



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

1727 Pali Highway, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 522-9200 Fax: (808) 522-9209

Web: www.hongwanjihawaii.com Email: hqs@honpahi.org



MARCH, 2017

YBICSE – YOUNG BUDDHIST INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL STUDY EXCHANGE

July 10-22, 2017

Hongwanji-sponsored educational trip to Japan

Visiting Jodo Shinshu historical sites including the Hongwanji (mother temple) in Kyoto

Fellowship with new friends from US Mainland, Canada, South America, and Japan

Homestay Program

Learn & experience Japanese Culture

Share joy of living in the Nembutsu Teachings

Many other life-changing experiences

Minister Chaperone: Reverend Tomo Hojo

Candidate Qualification

A person who appreciate the Jodo Shin Buddhism

A Person who is currently in 9th grade through age 25

In good health

*Fifteen (15) delegates will be selected.

Registration Fee: \$1,600.00

*Rest of the travel expense will be covered by Hongwanji

*Some meals and other personal expenses are not included

*Inter-island airfare within Hawaii is not included



2015 YBICSE participants at Honzan

****Application instruction and travel itinerary will become available soon.**

Application deadline is April 30, 2017.

LIVE VIDEO OF THE JODO SHINSHU ACCESSION CEREMONY

Hongwanji world headquarters in Kyoto, Japan provides livestreaming video of the Commemoration on the Accession of the Jodo Shinshu Tradition. If you access the web pages while the services are underway, you may watch and hear them as they happen.

<http://hongwanjihawaii.com/2016/10/05/watch-live-video-of-the-jodo-shinshu-accession-ceremony/>

A group from Hawaii Kyodan led by Bishop Eric Matsumoto and Rev. Yuika Hasebe will be attending the Accession Ceremony on March 31, 2017. There will also be other participants from the Buddhist Churches of America and the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada. You will be able to watch this particular service by accessing the above webpage on March 30, 2017 at 7:00pm (Hawaii Time).

BUDDHISM, MINDFULNESS, & PSYCHOTHERAPY

March 25, 2017,
10:00am – noon
Buddhist Study Center



Dr. Mark Unno
*Associate Professor
of Religion at
University of Oregon*

As approaches to cultivating and refining the inner experience of mind, Buddhism, mindfulness, and psychotherapy share common ground. In fact, what has come to be known as mindfulness in secular society has clear Buddhist roots, and mindfulness and psychotherapy often overlap in practice as well as theory, as they do with Buddhism.

In this workshop, we explore the similarities, differences, intersections, and synthesis of these diverse practices of the mind, and their implications.

Workshop participants will be encouraged to share their own perspectives and questions and Rev. Dr. Mark Unno will share his from the perspective of his experiences in all of these arenas including Zen, Shin Buddhism, and Jungi-an psychotherapy.

PBA TAIKO FESTIVAL

Pacific Buddhist Academy offers one of the premier high school taiko programs in the nation that will be celebrated at its annual Taiko Festival on **Sunday, April 9, at 4 p.m.** at the Pearl City Cultural Center. The theme is *Taiji: The Yin Yang of Taiko*.

Tickets are \$25 for general admission, or \$20 for seniors, students, and PBA alumni. They may be purchased by calling 808-532-2649, or in person at PBA's Main Office at 1710 Pali Highway. For sponsorship opportunities, please call Rüdiger (Rudy) Rückmann at 532-2649, ext. 209. **Tickets and sponsorships also may be purchased online on our new website [by clicking here](#).**

To send in ticket and sponsorship purchase forms by regular mail, **[please click here](#).**



Hawaii Island HAIB Buddha Day Celebration at Kona Hongwanji
(March 12, 2017)

HAWAII BUDDHIST COUNCIL BUDDHA DAY (HANAMATSURI) CELEBRATION

Sunday, April 2, 2017 at 9:30am
Jodo Mission of Hawaii
(1429 Makiki St, Honolulu)
Guest Speaker: Dr. George Tanabe

2017 Legislative Assembly Special Presentation on “Becoming A More Dharma-centered Organization”

Bishop Eric Matsumoto

Today, I would like to share what I see as the general solution to most, if not all, of our challenges. We must become an even more Dharma-centered Sangha! The answer may sound too simplistic, but I ask you to recall the words of Rennyo Shonin when he said, “...even as one person awakens to Shinjin (or True Entrusting), this...is true prosperity in the deepest sense of the word.” It is my conclusion is that it is the Dharma that will save us, both as individual persons and as an organization. The two key words are Dharma and Sangha. Or if you wish, the three key words-the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the Three Treasures. There is a reason why we start all our meetings with the recitation of the Three Treasures, but maybe, just maybe, the recitation of the 3 Treasures has become a mere ritual and lost its impact. It is time to re-emphasize the importance of that recitation. We, the Sangha, must live the Dharma as shared by the Buddha. I would say, if we cannot become this truly Dharma-centered organization/Sangha, we have no hope and our days in Hawaii are certainly numbered.

