

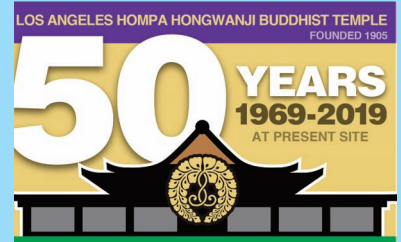
# LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

No. 441

March-April 2017

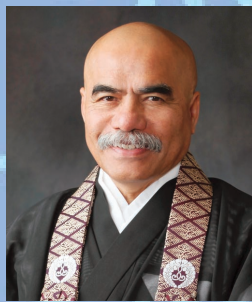
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WWW



*RIMBAN'S MESSAGE*

## THOUGHTS ON INTERCONNECTION



**RIMBAN  
WILLIAM BRIONES**

### KOKUN

*We are all Buddha's  
children*

*We will follow the  
Buddha's teaching*

*We will be friendly to  
everyone*

Every weekday morning at 9:00 the Nishi Day Care Center and a Betsuin ministers do a short service, that include *Juseige* and recitation of the *Kokun*. *Kokun*, literally translate into "school rule or lesson".

About 30 years ago, Robert Fulghum wrote a book, entitled "*All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten*". It started with this opening:

*Share everything  
Play fair*

*Don't hit people*

*Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody*

*Wash your hands before you eat*

*Put things back where you found them*

*Clean up your mess*

*Don't take things that aren't yours*

Very simple... yet if we all lived by those simple bits of wisdom the world would be such wonderful place.

Just like the *Kokun* ... We're teaching our children how to get along together.

One of the touchstones of Buddhism is the principle that Life is Interdependent. We are a

product of many influences that create who we are and how we feel. Our failure to recognize this creates greater egotism and detachment.

And as I reflect upon the ever-changing direction that our new president and his administration is leading our country, there is this profound sense of disconnect and disharmony throughout our country and the rest of the world.

We've all heard of *Indra's Net of Jewels*, the metaphor that we are Jewels in this interconnected net, a net that extends throughout the whole universe in all ten directions. At each point of intersection of the net is a jewel. Each jewel is unique in its shape, color, and luster, At the same time, each jewel is related to all the other jewels on the net. So, when one jewel sparkles, the light is picked up by other jewels which in turn sparkles and these are again in turn reflected on different jewels again. This is the way it is in our life. Our thoughts, our words, and our actions are those that are interrelated with those of others and affect and influence those around us. And those around us in turn are affecting us.

The size of the universe is beyond our comprehension. It has been around longer than we humans have. While the laws which operates are dependable, it will not intervene supernaturally in the human story. It didn't raise a finger to stop the holocaust, it didn't stop 9/11, it didn't stop Haitian earthquake, nor will it clean up the oil spill in the Gulf Coast.

*(continued on page 10)*

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## CHERRY BLOSSOM

by Rev. Koho Takata



**REV. KOHO TAKATA**

My overseas ministry began in Hawaii. I was in Hawaii for 16 years. During those last six years, I was working at the Hawaii kyodan headquarters. During that period, I accompanied the Hawaii kyodan bishop to Honzan (mother temple in Kyoto) nearly every other month to attend various meetings.

Kyoto is a beautiful place. When I was attending Ryukoku University, I lived in Fushimi, Kyoto for six years. I, recently, enjoyed some *Tamano Hikari* sake which is produced in Fushimi. The occasion brought me back to my time in Fushimi. There are many travelers from all over the world, especially, in April to view the cherry blossoms. I frequently went to Maruyama Park located in the Yasaka Shrine in Gion to see the beautiful cherry blossoms and enjoyed drinking sake under the cherry blossoms with my friends. Whenever I think of cherry blossoms, a poem composed by Shinran Shonin comes to my mind: “*Cherry blossoms that are felt to last till tomorrow, may well blow away during the night.*”

Our founder Shinran Shonin was ordained at the age of nine. He was determined to become a monk. He had his uncle take him to Master Jichin of Shorenin Temple (a Tendai temple). Master Jichin said to him, “*It is late at night. We shall have the ordination ceremony tomorrow.*” Shinran Shonin found the beautiful cherry blossoms in the garden and shared a poem with Master Jichin. “*There are beautiful cherry blossoms in the garden. There are now living gloriously. However, they might all be gone by tonight through rain or storm. My life is the same as those cherry blossoms. I might also die by tomorrow.*” Master Jichan was impressed and moved by his poem and his earnest and serious attitude to enter monkhood. He conducted Shinran’s ordination ceremony on that midnight.

With this, whenever I see or think about cherry blossoms, I recall the poem by Shinran. It reminds me of impermanence. Everything changes at each moment. Live today as today and not as tomorrow or yesterday. I always tend to think that it is tomorrow for me. However, as cherry blossoms remind me, I really don’t know whether I still be alive tomorrow or not. I have to fully live each moment of my life.

