

LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

No. 426

September-October 2014

jihō

WWW

LOS ANGELES HONPA HONGWANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE
FOUNDED 1905



SUCCESSION OF THE JODO SHINSHU TRADITION

On June 6, 2014, His Eminence Sennyō Shōnin (Ohtani, Kōjun), the 25th Monshū of the Nishi Hongwanji-ha, succeeded his father Sokunyo Shōnin (Ohtani, Kōshin), the 24th Monshū.



KOJUN OHTANI, MONSHU

MESSAGE

Today, according to my predecessor, Sokunyo Monshū's wishes, I was inaugurated into the posts of Hongwanji *jushoku*, resident priest and Monshū of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha institution.

On this occasion, I would like to extend my deep gratitude to him for his many years of nurturing and guidance. At the same time, I acknowledge the monumental responsibility of succeeding the Jodo Shinshu tradition and am resolute in carrying out my duties to the best of my ability.

The teaching on how we are saved by Amida Tathagata's Primal Vow was set forth by Sakyamuni Buddha, and it was transmitted by the seven Pure Land masters to Shinran Shōnin, who clarified it into the Dharma of Jodo Shinshu.

That tradition has been passed down to us through the efforts of successive Monshū of Hongwanji, fel-



KOSHIN OHTANI, MONSHU

MESSAGE ON RETIREMENT

I would like to announce that as of today, June 5, 2014, I am retiring from the posts of Hongwanji *jushoku*, the resident priest and Monshū of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha institution and entrust them to Shimmon, the Heir-Apparent Monshū

and Hongwanji *jushoku*.

It has been thirty-seven years and two months since I was inaugurated into these posts, succeeding my predecessor in the Jodo Shinshu tradition on April 1, 1977. I would like to say that the credit for my being able to carry out the duties until today all should go to the Buddha and masters for their guidance, as well as the continuous support, understanding, and cooperation that I have received from all individuals and concerned parties, both within the Hongwanji organization and from the general public. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you.

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(Kojun Ohtani- continued from page 1)

low Jodo Shinshu followers, and many people who have supported their work until today. In inheriting this illustrious tradition, I will exert every effort to convey the Dharma of Jodo Shinshu to the future.

Looking back on the past, there were occasions during which the Hongwanji institution addressed some issues in ways that contradicted the Jodo Shinshu teaching, sometimes by not questioning or doubting some common practices that were accepted in the society during a certain era, and sometimes by having to make harsh decisions in order to enable the Hongwanji to survive. Learning from such history, we must constantly keep a careful eye on social conditions and ourselves so that we will never again indiscriminately accept common, popular behavior and tendencies of a particular time nor return to the kind of society that would compel us to make painfully bitter decisions again.

In reflecting on the present circumstances of our organization, it is significantly important to consider how we can approach and reach out to persons who have never had any contact with a Buddhist temple, as well as those who are already involved with one. The nembutsu teaching that is based on Amida Buddha's Primal Vow remains unchanged, regardless of the changing times and society. However, the methods for transmitting and sharing it needs to evolve and adapt according to social changes. Now is the time for our Hongwanji institution to utilize our collective wisdom and knowledge for considering approaches to convey the Buddha Dharma to our contemporaries today.

There are also other numerous issues and problems that we must deal with, such as, "What is the most appropriate and effective manner we can offer support to the many victims and disaster-stricken locations of the East Japan Great Earthquake to facilitate their recovery?"

Let us always keep in mind the venerable words, *jishin kyo ninshin*, "secure our own entrusting heart to the Dharma, guiding others to the same path" as we cope with the various problems and hardships of the contemporary world, walking together towards realizing a society in which everyone is equally respected.

June 6, 2014

Shaku Sennyō

Monshu

OHTANI Kojun

Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

*(Koshin Ohtani - continued from page 1)*

During my tenure, thanks to everyone's efforts, the Hongwanji was able to undertake the restoration of the Amida-do Hall, the 400th Memorial for Kennyo Shonin, the 500th Memorial for Rennyo Shonin, the great restoration of the Goeido Hall, and the 750th Memorial for Shinran Shonin. In addition, several decades ago we were able to acquire the parcel of land on the north side of the Hongwanji precinct, and we have been able to utilize it for a wide range of activities. Furthermore, we have been able to develop and promote our equality awareness campaign that was named the Core Program, as well as initiate a variety of activities and projects. The circle of thenembutsu teaching has continued to expand and the recitation of Namo Amida Butsu can be heard in various places in the world. Fortunately, I was enabled to confirm these facts for myself by hearing the voices of my fellow nembutsu followers during my official visits to every district of the Hongwanji institution. For this, I am truly grateful to everyone.

Compared with my predecessor, Shonyo Shonin's turbulent fifty years, which included the period of World War II, my thirty-seven year tenure can be described as rather calm. During those years, however, domestically speaking, there were a number of natural and human-made disasters that took place one after another, and due to the exaggerated priority placed on economic profit and status, issues concerning people's mental health and well-being have become more critical. Worldwide concerns include serious issues such as armed conflicts, economic inequality, global climate change, and proliferation of nuclear materials. Among them are ones that directly concern humanity's existence. Unfortunately, amidst this, it is with regret that we, Jodo Shinshu Buddhists are not able to say that we have satisfactorily demonstrated our ability to cope with these issues.