As I reflect on the history of our Hongwanji organization, “What magnetically drew people to Hongwanji?” It was the equality and inclusiveness emphasized by Jodo Shinshu and also exhibited by Jodo Shin Followers beginning with Shinran Shonin and people like Rennyo Shonin. As we know, in Jodo Shinshu, we are all equal before Amida Buddha. In hierarchical Japan for especially the common people, the masses, this was a powerful impetus for people to support/join the Hongwanji. Listening to Jodo Shinshu Dharma Talks gave people a sense of worth and value. The message was you mattered. You are important. You are included in the embrace of Great Compassion!

What should not be overlooked is that it was not only the message, but when people came to Hongwanji or Jodo Shinshu that is what they were able to experience. There many stories or accounts of how Rennyo Shonin received people that came to see him. The Spirit of Sangha was strong. In Hawaii, we might say the spirit of Ohana prevailed. The sense of community was strong in Jodo Shinshu. This sense of community/Sangha, I believe, is the key to our future. And for this reason, we are also trying to identify what are our community values as a Jodo Shinshu Sangha. People, of any age, are looking for a place to belong-a place where they are respected, appreciated, safe and feel welcomed. Are we such a Sangha? Do we make people who come to temple feel that way? Let us self-reflect, another important Buddhist virtue.

As a Buddhist religious organization, what should guide is the Dharma or Teachings. We should always first ask ourselves, “What would a Buddhist do?” “Is what I am doing in line with our Buddhist Teachings?” “Am I going to the Dharma for guidance?” “What am I doing to contribute?” The Dharma must come to the forefront and to a lesser extent our culture, whether it be American or Japanese or any other. Of course, we live in America, so there are certain things which must be done in accordance with American laws and sensibility, but we need to go beyond this “Japanese style” versus “American style” and let the “Buddhist style” prevail!

Speaking of style, our Jodo Shinshu style or way is one of being nurtured by Amida Buddha and the Dharma. It is not one of following fixed dogma and set rules of do’s and don’ts or being reprimanded or scolded. Rennyo Shonin said,

“If you have acquired Faith, you will abstain from speaking harsh words to your fellow-believers...Without Faith, one will become self-assertive and speak rough words, hence disputes are bound to arise. What a pity! You should be well aware of this.”

(From “ Thus I Have Heard from Rennyo Shonin, pages 124-125).

Important is continual moment to moment reflection including self-reflection and awareness including self-awareness or paying attention to one's thoughts, words and actions/behavior. As the Shinshu Pledge says "I will put my effort in my work with self-reflection and gratitude."

In Jodo Shinshu, many of the worldly/secular values with which we make distinctions between people were put aside and everyone was considered equal before Amida Buddha. In Shin Buddhism, one's status in society, educational level, financial circumstances, gender, age, morality, whether one was ordained or not, all did not really matter as far as salvation was concerned. As we find in the Tannisho, "Amida's Primal Vow does not discriminate between the young and old, good and evil; true entrusting alone is essential."

Generally speaking, traditional Japanese society influenced by Chinese cultural influences had a tendency to favor men over women, elders over young people and the learned over the illiterate and so forth, but in Jodo Shinshu these distinctions were not primal. Again, in the eyes of Amida Buddha everyone was equally important. Now, this is a tremendous statement! In a society that had all kinds of hierarchy, to say that everyone is equal is potentially a dangerous statement. For this reason and others, in certain parts of Japan there occurred the suppressing of Jodo Shinshu as a dangerous philosophy along with fear of the deep loyalty and commitment that Jodo Shinshu members had to the Hongwanji.

But getting back to Shinran Shonin and Rennyo Shonin, they both considered themselves no better than anyone else. This too, is a tremendous statement when you really think about it. And this is part of what makes Shinran Shonin and Rennyo Shonin so special, the very fact that they claim that they are no better or no different from us makes them, to me, very, very special! They saw that they were bonbu too. This is not to say that we should not respect ministers for they are clergy. As Shinran Shonin said, "Although monks are so in name only and keep no precepts, Now in this defiled world of the last dharma-age, they are the equals of Sharihitsu and Mokuren, and we are urged to pay homage to and revere them." In Jodo Shinshu, while respecting Jodo Shinshu ministers for their profession as clergy there is also a strong understanding that they are also no different from anyone else. They have the same concerns, anxiety and challenges as lay people. Jodo Shinshu Ministers are not a superman or a superwoman, a perfect, flawless person. As Rennyo Shonin says about all of us, "Simply looking ahead without looking down at our feet, we shall stumble. To look at others and not look at our own self is a horrible thing."

A person of Shinjin-Nembutsu in Jodo Shinshu, in grateful response to Amida Buddha's Unconditional Great Wisdom and Compassion, laments about his/her imperfect and limited self and earnestly tries to live a more Dharma-centered life. Let me emphasize that the inspiration and original motivation for trying to live a more Dharma-centered life is not me-this foolish being, but Amida Buddha.

