

# Gassho

Newsletter of the Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

Fall 2025



# President's Message

As my term as temple president comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on the many events and the wonderful people who have been part of this journey. I am deeply grateful for everyone's support and contributions.

In a previous Gassho article, I shared a quote from Theodore Roosevelt that continues to inspire me:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming; but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly."

I don't usually rely on quotes, but this one has always resonated with me. It's easy to be a critic, but far more admirable to step up and get involved. That's what I appreciate most about our temple community—so many people are willing to work together and contribute to our shared success.

As the saying goes, "It takes a village." None of our accomplishments would have been possible without everyone's support and teamwork.

Buddhism teaches us gratitude, and I am truly thankful for all who have supported me and continue to help the temple thrive. Thank you for preserving our traditions, creating new ones for future generations, and building lasting memories together.

In Gassho

Tom Nakagiri

# Veterans Day Service

The Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple celebrated its third Veterans Day Service on Nov. 9, 2025. Present at the service were 11 veterans and three proxy family members, representing many branches of the military.

Taking part in the ceremony were:

- Ron Fukuji, Navy
- Rev. Ray Fukumoto, Army
- Dale Ito, Marines (proxy Melanie Morimoto)
- Milnes Kurashige, Army
- Erik Matsumura, Marines (proxy Irene Matsumura)
- Mark Mayeda, Marines
- Danny Nakagiri, Army
- Jim Nakahara, Army (proxy Emily Leach)
- Kay Obana, Army
- Lonnie Quon, Army Reserves
- Norman Tachiki, Army
- Ted Tenorio, Army
- Donald Uehara, Army National Guard
- Richard Yoshino, Navy



During their introduction, Temple President, Tom Nakagiri, and individual Scouts presented each veteran with a gift bag.

The service opened and closed with a flag ceremony performed by members of the Temple's Girl Scout Troop 5325

and Cub Pack 79. The Scouts also sang the national anthem, and later held a long, handmade red, white, and blue chain during the recitation of "The Golden Chain."

After the service, the veterans enjoyed a delicious lunch with their friends, family, and members of the Sangha. A special card with a commemorative print of the group picture was also presented to each veteran, and many people took the opportunity during lunch to thank all the veterans for their service.





#### VHBT-VJCC Fire Safety Seminar and Appreciation Luncheon August 13, 2025

With Keiro grant funding for Seniors, the VHBT and Venice Japanese Community Center jointly planned the Fire Safety Seminar and Appreciation Luncheon for Los Angeles Fire Department Station 62 on Venice Boulevard. Station 62 Captain Manny Zepeda could not attend, but sent his first responders, plus a couple of CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) members. Thank you to Jerry Iseda who organized the event remotely from Connecticut, and to Gayle Hirami, Senior Wellness Program Coordinator for the VJCC.







# BWA continued...

On October 4, 2025, the VHBT BWA (Fujinkai) held another successful Chirashi Sale, selling out all (close to 300) orders at \$10 per order. Thank you to the 26 people who came on Saturday morning to help cook, mix, cool, portion, and garnish each 11.7-ounce container. Big **Thank You** to Vicki Tokirio, who coordinated the shopping for ingredients, the SignUp Genius, and worked every shift! \$1,000 of the proceeds from the sale will be donated to Pasadena Buddhist Temple for their fire/smoke damage repairs.









## BWA continued...

On Saturday, October 25, 14 VHBT Sangha members attended the Southern District Conference at the San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. The conference, with the theme, "Cultural Connections: Exploring Jodo Shinshu Wisdom through Japanese Traditional Performing Arts," featured performances by Theatre of Yugen, an international experimental ensemble that performs Noh in Japanese and Kyogen in English translation. Bishop Marvin Harada welcomed guest speaker Reverend Henry Adams of San Mateo Buddhist Temple. Participants selected workshops such as: Mini Mindful Garden and Japanese Poetry; Sustainable Storytelling with Natural Dyeing; In the Garden – Honoring Our Past and Future Today; Origami inspired by Buddhist Symbols; Noh Mask-Making; and Buddhism and the Improv Comedy. Attendees enjoyed a continental breakfast, and a bento lunch with additional salads and desserts.





Our Dharma School held our annual Sundae Sunday event on Sunday, September 7<sup>th</sup>. We had lots of students of all ages enjoying their sundaes. Thank you, Barbara Fukuji, for spearheading the event.