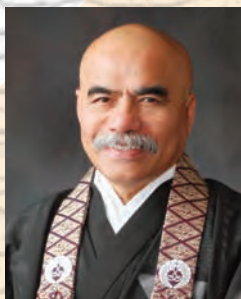
Our sangha has a glorious tradition of upholding and transmitting the Dharma from person to person. It is my hope that we will keep this wonderful custom despite of the current social fluctuations, and discover diverse potentialities in the teaching and tradition of Jodo Shinshu so that we can share them with as many people as possible and together follow the path toward realizing a society in which everyone is mutually accepted and respected. In order to realize that, I believe it is important to bring out the individuality and conditions of each person and generation, paying special attention to the young generations who possess the sensibility and ability to implement concepts

My successor, Shimmon Kojun, worked at Tsukiji Hongwanji in Tokyo as an on-site leader of the temple for five

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RIMBAN'S MESSAGE

THOUGHTS ON MY INNER JOURNEY TO JAPAN



**RIMBAN
WILLIAM BRIONES**

Amida's Primal Vow does not discriminate between the young and old, good and evil; true entrusting alone is essential. The reason is that the Vow is directed to the being burdened with the weight of karmic evil and burning with the flames of blind passion.

What seemed like an impossibility almost one year ago became a reality as 18 members of the Los Angeles Betsuin joined thousands of other Jodo Shinshu followers and witnessed history being made. On June 5 and 6 we were given the privilege to attend the retirement of **Monshu Koshin Ohtani** and the Accession of **Shinmon Kojun Ohtani** to Monshu within the halls of the Goeido or Founder's Hall. This was truly an auspicious occasion to witness the *hoto kisho shiki* or Ceremony of Transmitting the Jodo Shinshu tradition. The last ceremony was held 37 years ago when the former Zenmon Kosho Otani retired and the then Shimon Koshin Ohtani became Monshu.

Being a part of this historical event was more than just pomp and circumstance. For me, it was a moment that connected me to Shinran Shonin and the 750 plus years of our Jodo Shinshu Buddhist tradition. I was reminded, once again, of the countless causes and conditions that allowed me, William Briones to be intertwined within the very fabric of Jodo Shinshu history. Just as I had been a part of the tokudo and kyoshi ordination ceremony over 13 years ago in the very same building, I was once again overcome with the awe and a sense of responsibility and commitment I felt as an American to share the nembutsu teachings.

And yet as I reflect about those years in Japan, I remember the uncertainty and anxieties that I felt that lay ahead of me in my ministry as a non-Japanese. The three years spent in Japan was long and frustrating. I missed my family, the weather was unbearable at times, the summer months were extremely hot and humid and the winters were freezing cold and wet. I was truly unaccustomed to the Japanese way of life. Of course the biggest problem for me was the language. Every day, I struggled, it was humbling and at times humiliating experience not being able to communicate.

But I must admit it was an invaluable and wonderful experience to be in the Kansai area to live and experience the birth place of Jodo Shinshu. It wasn't so much the many historical temple sights... but it was experiencing some of the same conditions that influenced Shinran and Rennyo.

Like the inclement weather conditions, the beautiful spring blossoms and the radiant Fall colors ... or the distance that they had to travel. For example, the distance and the rough terrain that Shinran traveled when he came down from Mt. Hiei to Rokkaku Temple where he began his 100 day vigil, or the distance from Kyoto to Echigo to where Shinran was exiled.

The teachings of Shinran and the work of Rennyo came alive. Obviously, it was all within the context of the Japanese history, culture and society. How would all this resonate with westerners that had no clue of what was Japanese? I was even told by classmates at the seminary where I attended in Kyoto, that Americans would not be able to fully understand nor appreciate Jodo Shinshu. At times I was so discouraged, I felt like a token foreigner and that I was going through the motions of becoming a minister. But, the more I questioned, the more I truly began to search my heart ... I asked myself "What's the bottom line here?"

The reading I began with is from the first chapter of the *Tannisho*. The chapter establishes the basic principle of the Pure Land way to enlightenment and liberation. But for me, it also highlights the spirit and perspective in which Shinran related to the people of his time and how it continues to be relevant today, transcending national, ethnic, gender, and socio-economic boundaries.

The profound Vow of Amida Buddha refers to the story in the Larger Pure Land Sutra. Within the Pure Land tradition, as well as all Mahayana Buddhism, the Bodhisattva is the major symbol of compassion. It was out of compassion for all suffering being that the Bodhisattva Dharmakara established the Forty-eight Vows and became Amida Buddha. Of the Forty-eight Vows, the Eighteenth Vow became the most important to Pure Land Buddhist's, since it promised birth into Amida's Pure Land for those "*sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting themselves aspiring to be born in my land and saying my name perhaps even ten times.*"

Whether you take this story literally or metaphorically, the story represents the deepest aspirations that someday all sentient being will be freed of suffering. Amida then becomes this symbol of ultimate reality that points to our interdependence and the equality to every living thing.

When the Dharmakara made his Forty-Eight Vows, he declares, "*If, when I attain Buddhahood*" all beings do not experience the same realization, then "*... may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.*" The Dharmakara story points out

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911 REMEMBRANCES

by Rev. Koho Takata



REV. KOHO TAKATA

It has been 13 years since terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York. It was September 11, 2001. I was on Kauai, Hawaii, serving at Kapaa Hon-gwanji Buddhist Temple at that time. Many tourists who were visiting the island of Kauai were returning what they had bought to the store. Due to the closure of the airport for a week, they needed extra money for lodging and meals. We

had observed an interfaith memorial service on the next day of the tragedy at the Kauai Community College Performing Arts Center. It was packed full of people remembering all those who were affected by the tragedy. We all shared our anger and sadness which was caused by the tragedy, and extended our great concerns and pledges for world peace.

I now believe that, although 9/11 tragedy was just one of many tragedies we face today, the date 9/11 gave us an opportunity to reflect upon ourselves and a reason to pursue world peace, and how we can realize the peace in this present moment.

The cause of the tragedy is very simple. It is because of one's ego of self-centeredness, self-attachment, and self-satisfaction. Buddhism is a teaching enabling us to realize our ignorance which is our ineradicable blind passions and to deeply reflect upon ourselves on the teachings.

