

LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

jihō

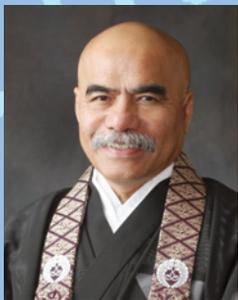
WWW

No. 472

May - June 2022

RIMBAN'S MESSAGE

THOUGHTS ON COMPASSION



**Rimban William
Briones**

sincere."

Nishi Betsuin is a member of the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC). The council is a nonprofit community coalition of residents, business owners, religious institutions, cultural and community organizations. I am a representative to the council. I also sit on the board of directors where we meet once a month. Both board of directors and general meeting agendas are always packed and it is very difficult to cover all the items within the allotted time.

There is so much going on in Little Tokyo and as a council our voice has impact on the future of Little Tokyo. In front of our temple, the completion of the Gold Line is ongoing as with the Regional Connector between Alameda and Central on First Street. The Mangrove property, our next door neighbor to the west of us, is very close to finalizing its MOU with Metro and is ready to move forward with plans for development.

There is now the issue of the West Santa Ana Branch Corridor, a light rail transit line from the southeast LA county to Union Station, the final terminus. An issue is with an above ground track along Alameda running through Little Tokyo or having the rail run underground, which for Little Tokyo is fighting.

In this life no matter how much pity and sympathy we may feel for others, it is impossible to help another as we truly wish; thus our compassion is inconsistent and limited. Only the saying of nembutsu manifests the complete and never ending compassion which is true, real and
—Tannisho: Chapter 4

For the most part, many of these issues are not controversial — not controversial in that everyone agrees that building a railroad or new development must not impact Little Tokyo adversely and should benefit Little Tokyo community. At the last board and general meeting, however, the issue of the increasing population of the unhoused and the encroachment of the unhoused into Little Tokyo has created a crisis pitting the legitimate needs of the unhoused against the concerns of local Little Tokyo businesses owners and workers struggling to stay afloat during the pandemic — especially, the encampment at the corner of Judge Aiso and First Street/Torimi Plaza.

Los Angeles County has one of the highest number of men, women and children that are homeless in California. In January of 2020 the number in Los Angeles County was 67,000 and just in downtown skid row alone there are over 5,000. The situation has become critical as witnessed throughout Southern California.

There were a couple of merchants who spoke at the general meeting expressing how the homeless were disrupting their business. One business owner said she was shoved to the ground. A spokesperson for the Koban ("neighborhood watch") said that there were 31 car break-ins last month and three overdose deaths in one month. He added that someone overdosed and died in front of a storefront. He further explained that people don't want to park in the Judge Aiso parking lot and that many are hesitant to come to Little Tokyo because they fear for their safety.

There were, however, a couple of business owners, who felt that the unhoused should be treated more humanely. One person said he was raised with Buddhist ideals and felt the un-

(continued on page 8)

Los Angeles
Hompa 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



THINK BROADER, BROADER, AND WAY BROADER

by Rev. Hibiki Murakami



**Rev. Hibiki
Murakami**

Recently, a thought popped up in my mind from when I was in college. I remembered this from my sensei from when I was listening to his lecture. His words were: *“Think broad, broader, broader, and way broader. This is the essence of the Heart Sutra.”* I’m pretty sure that many have heard this sutra before in that it is a well known Buddhist sutra which is commonly chanted by Zen monks.

Within this sutra is the phrase, *“Form is only emptiness, emptiness is only form.”* The Heart Sutra addresses the importance of awakening.

In Buddhism, “emptiness” tells the truth about reality. Comprehending it is a quite challenging. Let’s try to think about “emptiness.” We can start with the phrase, “form is only emptiness, emptiness is only form.” Form is having shape. Something that we see has form. For example, a pencil or our own body has form. Form constantly changes. Eventually, it will be gone but it will be present as another form. Meanwhile, we have to keep in mind that they don’t have any entity. Lacking self is called “emptiness.” In the Heart Sutra, knowing about the absence of an entity is the mind doesn’t attach to anything so that that mind is realized. Nagarjuna, one of the seven patriarchs of Jodo Shinshu, interpreted that emptiness is not just nothing. He negated the presence of an entity. He also proclaimed that the relationship of the form constantly changing should be called emptiness. In this context, the world that we observe is moving seamlessly and is subtle, yet the idea of emptiness enhances our sense to feel the inner energy of nature.

