



HIGASHI HONGANJI NORTH AMERICA DISTRICT
SHINSHŪ ŌTANI-HA HOKUBEI KAIKYŌ-KU

Greetings from Bishop Noriaki Ito

We send our best wishes to you during this extremely challenging period of living in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it seems to be slowing down in some parts of the world, as of now, the number of infections and those who have died from the disease in our country continues to rise.

With the stay-at-home order throughout the state of California, we are all being forced to change our everyday lifestyles in ways we've never imagined before. Although this brings on new challenges, we also realize that this is the best way to slow down the spread of this dangerous disease and to keep ourselves and those around us healthy.

Our temples have also had to change how we operate and we are happy to see that you are exploring new ways to share the Dharma through virtual services that our members and friends can access through the internet. Our ministers are primarily working at their homes. But you can contact any of us through email or phone.

What we are experiencing is an example of the kind of unexpected impermanence that the Buddha said is an ever-present part of everyday life. It is extremely sad that so many people are suffering and dying from this pandemic. But it is also an opportunity to understand the true nature of life and to accept the challenges that we face as well. Impermanence also means that a return to our normal lives will eventually come.

I am reminded of the wise words of Rev. Yasuda Rijin who once said, "Nenbutsu is not the way to take the burden off one's shoulders, and be comfortable, but to give us strength and courage to shoulder any burden, even the ones we think are more than we can bear."

We hope that you are well and that you continue to take care of yourselves and your loved ones, and find the patience and resolve to get through this difficult time.

Gassho,

Noriaki Ito
Bishop/Director
Higashi Honganji North America District