I received my ordination over 30 years ago. Since then, I encountered much “death and dying” in Japan, Hawaii, Arizona, and Los Angeles. Our founder, Shinran Shonin, sought to solve the issue of birth and death throughout his lifetime. Rennyō Shonin, who was the eighth abbot, emphasized contemplating one’s after-life at the here and now by listening to the Buddha-Dharma. Rennyō Shonin stated, “*There is no tomorrow in the Buddha-Dharma.*” He emphasized the importance of receiving

Buddha-Dharma at this present moment because there is no tomorrow in the Buddha-Dharma.

I would like to share a story about a memorable moment I had had of a person at the time of his death. I had met this person in Arizona. He was Buddhist but was not a member of the Arizona Buddhist Temple. His illness was discovered three months prior to his death. Until the the discovery of his terminal illness, he was seemingly very healthy. I received a call from the family asking me to visit him. At the hospital, he was wearing a mask for oxygen but was able to speak. After introducing myself to him, I started communicating with him because his wife wanted me to prepare a Buddhist name for him. I wanted to know more about him before deciding upon a name. As I started the conversation, he immediately recited “*Namo Amida Butsu.*” His recitation of the Nembutsu was unexpected. I was surprised and overwhelmed. He fully expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Buddha at his moment of death.

*Namo Amida Butsu* — I entrust myself to the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life. *Namo* was his self-reflection. I was totally incapable to attain anything by my own effort. Therefore, I totally depended on *Amidabutsu*, *Amida Buddha* who had perfect guidance, limitless Compassion and timeless wisdom.

Two days later, I explained the meaning of the bedside service and conducted the service with him and family members. While I conducted the service, he removed his mask, put his hands together in the *gassho*, and kept reciting *Nembutsu* in his deep gratitude and appreciation inspite of his difficulties in breathing. His hands were shaking, his eyes were filled with his tears, and his recitation of *Nembutsu* was not perfect. But, I appreciated his *Nembutsu*—hearing the calling voice of *Amida Buddha*.

After his passing, I had opportunities to speak with his immediate family members about their beloved one. The cancer was causing breathing difficulties. There was a big tumor in his lung which pushed upon his heart causing the difficulties. The family shared with me that he had decided on his own how to end his life because of his thoughtfulness to the family. The doctor had asked his wife whether she wanted to remove the tubes. Being aware of the conversation between the doctor and his wife, the husband wanted to avoid his family having to discuss ending of his life. He showed his caring mind and heart, his compassion to his wife and daughters. After hearing this from the family, I realized that he truly solved his death and dying while he was alive and discovered meaning of his life in the *Nembutsu*, *Namo Amida Butsu*.

There is no tomorrow in the Buddha-Dharma. Living fully each moment means living in the Buddha-Dharma. Living in the Bud-

(continued on page 6)

## FREE AND EQUAL

by Rev. Kazuaki Nakata



REV. KAZ

*"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."* (United States Code, Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 4)

As Americans, you may hear or recite this pledge on various occasions at various places. If you are of a Christian background, you may imagine Lord Jesus Christ as the symbol of a one God nation. It is natural to do so since the pledge was based on Christian ideology. How about people of other faiths? Allāh is the greatest God in Islam, as Muslims recite Allāhu akbar. Hindus believe in multiple gods such as Brahmā and Śiva. Atheists do not believe in any gods.

Buddhism neither accepts nor refuses to be under God. Metaphysically, there is no basis for such a concept. As Buddhists, we believe that we are able to maintain one nation, whether we are under God or not, as long as we are humble and do our best. One of the early discourses of the Buddha, Majjhima Nikāya, states that each person should be treated equally, based on their words and deeds, not their origin or current status. In Buddhism, it matters not what one believes or does not believe, but the way one lives, is the basis for equality.

Our Jodo Shinshu founder, Shinran Shonin expressed his understanding on equality in *A Record in Lament of Divergences*. It says, *"all sentient beings, without exception, have been our parents and brothers and sisters in the course of countless lives in many states of existence."* (C.W.S. 664) He did not see the boundary of discrimination, due to belief, ethnicity, culture or social status. His understanding is known as *Ondobo*. It is the one of core philosophies in our teachings and he emphasized it in various writings.

Although he was an ordained priest at Mt. Hiei, under the Tendai Buddhist order, he realized that he was not able to control his human desires. He deeply sensed that there should not be any distinction between priests and laity. Hence, his understanding of Jodo Shinshu led him to believe in true equality. Later in life, he commented that he did not have a single disciple, because he was simply a follower of the Nembutsu teachings. In his understanding, *ondobo* in Jodo Shinshu was the key word to transcend the typical homage relationship between priest and adherent in an organization. This was a very unique concept.

Many religious leaders talk about equality and no distinction between leaders and followers, but these leaders do not behave as ordinary members in the group, and the followers regard the leaders as special beings.