Our Dharma School also provided Dana Deliveries bentos and other gifts for our seniors on September 14th. Thank you to Barbara Fukuji for obtaining the items, to our staff for assembling the bags and to our delivery volunteers.









#### Dharma School continued...

In October and November, Dharma School classes were offered on Shakyamuni Buddha, the Altar, and Nembutsu/Gratitude.





On Sunday, October 26th, over 140 people attended our annual Halloween party. Everyone enjoyed the games, Haunted House, costume contests and the delicious food and treats. It was a big success, and we'd like to thank everyone for their participation, delicious food/candy donations and assistance. Huge thank yous go to Dharma School teacher Jan Ozaki, who headed the party, to our Dharma School staff and to our Sangha Teens and

Jr. YBA students/parents who helped in a big way - from their Haunted House, decorations, and creating/manning the game booths. We really appreciate you all!!!









# Junior Young Buddhists Association

During the fall months, our Jr YBA focused on fundraising, hosting, and planning events. In September, the Juniors hosted the Temple Rummage Sale on the 13th. The night before, they sorted items late into the evening and stayed overnight to prepare for an early start at 5 am. All these efforts resulted in us raising a large \$5,000 at this year's sale.

In October, on the same day as CicLAvia, our Juniors met at the Nishi Betsuin to discuss plans for the 2nd Seminar of 2026. We also met with Nishi's and West LA's Jr YBA group to help with the seminar. While details are still being determined, the seminar is planned for March 14 at the West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple.

Towards the end of the Month, on the 26th, was the Dharma School Halloween Party. Both the Jr YBA and Sangha Teens worked at stations for all the kids to play at, like a mellowed-down version of darts and Plinko for prizes and candy. Near the end of the evening, everyone gathered outside to witness the costume contest between all the kids, with 6 or 7 categories with all amazing winners.



The day after Halloween, 12 of the Jr YBA members attended Halloween Horror Nights at Universal Studios. While our advisors watched game 7 of the WORLD SERIES, we enjoyed the haunted houses and getting scared by the scare actors. It was a long, but fun night that ended with a sleepover at the Daimonjis' house. Thank you to Aunty Kristy and Uncle Davin for hosting!



With 1 month remaining of 2025, this year has been absolutely phenomenal. It couldn't have been done without the overwhelming support we are given from the temple in which myself and the juniors can't thank everyone enough.



# Sangha Teens

On the 30th of August, the Sangha Teens went on an end of the year trip to Disneyland. We drove from the temple to Disneyland and entered the park, starting off our day on Big Thunder Mountain Railroad and Pirates of the Caribbean. After riding Peter Pan's flight, Space Mountain, and Autopia, the kids and parents met up to eat at Galactic Grill and then going to Disney's California Adventure and riding Monsters, Inc. Mike & Sully to the Rescue! Half of the kids and some parents went back to Disneyland to ride Haunted Mansion Holiday while the other half stayed at DCA and rode Guardians of the Galaxy -Mission: BREAKOUT. After riding Haunted Mansion and Pirates of the Caribbean again, the Disneyland group rode Big Thunder Mountain Railroad and then hopped back to DCA to ride Soarin' Around the World with everyone and eat dinner at the Aunt Cass Café as a group. After eating dinner, half of the kids stayed at DCA to ride more Guardians of the Galaxy - Mission: BREAKOUT while the other half hopped back to Disneyland Park to ride Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance and Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run and then headed over to ride "it's a small world" where both groups coincidentally were in line for the ride at the same time. After riding "it's a small world," the group all went to ride Indiana Jones<sup>™</sup> Adventure with their Lightning Lane reservation. The groups split up again with half riding Big Thunder Mountain Railroad and then Space Mountain as the park closed with the other group riding Tiana's Bayou Adventure. We all left the park and had a really fun trip to Disneyland to end the Sangha Teens year.







# **Investiture & Rededication Ceremony**

Girl Scout Troop 5325 held its annual Investiture and Rededication Ceremony on October 27, 2025. In all countries and cultures, there are ceremonies to mark important events in life: days of celebration, days of sadness, days on which a special commitment is made and days that mark an achievement. Girls Scouts, too, have ceremonies which mark important events. The Investiture and Rededication ceremony consisted of four parts – an awards presentation, bridging, investiture and rededication. The rededication is for continuing Girl Scouts to reaffirm the Girl Scout Promise and Law and to reflect upon the meaning of Girl Scouting in their lives.