Generally, we tend to judge as "good" or "evil." Some of us labelled those who directly caused the 911 tragedy, having taken over 3,000 innocent lives, as "evil." It is probable that a large percentage of the population would agree, except, however, the terrorist group. What is the perception of the U.S, who took many innocent lives through the war? In this case, is this a judgment of "good" not "evil?"

In truth, we discuss only "good" and "evil," leaving Amida's benevolence out of consideration. Among Master Shinran's words were: "I know nothing at all of good or evil. For if I could know thoroughly, as Amida Tathagata knows, that an act was good, then I would know good. If I could know thoroughly, as the Tathagata knows, that an act was evil, then I would know evil. But with a foolish being full of blind passions, in this fleeting world – this burning house – all matters without exception are empty and false, totally without truth and sincerity. Then Nembutsu alone is true and real."

—(CWS, P.679)

We always think and see others or things through our self-centered minds and hearts and determine whether they are good or evil. This is why it always changes depending on circumstances and conditions. ie: the terrorist group and U.S., Iraq and U.S., etc. We judge others or events through our self-centered views and calculations. However, from Buddha's enlightened eyes, all living and non-living beings are equally valuable.

As I contemplate 9/11 after over 13 years and calmly reflect upon the teachings, one story comes to my mind. It is the well-known story of *Ajatasatru* in the *Contemplation Sutra*, one of the three *Pure Land Sutras*.

In the great city of Rajagraha, India, there was a prince named Ajatasatru, his father named King Bimbisara, his mother named Queen Vaidehi, and his friend named Devadatta. One day, Devadatta instigated Ajatasatru to kill his father King Bimbisara by locking him up in jail. Queen Vaidehi spread over her body with honey mixed to a paste with wheat flour and secretly offered the foods to the king to save him. When Ajatasatru learned this, he became so angry and he drew his sword to kill his mother. His ministers stopped him saying about Vedic scripture and he finally discouraged from killing his mother but he locked her up in the jail.

Queen Vaidehi filled with deep grief and despair by killing intent by her own son. She contemplated on the Buddha in her heart. The Sakyamuni Buddha became aware of her thoughts and came straight to Vaidehi in the jail with Mahamaudgalyana and Ananda. The Buddha caused Amida Buddha's image to appear in order to show her that Amida Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion is always with her. The Buddha preached to Vaidehi that through Nembutsu even the most evil person will be born into the Buddha's Pure Land because it is the true intent of the establishment of the Buddha-Land.

"I reflect within myself: The universal Vow difficult to fathom is indeed a great vessel bearing us across the ocean difficult to cross. The unhindered light is the sun of wisdom dispersing the darkness of our ignorance. Thus it is that, when conditions for the teaching of birth in the Pure Land had matured, Devadatta provoked Ajatasatru to commit grave crimes. And when the opportunity arose for explaining the pure act by which birth is settled, Sakyamuni led Vaidehi to select the land of peace. ---- Sakyamuni, the great hero, sought indeed to bless those committing the five grave offences, those slandering the

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HOW TO ACHIEVE AWAKENING IN JODO SHINSHU

by Rev. Kazuaki Nakata



REV. KAZ

There are many people who memorize the Dharma to gain knowledge or for intellectual understanding. There are few people who listen to the Dharma (Monpo) to reflect upon their own life as their life lessons. So, there are only a few people who rarely encounter the life of awakening through the Dharma (56).

Houkyo-Bo Junsei,
"Daily Sayings of Rennyo Shonin"

The 2014 Obon season is over. It is hard to believe that this was my third Obon here at the LA Betsuin. Time flies so swiftly! On a personal note, I had made a resolution for this year to "dance for both nights". I am sure that there are many Obon dance lovers. You may not believe it but I love dancing. I grew up with "Dance Dance Revolution" (DDR) which is an arcade dancing game. During this year's Obon, I followed our Nishi Dance teachers, such as Ms. Eiko and Ms. Elaine. I know you love Nishi Obon, so I don't have to mention their last names, because you know who they are. I was able to dance all the dances for both nights with these teachers. By dancing in the center of the circle, I could see many people's faces which showed so much joy by attending our Obon, and it was very successful.

What did we do to make Nishi Obon successful? We got the help and support of our Nishi families and friends. I know many of them came to Nishi in the early morning to set up and prepare Obon. Many stayed until the late night to clean up and close. Our Obon was able to be successful, because we gratefully received everyone's help and support. I sincerely appreciate each of their contributions to our Obon. Thank you so much!

As I mentioned, 2014 Obon was my third Obon in LA. It was also my 12th year Obon in the U.S. I still remember my first one. It was at the Sacramento Betsuin. I had arrived in San Francisco from Japan two weeks prior to the Sacramento Obon. At that time, my English idioms were... "Yes, No, Thank you, I am sorry, and... I am hungry!" I could help their Obon construction and tempura cooking, because English skills were not necessary to help.

However, when dharma school started in September. I experienced a lack of English speaking skills. I was taking an ESL (English as a Second Language) course at that time, and my ESL teacher said to me, "If you continue ESL, you will have an accent with your English. You will have a Russian accent if you have many Russian class-

mates. You will have a Spanish accent if Spanish speaking students fill your class. So, if you think you need to gain a public speaking skills and speaking proficiency as a minister, you should attend a regular college where local students go." My teacher was personally concerned about my English skills being a minister. I felt that her advice made sense to me. She suggested that I go to the Sacramento city college.

I did not expect to be going back to a two-year college, because I had a bachelor's degree. Once I had started at the college, I received tons of homework during the semesters, but I enjoyed learning English and playing the trombone in the city college jazz band. Study at the college improved my English accent so much by listening to native speaking local students. My classmates kindly corrected my pronunciations. After I completed my English course, some of Sacramento members teased me, "Rev. Kaz, now you have Californian accent!" I really appreciated my ESL teacher's advice.