Although Shinran Shonin did not have any intention of forming his own Buddhist school, his great-grandson *Kakunyo Shonin* (Third Monshu) organized the Hongwanji Temple, as a head temple for Jodo Shinshu fellows in 1321. It became the center of the Jodo Shinshu Sect. The spirit of *ondobo* had been maintained by descendants of Shinran and his fellows for many centuries, enjoying an equal way of living.

An organization can be a useful solution for gathering people. On the other hand, it often creates divisions. In Jodo Shinshu, it appeared as a separation between ministers and members and later it was immobilized as an organizational hierarchy. As a result, Shinran Shonin's spirit of *ondobo* was gradually weakened.

A Buddhist can be identified as a lifelong learner. Our Jodo Shinshu teachings encourage learning and continue Shinran Shonin's spirit. In 1971, when Shonyo Shonin (23rd Monshu) conducted Shinran Shonin's 700th memorial service, he mentioned a letter on the *dobo* movement. In the letter, he mentioned the sense of impending crisis on this mere shell, and suggested that all Jodo Shinshu fellows (both ministers and members) become listeners of the *Buddha-dharma* to propagate the teachings of Jodo Shinshu. In April of 2012 at the Hongwanji Temple, there was a discussion about how Shinran Shonin's spirit could be effectively transmitted by his 800th Memorial in 2062, and 'the movement of aiming for the Ondobo Society' was set as a goal for the next 50 years.

Buddhism reminds us to live the middle way. There is a no single way to reach a goal. There is no absolute right or wrong. By making mistakes, we as humans grow and advance in our daily lives. The history of our Jodo Shinshu shows how difficult it is to maintain the original spirit and philosophy. However, our Jodo Shinshu strives to hold *ondobo* as an essential philosophy for all sentient beings.

*Gassho*





## SPRING OHIGAN SERVICE

by Rev. Koho Takata

The Buddhist communities in Los Angeles are reminded of the coming Higan, a time to reflect on the human condition and examine the options open to us through the Infinite Wisdom and Compassion of Amida Buddha. 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 Spring Higan Rededication Service which will be held on **Sunday, March 19, 2017 at 10:00 AM**. The guest speaker for the service will be **Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara** of Co-Director of Center for Buddhist Education of the Buddhist Churches of America for English Service and **Rev. Nobuo Miyaji** who recently retired from the Buddhist Churches of America for Japanese Service.

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

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

In conjunction with Spring Higan Service, we are fortunate to hold a Spring Higan Seminar entitled *"Life of Awakening: Shinjin"* on Saturday, March 18, 2017. The seminar will begin with opening service at 9:00am and end with closing service at 3:00pm. For English speaking attendees, **Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara** will be speaking in the morning session and **Rev. Nobuo Miyaji** in the afternoon session. For Japanese speaking attendees, Rev. Nobuo Miyaji will be speaking in the morning session and Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara in the afternoon session. The registration is available at temple office. The deadline will be

(continued on page 6)

## HANAMATSURI SERVICE

by Rev. Koho Takata

The members of Los Angeles Homba Hopngwanji Buddhist Temple and their families are invited to attend the annual Hanamatsuri Service, which is the observance of Sakyamuni Buddha's Birthday Service to be held on Sunday, April 9, 2017. The guest speaker for the service will be **Rev. Ryuta Furumoto** of Senshin Buddhist Temple delivering Dharma messages both in English and in Japanese.



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

Many of the rites that are observed during Hanamatsuri are based on the events we are told happened at the time of Prince Siddhartha's birth. The hanamido or miniature floral altar of bright flowers provides the setting of the beautiful Lumbini Garden where he was born. The statue of the baby Buddha with its arm extended illustrates the virtues of Amida Buddha reaching out to all beings and the pouring of sweet tea on the statue represents the gentle rain that fell in Lumbini Garden and bathed the baby Buddha. May we all realize the meaning of his appearance in this world, so that we may humbly accept and understand his teaching as a way of our lives. Let us all gather to celebrate the birth of Sakyamuni Buddha, who guided by Wisdom vitalized by Compassion continue to aspire to develop the person, both ourselves and others, that we may all fulfill the ultimate meaning of life.

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

(continued on page 6)

**DID YOU KNOW?**

by Eiko Masuyama



**“Rev. John Doami Returns After 6 ½ yearsStudy,” Buddhist Newsletter, BCA, July, 1965**

The Rev. John Doami, his charming wife, and son, returned to the United States aboard a President Liner on May 10. He has assumed his ministerial position at the Los Angeles Betsuin.

Rev, Doami is a graduate of the University of California where he majored in Psychology. He then entered Ryukoku University in Kyoto, in 1958, to study Buddhism and graduated in 1961. He continued his graduate studies at Ryukoku University and concluded all requirements for his doctorate degree before his return.

His charming wife is the former Koko Hosotani of Kyoto. She is a graduate of the Kyoto Women’s College where she was an outstanding orator. Their young son is 9 months old and is named David Ryushin Doami.