Then, what is the relationship between the “think broader, broader, and way broader” that my sensei said and that emptiness? I think encountering infinity is equivalent to the moment of encountering emptiness. An example of this is the easiest way to feel infinity may be to think about how big the universe is. A couple of days ago, I watched a YouTube video that introduces the scale of our universe. The universe is huge. At the end of that video the scientist was quoted, “The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe around us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.” The universe is filled with mysterious objects and phenomena. Most of what suffers us does not come from unknown things but comes from the feeling “not enough.” As we feel we want more, our mind becomes eager to pursue. Those minds are in a state to hold on to limited resources, money, time, etc. From the perspective of emptiness, these should be

regarded as a ghost. While the more we feel want, the more our attachments grow.

Shinran said,
“Those who truly attain shinjin as they utter Amida’s Name, being mindful of the Buddha always, wish to respond to the great benevolence.”

In his hymn, the feeling of shinjin is represented as responding with uttering the nembutsu.

Shinran explains in another hymn,

“The liberating wheel of light is without bound; each person it touched, it is taught, is freed from attachments to being and nonbeing, so take refuge in Amida, the enlightenment of nondiscrimination.”

As Amida comes from the truth, the body is emptiness. The person who takes refuge in Amida touches its boundless truth. The nembutsu indicates the karmic action toward the Pure Land. However, for those who are still in this defiled world, being mindful through the nembutsu, our belief can connect with the infinity and emptiness. So, reciting the nembutsu, “let’s think broader, broader, and way broader.”

HATSUMAIRI INFANT PRESENTATION

Hatsumairi is translated as the *“First Visitation”* and is often referred to as the Infant Presentation Service.

The LA Betsuin will hold a Hatsumairi Service on **Sunday, May 15th** in conjunction with the Gotanye 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. Because COVID prevented Hatsumairi participation in 2020 and 2021, those children who missed the opportunity may also take part in the 2022 service

To those who are interested in participating in the Hatsumairi, please contact the Betsuin office or submit form found on [page 6](#).



BETSUIN BOARD

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Pam Tabata

I hope this message finds you well and safe – physically, mentally, and emotionally. I must admit that I am very happy that we can attend service in person. I enjoy seeing everyone come in and we get to speak face to face. We need to be with others even if it means the temple rules are still more stringent while the county and state loosen their mandates. COVID has not made its way

in because we have continued to try and keep everyone that enters the temple safe. I am so grateful for the work that the COVID Committee has done.

On behalf of the temple, thank you very much for supporting our **Salmon Bowl Fundraiser**. The support you give to the temple is not taken for granted and is very much appreciated. We know you could donate your money to other organizations that are in need. I also want to thank everyone that worked to make sure that this fundraiser was successful. Everyone works as one team to make every part of this fundraiser a success.

In *gassho*



Ohigan Service Ministers

Front - Rimban William Briones and Rev. Seikan Fukuma Back - Rev. Hibiki Murakami and Rev. George Matsubayashi

NISHI CENTER NEWS

by Susan Mukai, Director

Nishi Center celebrated Hinamatsuri (Girls Day) in March. We set up our beautiful hina doll display. (see adjacent photo) Children made doll crafts during the week, and then we created our own Doll Museum, where each child contributed a doll or stuffed animal from home. We had fun pretending to visit the museum.

In April, we will be going on our first field trip of the year, walking to JACCC's compost bin on Earth Day to celebrate with our friends, Amy Honjiyo and Allie Kimura, from Sustainable Little Tokyo. We have teamed with them many times over the years composting our food waste using Bokashi. Look for our Earth Day banners on display at the compost bins.

We will be busy in May with the return of our Fiesta Matsuri. We will set up game and craft stations for our children to visit and learn about the Japanese and Mexican cultures in honor of Kodomo-No-Hi and Cinco de Mayo, both on May 5th. Also in May will be our Gotan-E celebration for Shinran Shonin's birthday. We meet in front of the Shonin's statue and decorate it with flowers and a birthday banner.

In June we will be graduating five kindergartners in our hondo. They will walk down the aisle in cap and gown to receive their diplomas in front of family, friends and fellow students.

Finally, we would like to thank temple members Kenji and Kyle Oda, and Kenny and Daniel Itomura for repairing and painting our wooden playhouse. Our children were so surprised to see the "new" house. We love it!



Nishi Center students pose in the playground play house repaired by temple members.