The Troop appreciated the attendance of the special guests: Rev. Kory Quon, resident minister; Tom Nakagiri, Temple president; Jon and Joan Ito, Adult Buddhist Association; Linda Oshinomi, Buddhist Women's Association; and Sehnita Joshua Mattison, Cub Master of Pack 79.

The evening marked the introduction of two new troop leaders, Jia Kimoto and Mari Morikawa. The Troop families and guests were also introduced to three new Daisy-2 scouts, two new Brownie-1 scouts, and two new Brownie-2 scouts.

Roxanne de Alba, Ellis Park, and Kelly Matsubayashi were recognized for achieving their Bronze Award, the highest award for Junior level Girl Scouts. (See separate article about their Bronze Award.) The three Scouts also bridged (or advanced) from Junior Scouts to Cadette Scouts.

The Troop is looking forward to the holiday season which is filled with multiple service projects for the community and a lot of fun.

## Girl Scouts continued...

# **Silver Award Project**

By Marlowe Rathbun

Over the past months, the Girl Scout Cadettes have been working on their Silver Award project. My name is Marlowe, and I'm one of them. The Silver Award is a fundamental project meant to teach Girl Scouts about giving back to the community while practicing organizational and leadership skills. Each scout planned a project with 2-4 girls in the group. I was in a group with Kylee Oney and Claire Zangger.

We recently finished a huge part of our project. When planning our project, we knew we wanted to work with kids, but also try and bring something that other groups hadn't done in the past. We decided to work with the Jenesse Center. The Jenesse Center works with women who have been domestically abused to relocate and support them. Unfortunately, sometimes these women would have to pick up everything and flee, including their children. This can be traumatizing to the kids, so the Jenesse Center tries hard to lift their spirits and distract them from everything else happening in their life. One of the things they do every year is a



summer camp. After meeting with Ms. Angela, the director of children's activities, we got the chance to teach a dance class during the summer camp. The camp taught us so many things, like how to communicate to younger kids, create a strong dance routine, and organize a schedule. Our project was very successful, and we were so grateful for the opportunity.

Later, we got the chance to teach our dance to some other members of the Temple Girl Scout troop at our picnic. There are a lot more parts of this project to complete, but we are so glad to have been given all these opportunities to learn and grow.

#### Girl Scouts continued...

## **Bronze Award Project**

At Girl Scout Troop 5325's Investiture and Rededication Ceremony on October 27, 2025, three of the Troop's Junior level Scouts were awarded their Bronze Award. These Scouts are Roxanne DeAlba, Kelly Matsubayashi and Ellis Park.

The Bronze Award is the highest award that a Junior level Girl Scout may earn. Junior level Girl Scouts are in the fourth or fifth grade and to be eligible to work on their Bronze Award, they must have completed a Journey, which generally takes three to four months and results in three leadership awards. Earning the Girl Scout Bronze Award involves the time to complete this Journey, and then approximately 20 hours for team building, exploring their community, choosing their project, planning it, putting the plan in motion, and spreading the word about the project.



According to Kelly Matsubayashi, "The Brownies in our multi-level troop were interested in camping, but many had never been before. Several had also never spent the night away from their parents. This became the inspiration for our Bronze award project. We planned an overnight filled with camping themed activities. Prior to the event, we came up with strategies to make the girls feel comfortable, discussed what they could do in case someone was sad or wanted to go home, and reflected on our past experiences and emotions in order to prepare ourselves to host 7 brownies. We also made a flier with a packing list, and prepared activities and giveaways."

Roxanne DeAlba shared, "When the Brownies arrived, they decorated a flag with their camp name and learned to make friendship bracelets. Then we made foil packet dinners with salmon and veggies, and also had chili and rice. While the Brownies waited for their dinner to cook, we gave each "camper" a "Leave No Trace" luggage tag and explained how the principles were incorporated into the sleepover events. After dinner, we made a firefly lantern using plastic eggs, tape, pipe cleaners and an LED tea-light. For dessert, everyone made s'mores cones, then played Camping Bingo"

Ellis Park added, "After our last bits of sugar, everyone went upstairs to their "campsite", decorated mini-tents, watched a movie, opened glow sticks, and went to bed. Throughout the night, the three of us Juniors practiced patience and leadership, and became trusted and fun big sisters to the Brownies. All seven (7) Brownies made it through the night without tears."