John Doami was formerly an active member of the San Francisco YBA.

*[Rev. Doami served at the Los Angeles Betsuin from 1965 to 1969]*

\* \* \* \* \*

**Alice Kimoto Ibaragi, interviewed and audio taped at home, September 1, 2016**

Alice Kimoto was 18 years old when her family joined the Nishi Hongwanji group, called the Hongwanji Family #18390, led by Rev. Newton Ishiura, Rev. Reichi Mohri, and Yutaka Shinohara. The family consisted of the families of Rimban Kow, Reverends Okita, Hayashima, Abiko, Ohno, and friends and relatives of Mr. Shinohara.

The Kimoto family owned Kimoto Knitting Company on Weller Street. They had a truck and were able to take it to Santa Anita Assembly Center, but not able to drive it to Heart Mountain. They stored some of their goods at Nishi Hongwanji as they departed for Santa Anita, on May 9, 1942. The family departed by train, on September 9, for Heart Mountain. They traveled for three days, sleeping upright on hard seats, under surveillance of guards, with dim gas lights flickering, and shades drawn. The train stopped at San Luis Obispo, where local Japanese came out and handed out candy and treats through the windows to the riders. There was a rest break in Colorado, near the Colorado River, with no town or other trains in sight. The train arrived in Heart Mountain during a dust storm. The occupants had to walk up a hill to their barracks in the storm.

Alice recalls her high school classroom was a barrack with benches only, initially. She signed up for a geometry class with teacher, Mr. Kaoru Inouye, because he had a reputation as an excellent teacher.

*[Alice Ibaragi resides in Montebello with husband, Albert Ibaragi. The late Mr. Kaoru Inouye settled in Southern California, attended Los Angeles Betsuin, served as temple president, 1982 – 1983, and was the temple photographer for over thirty years.]*

\* \* \* \* \*

**Gotanye Service [1947],  
YBA scrapbook**

Picnic grounds of Solano Canyon in Elysian Park is expected to be filled with hundreds of sports-loving young people of the community when the Los Angeles YBA sponsors it 2nd annual outdoor Gotanye service and outing on May 28.

The day’s program will be opened at 10:30 a.m. with a special Gotanye rite commemorating the birth of St. Shinran, founder of the Shinshu sect, which will be led by chairman Agnes Nakamura with Kimi Terama at the organ.

The Rev. Bunyu Fujimura of the Salinas Buddhist Church will deliver the sermon. A vocal solo by Elso Ito, entitled “Nirvana’s Bliss,” will be one of the highlights of the morning service.

Souvenir pictures of the entire group will be taken by Toyo Miyatake Studio after the service, followed by luncheon prepared by members of the YBA.

With Johnny Okazaki as chairman, the afternoon will be devoted to playing games, softball, ping pong, tennis, volley ball, and hiking.

Those without transportation are requested to meet promptly at 9:45 at the church.

On the various committees for the affair are: Sam Kuratomi, Sadame Nomi, Agnes Nakamura, Sue Sukekane, Mitzi Takemoto, Noboru Ishitani, Bill Ishii, and Dorothy Mori.

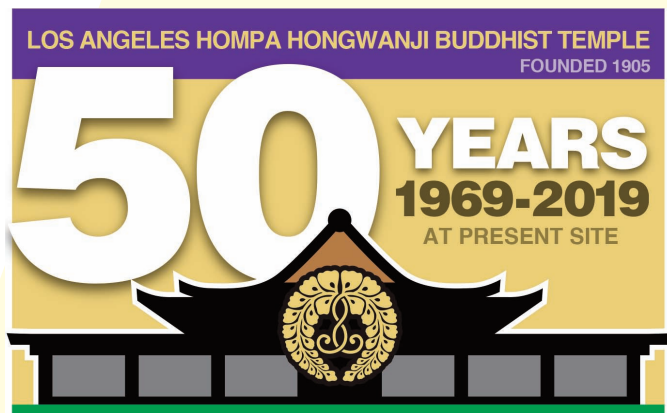
[Also,] Akira Hedani, Irene Takeshita, Eileen Yoshida, and Kiyoshi Yamada.

\* \* \* \* \*

**October 23, 2016: Visit of Michiko Sato Ikeda of Arizona Buddhist Temple**

*(continued on page 10)*

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY BENEFIT DANCE III



The third annual Betsuin 50th Anniversary Benefit Dance will be held on **Saturday, April 22nd** in the Betsuin Kaikan. As in the past, live music will be by Kokoro.

Individual tickets are \$50, advanced sale, and \$60 at the door.

Reserved Sponsor Tables, seating ten, are available. The Bronze Level table is \$500. The Silver Level is \$1,000 and will include hors d'oeuvres. The Gold Level is \$2,500 which provides hors d'oeuvres and wine.