DID YOU KNOW?

by Eiko Masuyama



Eiko Masuyama

Nishi Junior Matrons to Nishi Matrons to Fujinkai to BWA, “Nishi Matrons of the L.A. Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple,” Homba Hongwanji Los Angeles Betsuin, 1905 – 1980, p.74

Our group was organized in 1959 with the help of Fujinkai members Ms. Tamari, Yamaguchi, and Aratani, to attract English-speaking married women to the Homba Hongwanji. We were then called the **Nishi Junior Matrons**.

Mrs. Toshiko Aratani was our first president; charter members were Dorothy Goto, Grace Ishitani, Akiye Kodama, Elso Kanagawa, Mabel Kodama, Umeno Kumata, Meiko Murakami, Shizuko Ushio, Shizuko Yamamoto, Toyoko Yamagata, Sanaye Yoshimoto, and Tokiko Tsuchiya.

Historical notes such as dues of two dollars a year and the Shinnen-en-kai luncheon costing a dollar and a half seem ridiculous in 1979.

Our group participated in all phases of philanthropic work for our temple and our children. Some of the activities engaged in have been the Parents' Day luncheons, Nisei Week Baby Show, helping prepare otoki throughout the year, visiting Japanese patients at Rancho Los Amigos, sponsoring the “Crusade on Cancer” film with the help of the USC pharmacy organization, Alpha Iota Pi, donating T-shirts to the Betsuin boys basketball teams, and making bibs for the patients of the Keiro Home. We are often called upon to prepare luncheons for various conferences, such as the Jr. YBA and the Sunday School Teachers.

One of our most rewarding duties was making cookies for our Betsuin boys in the Armed Forces.

We have been a sustaining member of the BCA for over 15 years.

In 1966, as Junior Matrons, we joined the Southern District Fujinkai Federation and began taking part in that group's activities. For many years we collected twenty-five cents from each member per meeting for the Dana Day Fund.

We hold many events jointly with the ABA, such as helping with the Ti-Sarana and Sarana Services, donating a (continued on page 5)

ORIGAMI IS PAPER MAGIC

by Jean Kawakami

Did you know that origami began in the 6th century after Buddhist monks from China brought paper to Japan? Originally, it was only used for religious ceremonial purposes because paper was so expensive. Today, in addition to colored paper, any square paper may be used for origami: recycled newsletters, junk mail flyers, the Rafu Shimpo, magazines, or even old calendars.

Folding paper has been shown to have many therapeutic benefits:

- Improve concentration
- Enhance hand-eye coordination
- Improve fine motor skills
- Stimulate the memory centers of the brain as well as 3-dimensional spatial relations
- And perhaps most importantly, an opportunity to spend time together.

Join us for a class — Everyone is invited. Ms. Lisa Tanahashi is our origami sensei and we can zoom with her and Pasadena Buddhist Temple on the big screen TV at the Betsuin. Class meets once a month on a Tuesday morning from 9:30-11:30am. You are welcome to join us at Nishi so we can zoom and fold together, or you may zoom from home.

For information regarding the schedule or to leave your email address for the next zoom invite, please contact Jean Kawakami, jean@kilotango.me, (818) 321-4998.

Thank you! Let's Fold Together!



Front l-r: Seibi Okita, Eiko Masuyama, Kayo Uno, Back: Junie Obi, Moruko Okita, Yoshie Ishigame, Teresa Hirahara, Cynthia Kondo, & Gail Matsuura.



(KNOW? continued from page 4)

piano, and preparing Shinnen-en-kai dinners.

To finance our activities we sold noodles at the Obon Festival Carnivals, wonton at the Nisei Week Carnivals, sushi at the Cherry Blossom Festivals in Monterey Park, and also collected merchandise for the White Elephant Sales.

In February of 1974, we decided we were getting too old for the designation of "Junior," and so officially became known as the Nishi Matrons. Since then, we have sponsored the bunka shishu embroidery class, started in 1975, which has met with much success. For Girl's Day and Boy's Day, we displayed Japanese dolls and offered the Sunday school students and parents refreshments.

In 1976, we began selling refreshments to those who have come to see the exhibits at our temple during the Nisei Week Festival.

A microwave was donated for our ministers' use. We also helped financially with the new downstairs draperies.

Baby showers were given for the wives of ministers---Mrs. Toshiko Norimoto, Mrs. Fumiye Inouye, and Mrs. Shoko Ohta. We were responsible for the luncheons given for Rev-

erend and Mrs. Taitso Imai on the occasion of their marriage which was attended by 500 persons.