At the conclusion of the sleepover, the Brownies, many of them who had never slept away from their parents before, all stated that they wanted to do this again, immediately!

Kelly, Roxanne and Ellis concluded by saying, "Thank you to all the brownies for helping us earn our bronze award, to the Brownie parents for trusting us to take care of your children, to Reverend Kory for cleaning up our "campsite" and for letting us use the temple, and to our parents who help throughout the night."

Congratulations, Kelly, Roxanne and Ellis!



#### Family Camp Success!

Pack 79 Cub Scout families had a truly magical time at our Fall Family Camp! We returned to the Irvine Ranch Outdoor Recreation Center, a traditional Pack 79 camp. Our campground, Kennedy Meadows, was packed with more tents this year than we've had in over a decade.

Irvine Ranch is a great way to introduce new families to camping thanks to amenities like a giant pool with a slide and clean, flush toilets. In recent years, we've added a second Family Camp weekend, which gave us an opportunity to explore other camps like Camp Tahquitz and Camp Trask.

A camp highlight was a full Pack potluck dinner, coordinated by UCLA Executive Chef, AOL Parent Leader & Troop 764-G
Scoutmaster Michael Chang, with many parents jumping in to bring it all together.
The delicious meal was taken to the next level by a flowing chocolate fountain for dessert, manned by our Tiger den parents!
Not your usual camp treat, but a hit! Our scouts had a blast and did a great job all weekend on all their activities including archery, BB Guns, and climbing tower!! We are so proud of them all!







## Cub Pack 79 continued...

#### Support Our Pack: See's Chocolate Fundraiser

Speaking of chocolate... Our successful See's Chocolate Fundraiser helps Pack 79 continue to add an extra Family Camp weekend each year. It also supports the cost of key events like our fishing trip, Pinewood Derby, and other activities.

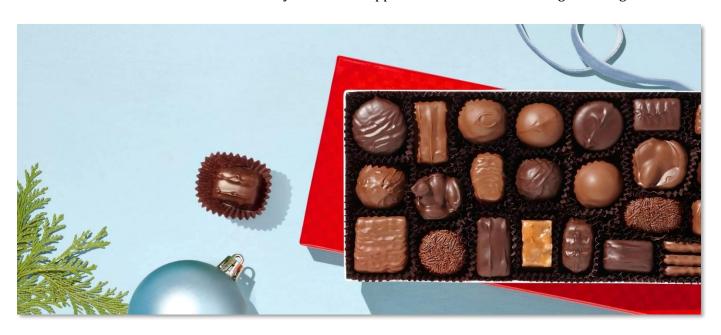
Thank you to all Temple members who have already placed orders or made a donation to support the Pack. We are grateful to all.

#### Key Fundraiser Details:

• Order Link: <a href="https://www.yumraising.com/store/winter-2025-culver-cub-scout-pack-79-sees-fundraiser-0d9a/SehMat5562">https://www.yumraising.com/store/winter-2025-culver-cub-scout-pack-79-sees-fundraiser-0d9a/SehMat5562</a> or use this QR Code:



- Deadline: Fundraiser ends on December 5th. Get your orders in quickly for great gifts for teachers, neighbors, host/hostess, clients, or yourself!
- Free Shipping: All orders over \$75 receive free shipping.
- Local Orders: If you have a smaller order and want to avoid shipping costs, send your order to me, Sehnita Joshua Mattison (626-372-0110), and I can add it to mine.
- Donations: Donations are welcome if you want to support the Pack without adding more sugar at home.



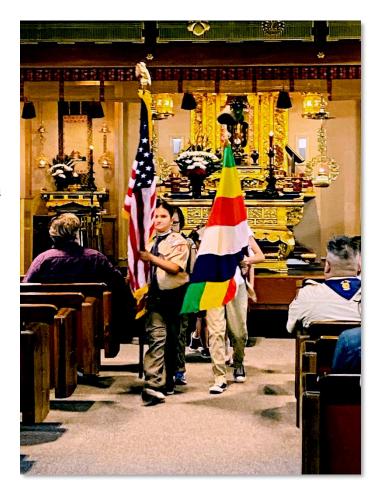
# Cub Pack 79 continued...

#### **November Activities**

November was a busy month for our scouts!