For further information or to purchase tickets or reserve a table, please contact one of the following:

Kenji Hatakeyama

323-719-4479 • taicho738@gmail.com

Wayne Nagao

310-374-0690 • wnagao@msn.com

Carol Tanita

626-487-6226 • cntanita@mail.com

*Pictured below are scenes from the Benefit Dance II in 2016  
(Further information on page 12)*



*(Takata - continued from page 2)*

dha-Dharma means listening to the Buddha-Dharma at each moment. Listening to the Buddha-Dharma means embodying the Buddha-Dharma. Without Buddha-Dharma, I cannot say that I am fully living at this moment. dharma is everything and everywhere. Sometime you are my dharma teacher. Cherry blossoms are my dharma teacher. Dharma is everything and everywhere.

Our beloved ones, represented by the Infinite Life and Light of the Buddha, are always guiding us to listen to the Buddha-dharma which makes us to fully live our life at each moment. Let us listen to the voiceless voice of our loved ones and live fully in the *Nembutsu, Namo Amida Butsu*, as a basis of true and real life at each moment of our lives.

*“Those who have been born first guide those who come later, and those who are born later join those who were born before. This is so that the boundless ocean of birth-and-death be exhausted.” (CWS P.291)*



*(Spring Ohigan - continued from page 4)*

on March 11, 2017. The registration fee is \$15.00 including lunch and refreshments. We encourage all of you to Listen to the Buddha-Dharma and apply it to our daily lives.

*(Hanamatsuri - continued from page 4)*

Buddha. Hanamatsuri Service, sponsored by the **Los Angeles Buddhist Temples Federation**, will be also held on **Saturday, April 8 at 1:00PM at Nishi Kaikan.**



## KAKOCHO, FAMILY RECORD BOOK

As one of commemoration projects for the 50th Anniversary of Current Temple Site which will be observed in 2019, Nishi Dharma Center recently produced a Kakocho "Family Record Book."

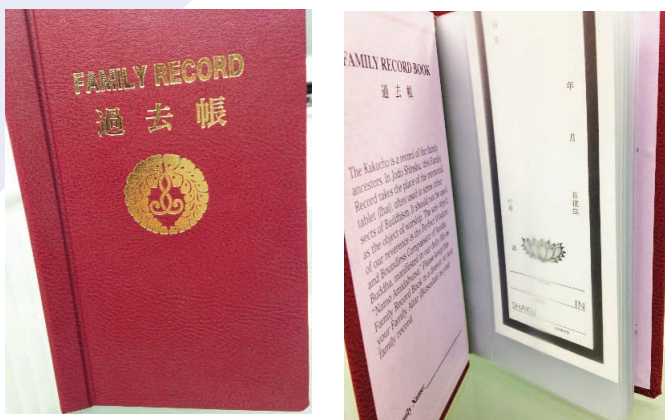
When you have a funeral service for your beloved family member, you receive a Homyo (Dharma Name) card which contains the information about Dharma Name, name of deceased, death date, age, birth place, name of next of kin, address of next kin, funeral date and time, and funeral officiant. You can put this card into Kakocho "Family Record Book. There are 10 folders (for 10 deceased family members) in this Kakocho. If you have more than 10 deceased family members, you may purchase additional books. If you would like to make the Kakocho for your brother or sister who lives other state or country, you may make extra book for them. If you miss or need the Homyo card, please contact temple. We will be able to issue a new card for you.

The Kakocho is a record of the family ancestors. Our temple has a temple Kakocho for all deceased members and each family also should have their own family record. Your Kakocho will be handed down by your children and grandchildren, generation to generation. This will be very important record book for your family.

In Jodo Shinshu, this Family Record takes the place of the memorial tablet (Ihai), often used in some other sects of Buddhism. It should not be used as the object of worship. The sole object of our reverence is the Perfect Wisdom and Boundless Compassion of Amida Buddha, manifested in our daily life as "Namo Amida Butsu." Please keep this Family Record Book in a drawer or near your Family Altar (Butsudan) as your family record.

When you have a memorial day of your deceased family member, please open the Kakocho, reflect upon your life and death, and hear the Buddha-Dharma through your loved one.

The Kakocho is now available at Nishi Book Center at \$25.00 per book. The part of the sale will help to raise fund for Nishi Dharma Center to further hearing the Buddha-Dharma. Thank you for your help.



## BUDDHIST STUDIES FOR TEENS

### *Applied Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Studies for Teens*

*In 2015, Rev. Kaz Nakata began a course of intensive Buddhist studies for the Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops at Nishi Betsuin. The students were taught the essential teachings of Buddhism in English, Chinese, Japanese and Indian Sanskrit. Their essays have been in the previous issues of the Jiho. Here is another one.*

### What Is Sangha?

Justin Chu

Hello and gassho. Have you ever wondered what sangha is? Sangha means group or assembly, which refers normally to the disciples of the Buddha and his teachings. The sangha learn, and spread, the Buddha's lessons about life (dharma). At a temple, we are the sangha, and what the priests teach is the dharma. Sangha means, in Sanskrit, indivisible.