I often hear the same question from people who are new to Buddhism. Their question is "What makes you Buddhist?" Since we have no significant entry point to Buddhism like the baptism in Christianity (Though we do have an affirmation service in Buddhism, it is not mandatory), many might question that point. I often respond to the question with same answer which is, "Becoming a Buddhist does not start with your faith, because Buddhism is not a belief system. When you commit to be a lifelong learner (listener), you start to live as Buddhist."

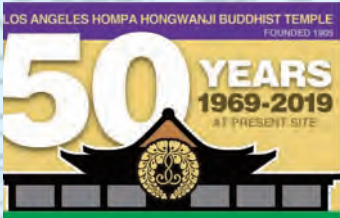
Once Rev. Jitsuen Kakehashi, *Kangaku* – the highest scholar in Jodo Shinshu, emphasized in his book ("Walking On A White Path") that "What a tragedy for human beings that they are not aware what they really have to pursue by spending their whole life." The answer is to pursue being a lifelong learner who is a lifelong listener.

In Jodo Shinshu, we are taught that listening to the dharma (*monpo*) is most important. I often mentioned that dharma means the Buddhist teaching that is the **universal truth** which makes sense to everyone and everything, whether they believe it or not. I am sure that most of you (especially dharma school students) may know the person who is known as the Master of Monpo (best dharma listener) in the Buddhist tradition. His name is Ananda and he was one of Shakyamuni's ten disciples. He listened to the many dharma talks given by Shakyamuni. When you read our Jodo Shinshu sutras, you may notice that these sutras begin with the words of "Thus I heard..." Many of

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“50TH YEAR COMMEMORATION” REPORT

by Ernest Hida



By the time you read this article, we have officially initiated the 50th Year Commemoration Project.

On August 3, Tomoyuki Wakabayashi, president of the Wakabayashi Butsugu

Mfg Co. and his staff, Kazuyoshi Shintani and Hiroshi Hasegawa, visited the Betsuin.

Following the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Victims' Memorial Service, they presented a video, produced by NHK TV (Japan Broadcasting Company), about the difficult and complicated task and the art of making an *obutsudan* (Buddhist altar). The Wakabayashi Butsugu Mfg. Co. was the main feature of this video. Seeing this video made members in attendance truly appreciate the beautiful *onaijin* (temple altar) that we have at the Betsuin.

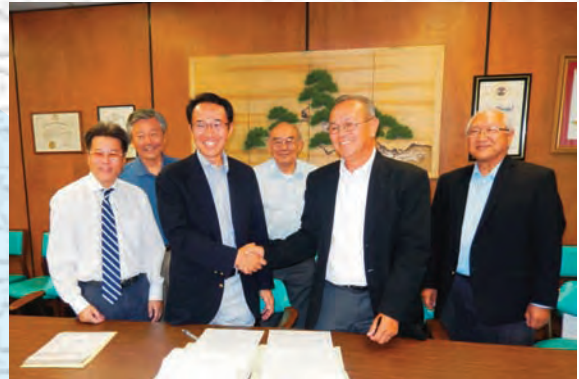
Afterwards, the Wakabayashi group had lunch with the members of the temple group that attended the Retirement and Ascension Ceremonies of the former Go-monshu and current Gomonshu in Kyoto.

After the lunch, our ministers, temple president Lonny Quon, and other temple leaders, met with Wakabayashi group to discuss the restoration of our onaijin. During this meeting, Mr. Wakabayashi and Lonny Quon signed the contract for the restoration of the onaijin. With this contract, our 50th Year Commemoration Project is officially underway.

The restoration of the onaijin is estimated to take nine months to complete and to be re-installed. The start date will be announced later when the date has been established. A brochure to explain about the 50th Year Commemoration and the Restoration Project and is available at the Betsuin.

Included in the onaijin restoration, Buddhist floral artworks, called "*bukka*," will be installed in the ceiling of the onaijin. These art panels will be two feet square. As with the Goeido roof tiles years ago, donor names will be written on the back of the artwork panels before they are installed. A minimum of \$5,000 donation to the 50th Commemoration Fundraising Campaign will ensure your name or whoever you designate to be written on the panels. Due to the limited number of panels, there will be a deadline for the donation to be made. Details of this program will be made available at a later date.

This is a wonderful opportunity where one can contribute and continue the legacy of the temple that was started by



SIGNING OF THE CONTRACT

L-R: Rev. Takata, Kenji Hatakeyama (president-elect), Tomoyuki Wakabayashi (Wakabayashi president), Shoichi Sayano (komon), Lonny Quon (Betsuin president), Ernest Hida (50th Commemoration chairperson)

the Issei pioneers and continued by each succeeding generations.

Everyone is encouraged to support and participate in the Betsuin's 50th Year Commemoration at its current location.

Gassho



(Koshin Ohtani - continued from page 2)

years and nine months. It is for certain that this experience has allowed him to expand his knowledge. Upon accepting his new responsibilities, he will be obliged to maintain the Jodo Shinshu tradition while considering the organization in its entirety by constantly attending not only to the Hongwanji institution, but also the whole religious society. I would like to sincerely request that you continue to provide your warm assistance to the new Monshu.

As for myself, I will be turning seventy in a little more than a year. Although nobody knows what the future holds, it is my intent to continue revering the Buddha Dharma as taught us by our Founder, being conscious that I am always embraced in the unwavering working of Amida Tathagata's Primal Vow, and will carry out my duties as a Jodo Shinshu priest for as long as I am able to the best of my ability.

June 5, 2014
Shaku Sokunyo
OHTANI Koshin
Monshu
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha



DID YOU KNOW?

by Eiko Masuyama



HOMPA HONGWANJI LOS ANGELES
BETSUIN DEDICATION
November 14,15,16, 1969
815 East First Street,
Los Angeles, CA 90012

New Temple Project, Part 3

The pledge report at the end of November, 1966, showed a total of \$716,815 pledged by 765 families. Because of rising costs, it was not obvious that the goal would have to be set in excess of one million dollars.