- Community Service: The Arrow of Light (AOL) and Webelos dens worked hard to organize the last Dana Deliveries of the year, which included fresh fruit generously donated by Mark Morimoto, See's lollipops, Rutt's Bento boxes, and calendars created by the Girl Scouts.
- Veteran's Day Service: AOL scouts joined Girl Scouts and Daisies to lead the flag ceremony for the special Veteran's Day Service. The service honored the many veterans and their families who are a part of the Temple.
- Intergenerational Connection: Both events created important opportunities for intergenerational exchange, echoing Rev. Kory's sermon on the value of building those relationships.
- Next Up: Scouts are already looking forward to Mochitsuki, which is always a highlight of the year!





## Cub Pack 79 continued...

#### **Court of Awards Pack Meeting**

Our November Pack Meeting was a Court of Awards, where scouts were recognized for the achievements they worked hard to earn with their dens. We appreciate how many parents brought their scouts out on an especially rainy day. Scouts dried out downstairs with an art activity, drawing what they were grateful for and what they enjoy most about scouting on individual puzzle pieces. Heading upstairs for the awards was especially meaningful for many new scouts who had never visited the Hondo before. We are grateful to the Temple for providing such a beautiful place for our ceremony that honors all the hard work the scouts have been doing. The meeting ended with scouts putting their puzzle pieces together to make a final group work of art.



#### Want to Support Pack 79?

We're always looking for fun, hands-on learning opportunities for our scouts — whether it's a behind-the-scenes tour, an engaging workshop, or a cool activity.

If you have a hobby, talent, or area of expertise you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you!

Reach out and help us make scouting even more exciting!

Pack 79 continues to welcome new scouts throughout the year. We are a Family Pack that welcomes girls and boys, Kindergarten - 5th Grade. If you, or family members/friends would like to learn more about Pack 79, please reach out to us via email or check us out on social media. We would love to have new scouts embark on their scouting adventures with us!

https://www.facebook.com/culvercubpack79 Culver Cub Pack 79 - YouTube https://www.culverpack79.com/ cubpack79@vhbt.org



ABA had a successful Steak Feast after six years. Thanks to Chris Ono and his crew for cooking the steaks to perfection. In addition to the steaks, we had baked potato, broccolini, mushrooms, salad and pumpkin pie for dessert. We also had a wide variety of beverages. After dinner, everyone enjoyed Bingo!

Thanks to everyone who helped make the 2025 Steak Feast a success. Also, thanks to those who kept the youngsters occupied upstairs.

Part of the proceeds from Steak Feast were given to Pasadena Buddhist Temple to help after the fires earlier this year.

By the time you read this, ABA will have had a successful mochi-tsuki (brought back by popular demand after skipping last year).

We hope that 2026 is another successful year!

David Nishina, ABA Co-President





# 2025 Memorial Service Schedule by Years

Memorial services for those who passed away in the following years:

2024: 1 year

2023: 3 year

2019: 7 year

2013: 13 year

2009: 17 year

2001: 25 year

1993: 33 year

1976: 50 year

#### **TEMPLE MEMBERSHIP**

The Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple thanks the following members for their **2025 dues** received **through October 31, 2025**. The asterisks (\*) identify our Honorary (Keiro) members who made membership donations. As we continue our membership drive for 2025, we want to thank all of you for continuing to support the Temple through your membership dues.