We helped in many ways in the dedication of our new temple in 1969, and again at the completion of our kaikan. We assisted the Bell Tower Dedication by preparing box lunches.

In 1970, we furnished the bridal room at our temple and have helped the wedding director at all ceremonies at our temple.

On the social side, we enjoyed going to Las Vegas as a group, in trying our luck or leaving a donation, such as the case may be. We made identical aprons and colored dresses to wear at conferences.

An okesa is given to all members. We are responsible for a special Sunday school service each year when we chair the service and offer refreshments to all attending.

In recent years, luncheon meetings have been held with all the members taking turns cooking. This has turned out to be a very delightful duty.

[author of this article is unknown]



JR. MATRONS IN DOWNSTAIRS CHAPEL AT CENTRAL AVENUE SITE 1957

Front l-r: Shiz Sera, Rose Ishihara, Amy Miyakawa, Setsuko Iwata, Mickey Nagamoto, Yaeko Nakashima, Faith Tamura, Shiz Shibata. *Middle row:* Kay Sakaniwa, X, Josie Watamura, Makino Morioka, X, X, Toshiko Masuda, X. *Back row:* Mrs. Maruyama, X, Mariko Tsukida, Sanaye Yoshimura, Rev. M. Kumata, Mae Tanaka, Kimiye Minami, X





NISHI CUB SCOUT NEWS

by Noemi Garcia Tagorda

The Nishi Cub Scouts are now meeting in person!

The Cub Scouts were busy this past month with activities like building bird houses and getting ready for the Pinewood Derby. The Cub Scout Bears learned archery and fishing and received recognition for these new skills.

Do you know a child between the ages of five (5) and eleven (11) years? Please let them know about our Cub Scout pack. We would love to have them as part of our community.

Follow us on facebook to learn about our next in person meeting.

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



Learning archery skills from Mark Montoya



HATSUMAIRI REGISTRATION

May 15, 2022

Name of Child			
Boy <input type="checkbox"/>	Girl <input type="checkbox"/>	Birthdate	
Name in Kanji (if Known)			
Parents' Names			
E-Mail			
Phone			
Address			

Estimated Number of Family Members Attending: _____

L.A. Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple
 815 E. 1st St.
 Los Angeles, CA 90012-4034
 TEL: 213-680-9130
 E-Mail: info@nishihongwanji-la.org
 FAX: 213-680-2210

Please submit by: May 1, 2022
HATSUMAIRI REGISTRATION



BWA president, Jean Kawakami (left) presented Betsuin president, Pam Tabata with a check from the proceeds of the BWA Silent Auction with Rimban Briones.





SALMON BOWL FUNDRAISER



Mother-daughter in the Check-In booth. Marley Uyehara and Chris Furu-sawa (fundraiser chair)

Marc Hentell throwing a "shaka" sign.



Judy Izumo, Junie Obi, and Rimban Briones



The "Gohan Guys"



Arranging the gohan into plates...



Sheryl Hayashi arranging the tsukemono and broccoli.



Preparing the salmon — Kenny Itomura, Jerry Naito, & Yuki Inoue



Mari Kawasaki and Bradford Hirahara providing a "no-contact" meal delivery.



Popcorn orders ready to go.

Panko gratis courtesy of Upper Crust Enterprises.



The "Next Generation" working at the fundraiser
l-r: Jonathan Kawasaki, Rimban Briones, Kihomi Sasaki, Takeshi Chavez, Daniel Yaguchi, & Rev. Murakami.





(Rimban - continued from page 1)

housed should be treated with compassion.

As a resident, as a citizen, as an ordained Buddhist priest, what is my responsibility to those who lack the basic needs that we take for granted — shelter, food, and health care. My uncle used to say “If you’re going to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk.”

The passage I began with is from the 4th chapter of the Tannisho. It tells about the difference between the compassion of “the path of the sages” such as saints and bodhisattvas, monks and nuns and it tells of the path of Pure Land devotees like you and me. It’s about realizing our inability to attain salvation or enlightenment by means of doing good deeds or following the paramitas, because, based on Shinran’s realization, all our good deeds are based on our ego ... we expect to receive benefits from our good actions. In contrast, the Pure Land way makes us aware of our human limitations. It illuminates our motives and actions as ego-centered and ignorant.