A jolting report was made at the April, 1965 Board of Directors' meeting. The members were informed that the city might not be willing to sell its property adjoining the Betsuin (119 North Central Avenue). President Kyuji Hozaki appointed a committee composed of Mr. M. Sasaki, Mr. E. Sasajima, Mr. K. Sayano, Mr. T. Nakamura, and himself, to look for other properties which might be suitable for building our temple.

On July 29, 1965, the committee reported that the 1½ acre Gough Industries Building property at First and Vignes Streets had been purchased for \$260,000. However, it was emphasized that the site of the present temple was still the first choice of the rebuilding project. The Gough property was only an alternate choice.

Architectural designs for our new temple prepared by three pre-selected firms were presented to the Betsuin members at the annual general meeting on January 23, 1966. The firms represented were Tom Makino; Tawa, Shimozono; and Kajima International, Inc.

The drawings reflected the change in the Betsuin outlook from a rebuilding program to the construction of a new temple complex of a main temple, multi-purpose gymnasium, and spacious landscaped grounds. The architects' plans were to be circulated among the general membership for several months.

A major recommendation was made by the Building Committee and accepted by the Betsuin Board in July, 1966. It was to definitely construct the new temple on the Gough property.

By the end of 1966, more emphasis was placed on the actual layout of the new temple. Inspection teams were formed to study various temples throughout California. Their reports were to be used for establishing the basic requirements to be presented to the architect.

.....TO BE CONTINUED

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Retirement and Ascension Services of Nishi Hongwanji-ha Monshus, June 4-6, 2014, Kyoto



Betsuin members that attended the Retirement and Ascension of the Monshu. Also pictured is Socho Kodo and Mrs. Umezu.

Seventeen Betsuin members were fortunate enough to be allowed to attend the auspicious Retirement and Ascension Services of the Monshu at Nishi Hongwanji in Kyoto, on June 5-6, 2014. Under the leadership of Rimban Briones and Rev. Takata, Rev. and Mrs. Matsubayashi, Seibi Okita, Koichi Sayano, Fumiko Jinkawa, Chiyeko Kondo, Suzette Kawaguchi, Yoshiko Oishi, Amy Miyakawa, Tsuruko Iwihara, Elaine Fukumoto, Christina Safranek, Bessie Tanaka, Judy Izumo, and Eiko Masuyama, were guided through Tokyo and Kyoto. At Nishi Hongwanji in Kyoto, Rev. Gene Sekiya (originally of Fresno) and Rev. Masako Sugimoto of the Hongwanji International Center, seated us and guided us through the services and the grounds.

On June 5, our group arrived in Kyoto (from Tokyo, on the Bullet train) about the same time as BCA Bishop and Mrs. Kodo Umezu, who were seated with the dignitaries. As we waited for the Retirement Service to begin, we were surprised and delighted to see Rev. Noriyoshi Matsudaira (Betsuin minister 1996-2000) as he wandered into our field of vision. Some of us had visited



L-R: Reverends George Matsubayashi, Noriyoshi Matsudaira, William Briones, and Koho Takata

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BWA SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE



Darren Kawasaki

Each year, dharma school high school seniors may submit essays that reflect what they have learned as a Jodo Shinshu youth. For the graduating class of 2014, **Darren Kawasaki** has been awarded with the Buddhist Women's Association (BWA) Scholarship.


Darren is the son of **Ken and Lisa Kawasaki**. He has received attendance awards years after year as a dharma school student. He has been active in the YBA on the temple and southern district levels as an officer.

Darren is also active with the Nishi Boy Scouts, having earned the rank of Eagle Scout. He has also been active at school with the Key Club, National Honor Society, Sign Club, and Modern Asian Arts and Drama Club.

In the fall, Darren will be attending the University of California, San Diego, majoring in Mathematics-Computer Science.

The following is Darren's essay:

Jodo Shinshu to me is both a name and a reminder. As a name, Jodo Shinshu is my religion officially but to others it can also be considered a philosophy. Jodo Shinshu adds to who I am. It is a part of how I grew thus far and it is also a part of my family's history. Jodo Shinshu is like a tradition passed on from my ancestors to me. Jodo Shinshu means that I am a part of a family and a community bonded together through the ideals of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. To me, I have always viewed Jodo Shinshu as the most relatable Buddhism possible in the world to everyday people or laymen or laywomen as they would say in the old times.

Jodo Shinshu is also a reminder for me as I live every day. It reminds me to try my best to follow the guidelines of the Eightfold Noble Path, and to follow the teachings of the Buddha. Two major concepts of Buddhism in everyday living are Impermanence and Interdependence. I see these every day. Impermanence or always changing is shown through a flower growing old or withering. Another everyday example is that wherever we touch we leave a mark and it has been changed. Interdependence, the concept that everything is connected is shown through our relations with other people. We say "hi" and "bye" to people we know, and we get to know those that we don't. We are connected by knowing each other or through mutual friends or even through mutual friends of the mutual friend. An ideal that is constant with me every day is to be nice and kind to everyone and everything, to appreciate everything that I have. 


TATSUSHI NAKAMURA JOKUN HONOREE



Tatsushi Nakamura

Tatsushi Nakamura, a former Betsuin president, was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays for his contributions to the promotion of Japanese culture and the development of the Japanese American community in Southern California.


Outstanding Jokun honorees are bestowed the Kunsho Medal award by the Emperor of Japan for their outstanding service and contributions to bridge U.S.-Japan relations.

A recognition luncheon was held by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce where many Betsuin members attended in support of Nakamura's as recipient of this auspicious award. 

CONGRATULATIONS!



Rev. Kaz

Rev. Kaz earned his MBA! Rev. Kazuaki Nakata recently completed his course work in Master of Business Administration at the Strayer University following four years of study. Rev. Kaz and his family traveled to Washington DC to attend the 122nd graduation ceremony. 

