

A graphic of a blue scroll with a yellow spotlight beam shining down on the text.

PEOPLE
Spotlight

BCA Member takes part in Confirmation Ceremony at Honzan
Lorraine Watanabe (67)

Walnut Grove Buddhist Church (California, U.S.A.) member took part in the Confirmation Ceremony following the morning service on October 17, 2013. "Taking part in the ceremony at Hongwanji, I'm sure would have been the wish of my

parents and grandparents. I remember being told, "As a Jodo Shinshu member, you should receive your *Homyo* (Dharma name) while you are alive." Having the opportunity to do so, I am very touched." shared Watanabe as she welled up with tears.

Following the first generation to have set foot on U.S. soil, three generations have lived with the Jodo Shinshu teaching as their spiritual sustenance. Watanabe comments, "My grandparents brought a Butsudan from Hiroshima. I was raised learning about the importance of putting my hands together in gassho, and later inherited the family Butsudan from my mother which is how I am here today.

Not living near the temple, I don't attend services regularly. However, I help out at temple functions such as O-bon and bazaars. For me, the temple is and will always be a special place."

(Hongwanji Journal, November 1, 2013, p. 8)



Susumu Yamamoto (77),

Travels from Brazil to participate in *Hoshidan* and Confirmation Ceremony



A *Nisei* (2nd generation) Japanese-Brazilian, Susumu Yamamoto lives in Pereira Barreto City in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and is a member of the Honpa Hongwanji Temple of Noroeste. The temple district recently visited Hongwanji to take part in the Nembutsu *Hoshidan* and Confirmation Ceremony.

A doctor of dentistry, Yamamoto began to go regularly to the temple after being encouraged by his older sister and brother. In an interview he shared, "I've been without a religion until now. But as I think about the future, I've become worried. Because life is finite, I wanted reassurance so I could live the present to its fullest."

"I've been to Japan on several occasions, but this is my first time coming to Hongwanji. I was taken aback by its large size. I am exhausted, but a good kind of exhaustion. The main purpose [of taking part in this trip] was to participate in the Confirmation Ceremony to renew my awareness as a Hongwanji member. Having received my Dharma name, I can now go home with my mind at ease. For as long as I am able, I plan to go to the temple regularly and learn about Buddhism and Jodo Shinshu" and with a look of relief, Yamamoto departed Japan.

(Hongwanji Journal, November 10, 2013, p. 8)

U.S.-Japan temple members attend gathering

Sangha members from the Buddhist Church of Lodi and Walnut Grove Buddhist Church arrived in Japan on October 15 for a 12-day tour led by Rev. Katsuya Kusunoki. On October 16 and 17, the 23 members visited Hongwanji before going to Nagasaki, where they attended a gathering hosted by Kogenji Temple members, the family temple of Rev. Kusunoki. (see photo)

The trip was planned following a visit to California by 16 members of Kogenji Temple and head resident priest Rev. Naoya Kusunoki. “Now it’s our turn to visit Hongwanji and Nagasaki” expressed overseeing minister Rev. Katsuya, encouraging members of the Lodi and Walnut Grove temples to visit Japan.

A get-together was held following the Sunday service at Kogenji, where the U.S. visitors sang American songs and members of the Kogenji Women’s Association read a story entitled *Inochi wo itadaku*, using picture cards and prepared the story in English. The traditional summer delight, nagashi somen (trans., flowing somen noodles), was later served as Dharma friends enjoyed the company of one another.



(Hongwanji Journal, November 1, 2013, p. 8)



Nembutsu *Hoshidan* group from Brasil “Visiting Hongwanji during one’s lifetime”



“I want to go to Hongwanji while I still can.”
“I want to take part in a Confirmation Ceremony at Hongwanji, to show that I am a Hongwanji member.”- were comments received from the visiting South American delegation. Donning their white cleaning aprons, the 20 temple members guided by two district *kaikyoshi* ministers this year participated in the *Hongwanji Nembutsu Hoshidan* or “the program of the Nembutsu followers’ volunteer activities at Hongwanji” on October 24 and 25. (see photo)

With the hopes to visit Hongwanji at least once in their lifetime, members who were unable to attend the 750th Memorial for Shinran Shonin at Hongwanji eagerly encouraged the South American district to begin a Hongwanji tour. Beginning last year, the group this year was the second group from South America to take part in the *Hoshidan*.

The group this year consisted of participants aged 37 to 85 from a total of 8 temples from the Sao Paulo and Parana areas. Although outdoor cleaning activities were cancelled on both days due to wet typhoon weather, *Hoshidan* participants spent time wiping the walkways of the Amida and Founder’s Halls as they mingled with participants from Japan. During the program, 9 members received their Dharma names in a Confirmation Ceremony.

“Coming to Hongwanji for the first time I am very satisfied. Being able to also take part in a Confirmation Ceremony, I could not be happier,” shares Akemi Nakano, Honpa Hongwanji Temple of Brasil member. Celena Koyama, a member of Honpa Honwanji Temple of Sao Jose Dos Campos comments “I was able to come to Japan through the assistance of my daughters. We felt so welcomed

by the warmth of the Japanese that I am very touched.”

Kazutoshi Suzuki, a member of Komyoji Temple in Cafelandia, after 20 years, reunited with his sister, Fumiko Tsuru, who resides in Japan. “I was able to see my sister doing well. Each time we meet, I always think that it would be the last time,” expressed Suzuki.

Before taking part in the *Hoshidan* program at Hongwanji, the group travelled to Hokkaido and Okinawa. The group enjoyed seeing the famous sites of Japan, but a typhoon and seeing snow was a first for many of them.

Leading the group from South America was district *kaikyoshi* Rev. Chijo Okayama, who comments “Unable to attend the 750th Memorial in turn gave us this opportunity to take part in the *Hongwanji Nembutsu Hoshidan*, for which we are thankful. The positive feedback we are receiving is very inviting for others to take part in future trips, as the circle continues to grow. After returning home, I too will share my experiences of coming on this trip to as many as possible.”