I feel compassion is a deep awareness of and sympathy for another’s suffering. The feeling gives rise to an active desire to alleviate another’s suffering. Just walking through an encampment or being approached by a homeless person for help ... feels overwhelming. How do we start?

I’m sure we all would like to be a compassionate person not just because we’re Buddhist but because we’re part of this society and we care for the rights of others and well-being of others.

When one tries to practice compassion, expressing care, concern, and empathy, one encounters a huge obstacle. That obstacle is never the “other,” but rather one’s own self-centered ego. Faced with being a good person ... a compassionate person, we choose that which will fulfill our own self-centered needs, even subconsciously. This awareness is the starting point of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist path. To truly see our own ego and self-centeredness is actually liberating. We experience the freedom of being able to accept our own failings. This process is liberating in that one can finally awaken to how one really is, stripped of all pretenses, defenses and self-images. In Jodo Shinshu, we are truly freed precisely because we are foolish, not in spite of it. The realization of our foolish and human nature is a very important part of our awakening.

Our lives are a result of innumerable causes and conditions, interdependent and interconnected with other people, things, and events. All these conditions together form and define the true nature of our existence. Amida Buddha is the manifestation of all those causes and conditions that allow each and every one of us to exist.

This brings us to practice in Jodo Shinshu a process of

deepening awareness. This is not separate from ordinary or Buddhist practice. Rather, it is an ongoing religious experience in which we realize that we are totally unable to be ethically “good,” and yet, at the same time, also realize, with deepest gratitude, that we are embraced by Amida Buddha.

We must think for ourselves and act according to our own personal and spiritual insights. Therefore, any action that I would take on with the unhoused or any social issues would be on a personal level — to engage in the community, to work together for the benefit the homeless, the businesses and residents of Little Tokyo.

Rev. Howard Torimi (1916-1987) of Union Church, for whom the plaza was named, was an early voice for the community-oriented redevelopment and was known for being compassionate to those who were down and out. He would have found a way to meet the concerns and bring a balance to the community.

Namo Amida Butsu



*Hanamatsuri
Hanamido*



Hanamatsuri Service conducted by Rimban Briones (left) and Rev. Murakami. (Note: laptop in foreground enabling Zoom viewing)



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*

January 2021	27 Lou Sharkey
21 Jimmy Akira Hanamoto	28 Sueo Nakahara
22 May Midori Soeda	
February 2021	March 2021
5 Ikuko Kawamoto	1 Brian Masao Miyakawa
8 Johnny Yusow Yamada	3 Sadao Shiota
10 Hiroyuki Nagata	4 Sanae Muramoto
22 Ellen Kimiye Misawa	7 James Mukai
23 Ramon Yasuo Yamamoto	8 Marion Setsuko Hara
25 Yuhri Sano	11 Harry Hisanobu Nakano
	13 Yuriko Honda

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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 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY

- 08 Mothers' Day Service 10:00 am
Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm
- 15 Gotan-E Service & Infant Presentation Service (Hatsumairi) 10:00 am
- 22 Regular Service 10:00 am
- 29 Memorial Day Sunday Service 10:00 am
- 29 Memorial Day Hakamairi (call temple for schedule)

JUNE

- 05 Regular Service 10:00 am
- 12 Regular Service 10:00 am
Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm
- 19 Fathers' Day Service 10:00 am
- 26 Regular Service 10:00 am
Graduation/Attendance Awards

JULY

- 04 Independence Day - Betsuin closed
- 09 Obon Drive-Thru

Wednesdays "Contemporary Issues and Jodo Shinshu Perspective" discussion by Rimban Briones

In order to access or register for any of these events contact the Betsuin for information:

213-680-9130 or

NishiDharmaCenter@gmail.com

Betsuin Jiho

Editor-in-Chief: Rimban William Briones
English Editor: Elaine Fukumoto
Photos: Glen Tao & Koichi Sayano

LOS ANGELES HOMPAN HONGWANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE



ONLINE AUCTION OPENS

5.15.2022 9AM - 5.29.2022 9PM

[HTTPS://WWW.32AUCTIONS.COM/LAHHBT2022SPRINGAUCTION](https://www.32auctions.com/LAHHBT2022SPRINGAUCTION)

PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE TEMPLE

DRIVE THRU PICKUP

SATURDAY, 6.04.22, 10:00AM - 3:00PM

SUNDAY, 6.05.22, 12:00PM - 3:00PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION: NISHIBWA@GMAIL.COM



2022 SPRING SILENT AUCTION