Joe & Dianne Belli, Ken Chen & Sheri Nagata, Martin & Robyn Cohen, Mark & Lisa Cummings, Tom & Janet DaVall, Karen Eguchi, Brett Freitas & Julie Wilson, \*June Fujioka, \*Kei & Tomoko Fukuda, Kristina Fukuda, Ron & Barbara Fukuji, Ron & Iris Gee, Robert Guimond & Tani Brown, Glenn Hamashita, Janice Hankawa, Eugene & Phyllis Hayashibara, John & Patti Heyl, Jill Hopfield, Joe & Judy Hopfield, Jamie Ann Ido, Leonard & Gwen Imada, Shirley Inada, Stacy & Joyce Ino, Gerald Iseda, Nelson & Sharon Ishida, \*Dale & \*Rosan Ito, Jon & Joan Ito, Justin Ito, Josh Jordan & Jennifer MacFarlane, Emily Kariya, Yoshiko Kariya, Kevin & Patti Kirio, Jimmy Kita & Gail Higa, \*Sanaye Kita, Sam & May Kiyohara, \*Shinobu Koda, Carolyn Komoto, Ann Kotani, \*Frank & Elaine Koyama, Gary & Leticia Kurashige, \*Milnes & \*Nori Kurashige, \*Tom & \*Delcene Kuwata, Orr & Kimberly Limpisvasti, Hide & Yukari Marume, \*Ayako Masada, Erik & Cindy Matsubayashi, Erik Matsumura, Evann Matsumura Tsai, Irene Matsumura, \*Alan & Jane Matsuzaki, Charles & Sue Mayeda, Mark Mayeda & Deborah Ching, Jonathan Montenegro & Mika Ogawa, Mark & Diane Morimoto, Daniel Motobo, Jackie Motobo, Brian & Mariko Nakagiri, Cheryl Nakagiri, Dan Nakagiri, Tom Nakagiri, \*Jean Nakamoto, May Nakasone, \*Hiroko Naruo, \*John & \*Judy Nawa, Ted Nishimura & Eva Nakasone, David Nishina, \*Fusae Nishina, \*Yayeko Nishina, Dale & Gail Noriyuki, Dustin Noriyuki, \*Kay & \*Kimi Obana, Fusako Ogasawara, Kenji & Alice Ogawa, Jino Ok & Aleyna Minamoto-Ok, Quinn Okamoto, Margarita Oku, \*Tatsumi Omote, \*Fujiko Oriba, Mark & Michelle Orne, Craig & Linda Oshinomi, \*Mitsuko Ota, \*Kazuko Ozaki, Ron & Janis Ozaki, \*John & Valda Palacios, Ted Reeve & Jim Matsuo, Rippey Rense & Annie Chuck, Ken Rosengrant & Joyce Enomoto, Billy & Sandy Saeki, Greg Saeki & Luz Wardlow, Ichiko Sakamoto, Merle & Gail Sharp, Mabel Shimasaki, Mark & Sharlene Shinmoto, Catherine Silman, Ken & Sue Sogabe, \*Kiyoe Suzuki, David & Arlene Tademaru, \*Kagemi & Katsuko Takata, Randy & Mari Tamura, Michael Tanaka & Jill Ishida, Carey & Vicki Tokirio, \*Karen Tokubo, \*Yasushi Udagawa, Dean & Julia Ueda, Kayla Ueda, Kelsey Ueda, Don Uehara, \*Yoshiko Uyeno, Ron Wakabayashi & Jane Wong, Beverly Yahata, \*Mary Yasui Yamabe, \*George & \*Sheryl Yamada, Thomas & Judy Yamaguchi, Robert & Peggy Yamamoto, Gail Yoneda, \*Art & Roseann Yoshida, Spencer & Courtney Yoshikawa

#### Membership Categories:

FAMILY MEMBERS	INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS	SENIOR MEMBERS
Family Membership	Individual Membership	Senior Membership*
(Includes children under age 22 yrs)	(Single Adult age 30 and older)	(Keiro – age 80 yrs. during or after 2018)
\$500	\$250	\$125
Young Family Membership	Young Adult Individual Membership	Senior Membership*
(Family under age 35 yrs.)	(Single adult under age 30 yrs.)	(Keiro – age 80 yrs. before 2018)
\$350	\$50	Complimentary

#### Thank You for Your Donations

#### September 2025

Eitaikyo Fund: Noriko Kurashige

Memorial: Dianne Belli, Jimmy Kita, Kiyoko

Matsubayashi

Nokotsudo: Robert Fujimura

Special Donation: Anonymous, Craig Cummings, Barbara Fukuji, Gardena Buddhist Church Youth Fund, Sharon & Nelson Ishida, Akemi, Rumi & Saori Mayeda, Katsuko Nakagawa, Karen Schoeneborn, Gail Sharp, Katsuko Takata, Jean Tsunemoto, Rob Yamamoto, Thomas Yoshikawa

#### October 2025

Funeral: David Nishina

Memorial: Kimberlee Nishimura, David Nishina, Gail Sharp(2), Elaine Weiss, April Yamamoto, Yoshiko

Yamashiro

Special Donation: Craig Cummings, Rose Hernandez, Sharon & Nelson Ishida, Noriko Kurashige, Tom Kuwata, Jean Nakamoto, Fujiko Oriba, Frances Saito, Rob Yamamoto

Special Event Donation: Norm Liu, Jean Toshima

#### Thank you for your generosity