After seven weeks of enlightenment, the Buddha went to his five companions and gave the first two sermons. The five became the first sangha. Many other people joined the Buddha, and they too became part of the sangha. After Buddha died, the disciples stayed as a community and wandered around receiving money and food, also known as alms. As they stayed in one place during the rainy season, it led them to settling small, religious communities. These communities became religious places, and spread Buddhism.

Sangha is one of the Threefold Refuge, which also includes the Buddha and dharma. The Buddha is the enlightened one. The dharma is the teachings of the Buddha. The sangha is the monastic order or community. To say you take refuge in the Buddha is to believe in Buddhism, to take refuge in the dharma is to follow the teachings, and to take refuge in the sangha is to commit to the teachings of Buddha.

Sangha is important because without the students, without the priest, there would not be any such thing as Buddhism. All of the Threefold Refuge relies on each other, because without one, the others would not exist. If there were no Buddha, then there would be no dharma, and no sangha. They are all interdependent. We are the sangha because we are the students and disciples of the dharma.

### Amitabha Amitayus

Samantha Hayashi

When we go to the temple, we always thank Amida Buddha, but some don't really know who Amida Buddha is. Amitabha and Amitayus are two interpretations of his

*(continued on page 9)*

## THROUGH MY STUDY CLASS...

by Nancy Logrosso

I have lived my life with a narrow-minded world view, cultivated by my own religious beliefs. After having many difficulties, however, what I had believed could no longer cease my pain or give me a sense of direction. Similar to Christianity, my religion had absolute truth and rules that must be obeyed. Having lived by forcing myself to deny my own feelings for such a long time, I lost the sense of right and wrong or feeling of like and dislike. I was suffocated and felt lost. Even though I knew that my world view no longer fit who I was, I could neither destroy my belief nor I could I find a way to construct a new world view.

During such chaos, I was introduced to the Buddhist study class. Rev. Kaz's class helped me to regain my freedom to choose who I am. By understanding how religions stimulate our fear and hope, I learned a way to grasp my source of fear, which was coming from disobeying my religious rules. For example, learning about the history of the world religions, including Buddhism, it made sense to me that religions and their rituals were necessary to guide people to help them function as a community at the time. This awareness helped me to unwire numerous confusions I have had. I used to force myself to deny my thinking in order to accept conflicting religious beliefs and obey the law. The study class gave me the opportunities to think on my own and trust my own feelings. It became clear to me that believing the religion was deceiving myself. In other words, the Buddhist study class was completely opposite from other religious study classes I have been in. The Buddhist class encouraged me to look into myself instead of finding problems and fear in outside of the world.

For a person who only had a choice to see this world in one way, this class opened up various worldview, by contrasting my religious view with the Buddhist view. Without putting another judgment or fear on me, Buddhism helped me to clarify my feelings and thoughts. Rev. Kaz gave us a metaphoric contrast between world religions and Buddhism. Having absolute rules and truths, religious believers are like car drivers who only can go where the road leads them. They might not have much freedom to choose, but they can have safe and easy drive. On the other hand, Buddhists are like sailors who have freedom to go anywhere in the ocean. There is no road or rules to follow, yet there are much more responsibility to carry on oneself. There will be constant challenges to deal with uncertainty, face a great force of nature, and be aware of reality so that the one can increase choices to survive and reach the destination. For me, Buddhism is a benevolent light that allows me to reflect. Through reflection, I can freely learn, make mistakes, and create my own life. It is



Rev. Nakata's Japanese Study Class  
(Nancy Logrosso - back row, 6th from left)

a joyful journey to regain my confidence to build my own way of life and truly taking responsible for myself.

In the Buddhist study class, I also learned the vocabulary used by the Buddha and Shinran Shonin. For example, Rev. Kaz elaborated meaning of the ancient teachings of the Buddha, such as Amitabha and Amitayus. I also read Shinran Shonin's letters. Appreciating the depth of the teachings, I could see that Buddha and Shinran meant to explain things that scientists were trying to discover such as quantum physics and neuroscience. I am fascinated with this connection between science and Buddhism, giving me a sheer joy of learning.

*Nancy Logrosso has been attending Rev. Nakata's Japanese study class since this past September.*

## 2017 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Valid from January 1 through December 31, 2017

**\$250 PER EACH MEMBER OF A HOUSEHOLD**

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

Payments may be made in full or by installments  
throughout the year of **2017**



*Buddhist Teens - continued from page 7)*

name. Amitabha and Amitayus have different meanings, even if they sound the same, Their meanings are similar, but not exactly the same.

Amitabha has two parts to its name. The first part is "amita" and the second part is "bha." The first part, "amita," has two meanings, immeasurable or uncountable. The second part, "bha," means "light." This means that Amitabha means immeasurable light or uncountable light. Today, it is infinite connections, which explains the name of the Buddha because the Buddha has infinite connections the links everything together.

