwoods which is the largest in Southern California. The ABA members brought their own bento and ate at a convenient, shaded picnic table. Sharing and exchanging conversation with laughter and friendship completed this day of harmony with nature in gratitude and thankfulness. It was, certainly, a beautiful morning!

Everyone is invited to join ABA and share future activities, planned and arranged by Lonny Quon ABA's activity chair.

(KNOW? continued from page 4)

The band has performed at various temple functions: Surf and Turf Fundraising Dinners, BWA and ABA New Year's Parties, and for obon entertainment. Recently, ABASonics played in the West parking lot for an Independence Day celebration. Since March 2020, many of ABA's activities have been put on hold due to the COVID-19 epidemic; however, ABA members have continued to safely assist the temple by conducting the mailings, participating in temple maintenance, and in developing health and safety guidelines for the temple COVID-19 committee. In addition, many ABA members serve as officers or are members of the board of directors. They also serve on many of the temple committees and assist in the office, bookstore, and Nishi Center. Even during the epidemic, ABA members continued to meet monthly on zoom. Social activities were held outdoors or in the kaikan.

As COVID-19 cases subside, ABA has again began meeting in person at the temple. The band meets weekly for practice in the kaikan. ABA meetings are held once a

ABA SHORELINE WALK

"Under the boardwalk...Down by the sea..."
(Long Beach, that is.)

That is where we were, having some fun breathing the fresh ocean air.

On a Saturday in May, the Nishi ABA walkers took a shoreline stroll along the Long Beach coast. The air was crisp and invigorating. All of our senses were stimulated by the smell of the ocean. The sights and sounds of the sea gulls and the music from the carousel was delightful. A delicious lunch at Tequila Jack's culminated this walk.

Special thanks to Nishi ABA's activity chair, Lonny Quon for making this venture relaxing and pleasurable. It was so much fun!

Nishi ABA cordially invites new members to join and experience temple service, temple support and members' social activities.



month. Anyone interested in joining ABA for service to the temple, for learning more about Buddhism, or for fellowship with other temple members can contact the office or any ABA member.

* * * * *

Nancy Hayashibara has been an active member of the Betsuin for many years. Currently she is recording secretary of the temple's board of directors, organist and president-elect of Nishi ABA. Her past contributions include chairperson for Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and Dharma School Parents (Fubokai) as well as Girl Scout leader. She has been an active member of Nishi ABA since it was reorganized in 1997.

— by Dianne Odagawa

NISHI CUB SCOUT NEWS

by Noemi Garcia Tagorda



Nishi Cub Scouts have been busy. In April, the Cub Scouts held a Phone and Tablet Recycling fundraiser. The Cub Scouts collected nearly 100 phones from the community. Thank you to everyone who participated. We will continue to accept old mobile phones and tablets for recycling.



Ruben Clingerman readies Pinewood Derby cars for scout, Liam Barnhart.

Also in April, the Cub Scouts held the Pinewood Derby. Nearly 20 Cub Scouts participated. Our next event will be the Raingutter Regatta in May.

Email pack738@yahoo.com for more information or follow us on facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/nishicubscouts>

NISHI BOY SCOUT PANCAKE BREAKFAST

After a two year hiatus, Nishi Scout Troop 738's Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast re-turned on May 8, 2022. Thank you to all who supported this fundraiser! It was great to see everyone in person again.

Photo credit: Rie Fujie and Grant Hayashi



2022 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Valid from January 1 through December 31, 2022

\$250 FOR EACH ADULT FAMILY MEMBER

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

Payments may be made in full or by installments throughout the year of 2022

BETSUIN PHOTOS



Los Angeles Butsuren ministers conduct Memorial Day services at Evergreen Cemetery. The ministers stand before the Muen-to monument chanting a sutra. The inset photo shows Rimban Briones speaking .



Nishi Center Gotan-E
Nishi Center students create a Happy Birthday banner for the birth of Shinran Shonin. They had a service by the statue and presented flowers.



Hatsumairi Participants
Kawasaki families on the left. Han/Kakita families on the right.



Rev. Kodani's BEC study class.



Rev. Miyaji's BEC Japanese study class.

DHARMA SCHOOL END OF THE YEAR RECOGNITION

ATTENDANCE AWARDEES



Jordyn Shimizu
(Nursery)
2nd Year



Emaline Silverthorne
(Kindergarten)
2nd Year



Dustin Shimizu
(Kindergarten)
4th Year



Noe Ross
(Kindergarten)
4th Year



Kenji Ross
(6th Grade)
8th Year



Matthew Hayashi
(11th Grade)
8th Year



Shigeo Yoshida
(8th Grade)
11th Year



Verena Chao
(9th Grade)
11th Year



Laurens Chao
(11th Grade)
11th Year



Shanti Takata
(12th Grade)
17th Year

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



Takeshi Chavez



Kurtis Kato



Shanti Takata

OBON IN AMERICA

<https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/obon-gathering-of-joy>



Los Angeles Betsuin Bon Odori 2019

Buddhist minister Yoshio Iwanaga introduced Bon Odori to communities along the North American West Coast in the 1930s (see this exhibit for more early history). As Obon dances attracted large crowds from the surrounding neighborhoods, they evolved into larger festivals with culinary bazaars and cultural demonstrations.

Today, a festival can be found nearly every weekend between June and August. Obon Festivals are typically temples' largest event of the year and most visible presence in their local communities. Obon dances have been passed from parents to their children and grandchildren, while new dances continue to be developed and introduced each summer. It is a special time for temple communities to come together and orchestrate their own event, while visiting others out of support and friendship.

Taiko drums herald the centerpiece of the Gathering of Joy, when everyone makes a circle around the yagura (tower) for Bon Odori. Whether you dress in traditional Japanese attire or your best beachwear, everyone is encouraged to "just dance." Setting our egos aside, we find kindness in everyone's care toward each other, in a friendly wave, or a knowing laugh on the dance line. As the sun sets and the festival lights begin to shine, we think of those who have passed on and celebrate the paths that brought us together in gratitude.

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*

March 2022

27 Tomie Hattori
30 Hisaye Shiba

15 Yuka Ann Yasuda
25 Daniel Torao Ohnoki
25 Wilbur Hitoshi
Kusumoto
26 Kazuko Kobayashi

April 2022

1 Robert Noriyuki
Hiramoto
2 Frank Takashi Wada
6 Barbara Toshiko
Matsuno
11 Satsuki Mae Kaku
11 Kristi Yoshi Shintaku

May 2022

2 Yoshiharu Roy Oda
4 Takeko Miyatake
10 Setsuko Murata
14 Shigeo Iwai

BETSUIN VEHICLE DONATION



***Donate any vehicle:
car, truck, motorcycle, or boat***

The vehicle need not be operational.

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

Betsuin Jiho

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