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

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

FALL OHIGAN SERVICE

by Rev. Koho Takata

With the waning of the hot, relaxing summer days, 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. The members of Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple and their families are invited to attend one of the six major services in the Hongwanji tradition, the **Fall Higan Rededication Service** which will be held on Sunday, September 21, 2014 at 10:00 am. The guest speakers for the service will be Rev. Dr. Shoyo Taniguchi of the former BCA minister for English service and Rev. Zuikei Taniguchi of the Buddhist Temple of Alameda for Japanese service.

Higan is an abbreviation of "To-Higan" - literally meaning "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 Paramita of charity, morality, patience, effort, meditation, and wisdom. Various sutras teach that the six paramita or perfections of practice are the way of reaching the other shore from this shore.

In Jodo Shin Buddhism, the observance of *higan* is simply the expressing of our gratitude to Amida Buddha for awak-

ening 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 Buddhism 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 Fall Higan service, we are fortunate to have a Fall Higan Seminar entitled "*Sharing our life stories as Buddhists*" on Saturday, September 20, 2014. This is the same theme as the 2014 Southern District Buddhist Conference to be held in October 10-12 in Hotel Irvine Jamboree Center.

The seminar will begin at 9:00 am and end at 4:00 pm. For English speaking attendees, Rev. Dr. Shoyo Taniguchi will be speaking in the morning session and Rev. Zuikei Taniguchi in the afternoon session. For Japanese speaking attendees, Rev. Zuikei Taniguchi will be speaking in the morning session and Rev. Dr. Shoyo Taniguchi in the afternoon session. The registration is available at temple office. The deadline will be on September 14, 2014. The registration fee is \$15.00 which will include lunch and refreshments. We encourage all of you to hear the teaching of Shinran Shonin who clarified the purpose of our lives.



BON DAIKO (TAIKO FOR BON ODORI)

by Yuki Inoue

I hope everyone had a chance to dance between your busy shifts during our Obon weekend. This year, we had seven dharma school students playing taiko on the *yagura* for the *bon odori*. They were: **Laurens Chao, Michelle & Karlee Itomura, Shanti Takata, Matthew & Samantha Hayashi, and Jacqueline Naito.**

With the go-ahead from Rimban Briones, I had the pleasure of teaching the children taiko for obon dancing for the first time. They had fun and did such an awesome job. In just a matter of seven weeks, the group learned to play taiko for ten dances. In order to cover many songs within a short period of time, I created a few simple patterns that fit each song and added some arrangements to a few of the songs. As beginners, the children had no problems.

I am already looking forward to teaching taiko next year. Thank you for so many people's support, especially Rimban Briones and Eiko Masuyama, to make it happen.

-Yuki Inoue/L.A. Matsuri Taiko



Yuki Inoue helping the drummers keep time.



(Rimban - continued from page 3)

that liberation is not just for himself, it is not a selfish goal to save oneself. Rather, as a way to awakening to end suffering, it must include others and work on their behalf, otherwise there can be no meaning to the vow.

And this I take to heart. Amida's Primal Vow does not discriminate between the young and old, good and evil the rich and poor, gay and straight, Japanese and American, Black and White. ... if it doesn't include them there can be no meaning to Amida's salvation. If I didn't think they were not included, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing.

I believe they're included because, according to the Larger Sutra, the Dharmakara's enlightenment did become a reality with the fulfillment of each of his Forty-Eight Vows. So, in reality, salvation is not a future goal, it has already taken place.

It is within Amida's Primal Vow we become aware of the intimate interconnectedness with others. To realize this interdependence, is to have a deep and abiding sense of responsibility for and concern for our fellow human beings.

I truly believe that Jodo Shinshu is a universal faith. It is a world religion with the potential to bring insight and wisdom to a suffering humanity. As Shin Buddhist's, we have an obligation to share our knowledge and experience to all people, transcending national and cultural boundaries.

As I reflect on my journey to Japan as an invited overseas guest, to attend the retirement and accession ceremonies of Monshu and Shinmon, respectively, I am truly grateful for the countless causes and conditions that have allowed me to participate in this auspicious event. The elegant ceremonies, the chanting and rituals were so impressive and inspirational, but in the midst of the all this, my mind kept wondering to my formative years in Japan and my journey to where I am now. Realizing now, more than ever, how the intent of universal Truth of Amida's Vow resonates within my life ... the Vow does not discriminate between the young and old, good and evil American and Japanese, Black and White, Gay or straight. The reason is that the Vow is directed to the being burdened with the weight of karmic evil and burning with the flames of blind passion.

Namo Amida Butsu




Takata - continued from page 4)

dharmā, and those lacking the seed of Buddhahood. We know, therefore, that the auspicious Name embodying the perfectly fulfilled supreme virtues is true wisdom that transforms our evil into virtue, and that the diamond like shinjin so difficult to accept is true reality that sweeps away doubt and brings us to attainment of enlightenment."

— (CWS, P.3: Preface)

Shinran Shonin wrote about the story of Ajatasatru in the beginning of his major writing "The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way" (Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho). My interpretation of this is that Shinran Shonin saw his own foolishness in the story of Ajatasatru and wrote it in his preface. Through this, Shinran Shonin has enabled me to be awakened to the fact that one who commits such evil acts is none other than myself who is always filled with blind passions. When I receive the Light of the Wisdom from Amida Buddha, my blind passions, caused by my own self-centered nature are revealed. It makes it clear that I am the "evil one." Amida Buddha's Primal Vow (18th Vow) was established solely for me, the one who carries an ignorant nature, needing to be liberated from the darkness of a deluded mind.

As we welcome the 14th Memorial for the September 11th tragedy and the Fall Ohigan season, let us all listen to the teaching of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow on why Dharmakara Bodhisattva had practiced Six Paramitas for us in order to become Amida Buddha and establish the Buddha-Land of Infinite Light and Life. 