It is infinite connections because there are so many connections in the world. Some connections can be family and friends. Connections can even be people and their apps. For example, I play *Tsum Tsum* which is connected to many other people who can play virtually with me. They could be my friends or friends of friends. There are so many or uncountable connections that people don't even realize that they have these kind of connections. The more connections I make on this game, the more hearts I get and I'm getting help from these virtual connections.

There are other connections you don't notice as much. For example, you don't notice your connections with your food that you like until you really stop and think about it. To me, foods help me bring back memories from where my family and I ate. For example, my connection to pancakes brings back a memory from Japan, which was me eating a pancake for dinner. (It was very good). Once you think about it, you finally notice how many connections you have, to your friends, family, pets, food, and games as well. There are an infinite number of connections!

The other word that I will be telling you about is Amitayus. There are two parts in this word also. The first part is "amita", which I mentioned before. "Amita" means immeasurable or uncountable. "Yus", which is the second part of the word Amitayus, has a different meaning than "bha" in Amitabha. "Yus" means life rather than light. This means that Amitayus means immeasurable or uncountable life. Today, it is infinite life, which explains the name of the Buddha.

Amitabha and Amitayus go hand in hand with each other. When you have infinite links to friends and family, that consists of infinite lives within those links of people, you have many influences on your life. This is how two names can describe one person, Amida Buddha. One of the words can't exist without the other word.

**HATSUMAIRI****INFANT PRESENTATION SERVICE**

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

The LA *Betsuin* will hold its annual *Hatsumairi* Service on **Sunday, May 21st** in conjunction with the *Gotan-ye* Service which is the observance of the birth of the *Jodo Shinshu* founder, Shinran Shonin.



The ministers and the *dharma* school teachers will be conducting the *Hatsumairi* Service for any infant up to one (1) year of age.

To those who are interested in participating in the *Hatsumairi*, please contact the Betsuin office by May 7, 2017.

(Registration form on page 13)

**SPRING OHIGAN SEMINAR**

## LIFE OF AWAKENING

### Namo Amida Butsu

Saturday, March 18, 2017  
9:00 am- 3:00 pm

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Rev. Nobuo  
Miyaji

Rev. Kiyonobu  
Kuwahara

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 Ohigan Seminar  
815 E. 1st St. Los Angeles, CA 90012

Deadline March 12th

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

## 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*

### November, 2016

- 24 Shizuye Takehana  
27 Mary Tsuruko Kinoshita

### December, 2016

- 1 Betty Toshiko Nakamura  
9 Ritsuko Takeuchi  
10 Miyuki Ichinose  
12 Owen Ikeda  
14 Morio Leo Marubayashi  
17 Bill Yuso Yokoyama  
18 Hatsumi Matoba  
Nakamura  
21 Matsue Fujikado  
22 Steve Kawakami  
26 Masako Mary Shingu

### January, 2017

- 2 Takeo William Kaneko  
3 Hideko Maruyama  
3 Houko Haruno  
9 Jun Fukushima  
10 Tsuneaki Kinoshita  
10 Howard Kho Iseda



(*Did You Know?* - continued from page 7)

Mrs. Michiko Sato Ikeda, sister of Carl and Sanford Sato, all active pre-war Nishi YBA member honored us with a visit to our temple, with her daughter, Laurie Kageyama. Mrs. Ikeda has been active at Arizona Buddhist Temple, especially in bon odori—leading and choreographing original dances for their bon odori.

Mrs. Ikeda danced in the first bon odori in 1935, being taught by Rev. Iwanaga, who visited temples up and down the coast, teaching *minyo* and obon dances. She recalls that bon odori were originally taught by ministers, like Rev. Washioka (1934 – 1938). Then Rev. Yukawa (1933 - 1940) asked her to teach and she has been doing it ever since.



*Michiko Ikeda*

It was a boisterous reunion with reunion of Mrs. Ikeda and Laurie Kageyama with Sherry Watanabe and Judy Izumo (mother, Kay Ichikawa Izumo is originally from Arizona).

\* \* \* \* \*

### Funeral for Mrs. Yoshiko Okino, wife of late Mr. Masaru Okino

On Saturday, October 22, 2016, a funeral service was held in the Fukui Chapel for Yoshiko Okino, the wife of the late Mas Okino. Attending were the wives of the late Ben Jinkawa (Fumiko), and Tsukasa Saneto (Motoko), as well as Yoko Munekata, wife of Ryo Munekata, and Minnie Iseda, wife of Kho Iseda. Also, traveling from Saratoga, CA, was Min Ota, former Nishi Sunday school teacher and YBA member. Mr. Ota was originally from San Jose area, and returned to the San Jose area, to return often to the LAYBA Kodomo reunions.

The late Mas Okino was an active YBA member after WWII, then a Nishi high school Sunday School teacher for many years, and Betsuin president 1991 – 1993.

(*Rimban Briones* - continued from page 1)

Still, we are composed of the very stuff of the universe. For each of us as individuals, thorough innumerable generations, we are connected all the way to the beginning of life. The atoms which make up the molecules of life connect us back even further to the creation of the stars.

We cannot separate ourselves from this whole. Everything that happens affects us, just as everything we do has an effect on the whole, for better or worse. But we are only part of the whole. We are subject to physical laws, like gravity, or the laws of nature, like genetics which are not debatable.

There is no way to escape the reality that we, our identity is based in our relationship with the Dharma. The English translation of Dharma can mean many things, but they include Law, Suchness, Truth and Reality. In everyday language this Dharma can be described as Life, Universe, Life-giving force or energy. We are actually one with Dharma.

And that's what Buddhism is about. Buddhism is a religion of Awareness. We become aware of the principles of existence. We become aware the Dharma, the truths by which we try to think and live.

We become truly human when we are fully aware. This

(continued on page 11)

## Betsuin Jiho

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



BETSUIN PHOTOS



Judy Izumo, representing Hollywood Buddhist Church, presents a donation to the 50th Anniversary fund. Accepting the donation is board president, Kenji Hatakeyama (left) and 50th Anniversary chairperson, Ernest Hida.



During the BWA Kisaragiki Service, the following ladies were recognized for their 88th year: (l-r) Alice Matoba, Fumiko Jinkawa, and Emiko Ichikawa. Also pictured are Rimban Briones and Pam Tabata, BWA president.



Betsuin ladies who helped to prepare the ozouni that was served after the New Year's service.



BCA Winter Pacific Seminar - "East Meets West" Higashi and Nishi Perspectives Photo shows attendees from all over Southern District



Winter Pacific Seminar - Panel l-r Rev. Patti Usuki (San Fernando Valley Hongwanji), Rinban Noriaki Ito (Higashi Honganji), Rimban William Briones (Nishi Hongwanji).

*(Rimban Briones - continued from page 10)*

means we feel deeper appreciation for things that sustain our life. We see the need to make life better for all living things. This is what we teach our kids (*Kokun*). We become aware of the inter-connectedness with all things.

So when we begin to look into our own lives, when we look deep at the roots of the prejudice, intolerance and disharmony in our society and the world and truly listen with compassion we, as individuals, can then speak out confidently against bigotry, hatred, and discrimination. You can be informed, you can vote, sign petitions, write letters to your congressman/congresswoman. Individuality shines within the interdependent network of existence. Going back to Indra's Net of Jewels. Each Jewel becomes brighter, illuminated by other jewels. All the jewels are mutually made brighter. You are that jewel. You can make a difference.



46th ANNUAL KOUHAKU UTAGASSEN The competition ended in a tie between the Red (women) and the White (men) Teams. The tie was broken by the simple game of Jan Ken Po. The White Team won!





**Saturday, April 22, 2017 • DOORS OPEN: 1:00PM**  
**DANCE: 6:00PM-11:30PM**

**nishi hongwanji Buddhist Temple "kaikan"**  
 815 East 1st Street Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Reserved Sponsor Tables**

- Gold Level: \$2,500 Table of 10 *includes Hors d'oeuvres & wine*
- Silver Level: \$1,000 Table of 10 *includes Hors d'oeuvres*
- Bronze Level: \$500 Table of 10
- Individual: \$50 Advance/ \$60 at Door

**For more information**

- Kenji Hatakeyama | 323-719-4479 | taicho738@gmail.com
- Wayne Nagao | 310-374-0690 | wnagao@msn.com
- Carol Tanita | 626-487-6226 | cntanita@mail.com



Cut here

Please submit **RSVP Form with Payment** by **Friday, April 14.**

**Contact Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Required e-mail for Confirmation:** \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_ **Gold Level** - \$2,500 Table(s) of 10 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ **Silver Level** - \$1,000 Table(s) of 10 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ **Bronze Level** - \$500 Table(s) of 10 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ **Individual** - \$50 Advance/\$60 at Door \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ **Cannot attend but glad to donate** \$ \_\_\_\_\_
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One Check Only per Table. Make check payable: **LAHHBT**

**Return Address:**  
 LAHHBT - 50th Dance  
 815 East 1st Street  
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

# ***HATSUMAIRI***

**May 21, 2017**

## **REGISTRATION FORM**

**NAME OF CHILD:** \_\_\_\_\_

**BOY** \_\_\_\_\_ **GIRL** \_\_\_\_\_ **BIRTHDATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>NAME IN KANJI</b>	
--------------------------	--

**PARENTS' NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TEL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE SUBMIT THIS FORM TO THE BETSUIN OFFICE BY:**  
**MAY 7, 2017**

**LA Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple**  
815 E. 1st St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Tel: 213-680-9130

**Email: [info@nishihongwanji-la.org](mailto:info@nishihongwanji-la.org)**  
**FAX: 213-680-2210**