SPRING OHIGAN SEMINAR

SHARING OUR LIFE STORIES AS BUDDHISTS

Saturday, September 20, 2014 9:00 am- 4:00 pm

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Jpn/Eng

Rev. Zuikei Taniguchi
Buddhist Temple of Alameda

Jpn/Eng

Rev. Dr. Shoyo Taniguchi
Former BCA Ministers

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 September 14, 2014

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

(Nakata - continued from page 3)

the other Buddhist sutras also begins with the same words which are “Thus I heard...” Buddhist scholars understand the person “I” in the many Buddhist sutras signify Ananda. Although Ananda had listened and memorized most of Shakyamuni’s dharma talks for 25 years until Shakyamuni died, he was not able to be awakened. His approach to Buddhism was an intellectual understanding which means he tried to memorize what Shakyamuni was saying, but he did not consider it as his life lessons.

Is the way of one’s listening attitude a critical factor for awakening? Yes, it is.

In Buddhism, the phrase “listen to the Dharma” is traditionally known as “*monpo*”. The kanji character is, “聞法”. The first character “聞(*mon*)” means “listen/hear.” The second character “法(*po*)” means “dharma.” Why would we need to know what the kanji characters are as English speakers? It is my belief that the kanji characters will help us to effectively view Buddhism more meaningfully.

The kanji character “聞” consists of two components. One is an outer component “門,” and the other is an inner component “耳”. The outer component we call “*mon*” which means gate. It looks like the swinging saloon doors in the western cowboy movie that I have seen. The inner component we read as, “*mim*” which means “ear.” So the kanji character “聞” reads as “an ear in the gate.” Can you figure out why the *monpo* kanji means “an ear in the gate?” Physically, our ears are opened for business 24/7. This is why we can wake up when we hear the alarm sound in the morning.

Although our ears “open” 24/7, we sometimes hear but we don’t listen. Why does that happen? This is because the ears in the gate were closed. We do not listen with intent in our minds. Our minds are not set to listen even though our ears can physically take in sound vibrations.

Fortunately or unfortunately, our ears respond well to worthwhile information but do not respond well to seemingly meaningless information. Our mind intentionally opens and closes the gates of our ears. This is why the *Three Treasures* reminds us that it is difficult to listen to the dharma because our ears open and close through our own biases. The *Three Treasures*, however, goes on to read, “now we hear it.”

The Hongwanji Eighth Monshu, Rennyō Shonin’s disciple, Junsei, recorded Rennyō’s daily sayings “*Rennyō Shonin Goichidai Kikigaki*.” In the book, Junsei wrote Rennyō Shonin’s explanation of *monpo*. Rennyō explains,

“There are many people who memorize the dharma to gain knowledge or for intellectual understanding. There are few people who listen to the dharma (monpo) to re-

flect upon their own life as their life lessons. So, there are only a few people who rarely encounter the life of awakening through the dharma (56)”.

Shinran Shonin made reference to “listening” in his book, *Study of Single Recitation and Multiple Recitation* (Ichinen Tanen Moni). He wrote,

“[In Jodo Shinshu] listening signifies there is no doubt in your mind after you listen to the teachings of Amida’s primal vows. Also, listening is the dharma to symbolize Shinjin.”

This thought is known as “listening equals awakening” (Mon Soku Shin).

In my case, I was able to correct my English pronunciation, because my teacher repeatedly advised me to go to the college. When she first suggested it, I was lazy and felt, “it is too much work to switch the schools.” My ears were closed. However, after imagining my next 40 years of ministry in BCA, I realized the truth of her advice. My ears then opened and I took her advice as *dharma*.

If Shinran Shonin and Rennyō Shonin existed in this 21st century, they would affirm that,

“Even if you would encounter thousands of dharma talks (stories of universal truth from life lessons), if you do not listen/monpo to them (you just take them as knowledge), you are actually not listening at all. By listening to the dharma, we need to live our life deeply and mindfully which is the way to awakening.”

Gassho



STATUE OF SHINRAN SHONIN AT THE SHOREN-IN TEMPLE, KYOTO



This statue is a representation of Shinran as a child. Following the death of both his parents, Shinran asked his uncle to take him to this Tendai temple where he received tokudo ordination at the age of nine.

BOOK CENTER

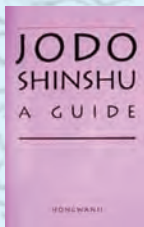
Hongwanji Monto Gongyo CD

Recording of the daily ritual sutras in the Jodo Shinshu Honganji-ha. The sutras included: *Shoshin-ge, Go-bunsho* by Rennyō, *Bussetsu Amida-kyō*

Books

Jodo Shinshu, A Guide by Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

This book makes the basic tenets and traditions of Judo Shinshu available to all who have little or no knowledge of our tradition of Buddhism.



The Buddha's Gift to the World by Koshin Otani (former Monshu)

This book is composed of 36 short inspirational chapters, demonstrating how Buddhism is lived in everyday situations. Monshu Ohtani shares his insights on kindness, compassion, mindful attention to others, faith, and self-understanding through personal stories and examples. The Buddha's Wish for the World was written for general audiences, not just followers of the Shin tradition. Americans who are familiar with other Buddhist teachings will find many similarities, but also unique differences that come out of the Pure Land vision.

Recipes of Japanese Cooking written by Yuko Fujita

Amazon Reviews:

"...The majority of the book is filled with recipes that cover a gamut of staple Japanese dishes. The nice thing is they do go step by step with a few photographs to illustrate. And if you are trying to learn Japanese language, each page is in English and Japanese..."

"...If your interest in learning Japanese cooking is of a practical nature--to make some meals for yourself--it will be hard to find a better book than this one..."

"...Bilingual English/Japanese Cookbook with Wonderful Selection of Recipes..."



Did You Know? - continued from page 7)

him at his temple in Hokkaido in 2009 for their Obon festivities. Also, Issei Okita (now in Nagoya and son of Seibi and Moruko Okita) and his wife met us on the grounds of Nishi Hongwanji, as we arrived in the afternoon, and sat with us for the services.

On June 6, retired BCA minister, Rev. Keizo Norimoto (Betsuin minister, 1966-1976), wandered by and sat with us in the Overseas section. He was in Japan, lecturing about the Japanese American experience in America. After the morning services (6:00 am morning service, followed by the Ascension Service) and tour of the Hongwanji grounds and the Ohtani Hombyō, some of us did a quick tour of Kyoto, Kiyomizu-tera, Rokkakudo and Shoren-in. When we returned, in the lobby of the New Miyako Hotel (Kyoto), Rev. Masami Nakagaki (Betsuin minister 1954-1957, 1961-1966) appeared and renewed friendships with many members.

Many thanks to American Holiday Travel, Ernest and Carol Hida, who arranged this amazing pilgrimage for us!

Special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Mitsuru Oshita for their donation of 4 potted, 6-foot+ Rhafis palms, which were picked up by Ken Kawasaki and placed at the West entrance of the temple. The plants were grown and tended to by Mr. Oshita, who is the brother of Fumio Oshita. Mr. Oshita's wife, the former Mitsue Kato, was a Sunday school teacher at the Betsuin in the 50s and 60s. Her older sister, Bobbie Kato Shiota, was also active in the YBA and a Sunday school teacher. Their niece, Karen Escano, is presently active with the Nishi ABA.



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by BWA

Old T-Shirts

...to be recycled into
wonderful things!

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BETSUIN PHOTOS



Dharma School Attendance Awardees



Service held in the Nokotsu-do for Memorial Day



Recognition of high school graduates and parents



Rimban Briones and Rev. Takata hold the annual Obon Service at the Evergreen Cemetery.



The Obon dancing begins with a brief service by the ministers on the yagura.



Obon Service
L-R/front: Rev. Seikan Fukuma (Jpn speaker), Rimban Briones and Rev. Patti Usuki (Eng speaker) Back: Rev. Nakata and Rev. Takata

(Additional photos on page 14)

MORE BETSUIN PHOTOS



The Nishi Center children dance on stage led by director, Susan Mukai



The men of L.A. Matsuri Taiko



Singer, Marc Sanwo, provided a few of the bon odori songs "live."



Lina Okita (left) and Kelly Nguyen



Nobuko Miyamoto (center) and company along with a Fandango group perform live, a new "Little Tokyo/Boyle Heights" fusion bon odori song, *Bambutsu no Tsunagari*, "all things are connected."

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, 2014

- 9 Fumi Urushima
- 16 Ted Tadashi Okino
- 19 Elsie Yoshiko Terakami
- 31 Bruce Nakamura

- 17 Masato Ben Watanabe
- 19 Takeichi Jack Furutani
- 22 Agnes Ayako Nakamura
- 26 Kimie Izumida
- 27 Kazue Okamura
- 27 Yoshiharu Yamamoto
- 27 Atsushi Sasaki

June, 2014

- 1 Fumiko Roberta Shiozaki
- 3 Tsuyako Ruby Sumida
- 4 Takeko Sadamoto
- 5 Frank Takashi Niimi
- 7 Matsuko Fujikawa
- 7 Albert Ryoji Sugimoto
- 9 Yoshiharu Mizutani
- 11 Haruko Fujimoto

July, 2014

- 3 Keiko Tsuruta
- 8 Susie Toshiye Katase
- 14 Masayuki Henry Kodama
- 21 Isao George Miyakawa
- 30 Mikiko Shinuchi



Mitsuyo Tanaka, along with hundreds of others, dancing in the twilight with the Los Angeles skyline in the background

Betsuin Jiho

Editor-in-Chief: Rimban William Briones

English Editor: Elaine Fukumoto

Photos: Koichi Sayano and Glen Tao

SEPTEMBER 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Labor Day Betsuin Closed	2	3	4 Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class 6:00 pm	5	6
Bon Odori Exercise 8:30 am 7 Regular Service 10:00 am Registration for Dharma School	8	9 Bon Odori Exercise 6:30 pm	10	11 Board Meeting 7:30 pm	12	13
14 Regular Service 10:00 am	15 Study Class Rev Takata 6:30-7:30 pm Annon Cafe 7:30-8:30 pm	16 Go-Meinichi-ko 1:30 pm Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class for 30s & 40s 7:00 pm	17	18 Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class 6:00 pm	19	20 Ohigan Seminar 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Bon Odori Exercise 8:30 am 21 Ohigan Service 10:00 am	22	23 Bon Odori Exercise 6:30 pm	24	25	26	27
28 Regular Service 10:00 am	29	30				

OCTOBER 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class 6:00 pm	3	4
Bon Odori Exercise 8:30 am 5 Eshinn-ni/Kakushin-ni Service 10:00 am	6 Study Class Rev Takata 6:30-7:30 pm Annon Cafe 7:30-8:30 pm	7	8	9 Board Meeting 7:30 pm	10 FBWA/SDBWA/SDDSTL Conference in Irvine	11 FBWA/SDBWA/SDDSTL Conference in Irvine
12 Regular Service 10:00 am FBWA/SDBWA/SDDSTL Conference in Irvine	13	14 Bon Odori Exercise 6:30 pm	15	16 Go-Meinichi-ko 1:30 pm Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class 6:00 pm	17	18
19 Bon Odori Exercise 8:30 am Regular Service 10:00 am	20 Study Class Rev Takata 6:30-7:30 pm Annon Cafe 7:30-8:30 pm	21 Beginning Buddhism Rimban Briones Study Class for 30s & 40s 7:00 pm	22	23	24	25
26 Regular Service 10:00 am	27	28 Bon Odori Exercise 6:30 pm	29	30	31	