Today, once again, I refer to the late Rev. Jitsuen Kakehashi, a revered great scholar priest of Jodo Shinshu who said, a person who has become awakened to Amida Buddha's profound Wisdom and Compassion

"...begin(s) to live a new life, refraining from committing selfish deeds and trying to respond to the Tathagata's great compassion." "Shinran points out that there must be necessarily be a big difference in the condition of person's mind between before he heard the teaching of the Primal Vow and after he became a nembutsu practitioner guided by the Primal Vow, and that there must certainly be a difference in behavior before and after the person became a nembutsu practitioner.

In our daily life, we are liable to be dictated to by self-centered thoughts, but in the mind of nembutsu practitioners who are saddened and pained by this reality, there is a recurring transformation in which, with the heart and mind of the Tathagata's great wisdom and compassion, we come to look back at our own thoughts and behaviors. When we look at the world with an ordinary human mind, it is distinctly divided into things we love and things we hate, but with the mind of the Tathagata, we are made to know that everyone is equally the Tathagata's indispensably important child. From that standpoint, we realize that we are all brothers and sisters and fellow human beings. Then slowly but steadily, we come to reflect on our self-centered thoughts, reject our blind passions and make efforts

to see things and live our lives in a way that can be approved by the Tathagata.” (From *Hearing the Buddha’s Call* by Jitsuen Kakehashi.)

In a person of True Entrusting, because the Dharma is a part of their life, there is a certain degree of sensitivity towards others and going to go to the Buddha-Dharma for guidance is evident in their actions. However, we do not demand this of others. This might sound a bit confusing, but we do not expect things of others, but I should try to live up to those ideals. The more common way of thinking is to expect certain behaviors from others, but in Buddhism the emphasis is on how I should try to be. In “The Teaching of Buddha” it shares in a section after describing what a good friend is, it says “It is very difficult to find a friend like this, and, therefore, one should try very hard to be a friend like this.” If everyone thought and did things this way it would be a much more peaceful and harmonious world. This is being guided by the Dharma or being Dharma-centered. In grateful response to Unconditional Compassion which I find embracing me and because Compassion is so accepting of me, I also see the value of other people’s lives too. In the days of Honen Shonin and Shinran Shonin, it is recorded that aristocrats and samurai warriors, thieves, beggars and prostitutes, people of all level and strands of society, sat together listening to the Nembutsu Teachings. “Are we, today, such an open Sangha?”

In this way, everyone found hope and experienced the warm compassionate embrace of Amida Buddha and the spirit of Sangha in Hongwanji. The great message of Shinran Shonin and Rennyo Shonin was that everyone was included in the Great Compassion of Amida Buddha. From a very humble beginning Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji evolved into the largest Buddhist denomination in Japan and in Hawaii because it gave people a sense of hope and value and provided people with a safe community. In this way, people of all strata of society, but especially the common folk, found the Wisdom and Compassion of Supreme Enlightenment reaching out and embracing them as Amida Buddha, as Namo Amida Butsu. We can only imagine their joy and sense of gratitude. There was nothing that could match it! Shinran Shonin’s wasan or hymn “Ondokusan” expressed people’s thoughts “Such is the benevolence of Amida’s compassion, that we must strive to return it, even to the breaking of our bodies; Such is the benevolence of Great Masters and True Teachers, that we must endeavor to repay it, even to our bones becoming dust!” It reflected the depth of joy and gratitude that people felt as they found themselves embraced and included. Truly, in Jodo Shinshu, we are talking of no ordinary compassion, it is compassion in its ultimate form, totally unconditional and inclusive of all! I thank all of you here today for you are a living example of “Ondokusan.” As our membership declines and you find yourselves doing more and more, and yet you continue. I thank you! I thank Amida Buddha who is our motivation, our inspiration!

As I think about this, the words, “Beyond this, whenever we feel joy and gratitude... we should simply say ‘Namo Amida Butsu, Namo Amida Butsu,...’” “when we remember Amida’s benevolence, more and more out of gratitude, we should recite the Nembutsu...” regardless of time or place. This is called the Nembutsu as an expression of gratitude for the Buddha’s benevolence.” Our own Bishop Yemmyo Imamura of Hawaii said, “whenever I felt I was on the border of dismay, I recalled the hardships in Shinran’s life. He said that the five kalpas of profound meditation, the eternal kalpas of diligent practice, (by Bodhisattva Dharmakara) were meant only to save me alone. The Buddha’s great compassion touched my heart. Even drops of water can bore a hole in a harder boulder. I resolved to not falter. I had a firm conviction that in the future, someday,...enlightened by the Dharma’s light and comforted by Tathagata’s compassion (many) will awaken to a serene, beautified, happy...life.”

How do more people become aware of this “serene, beautified, happy...life” which Bishop Imamura spoke of? It happens when we both ministers and lay people reach out to our families and the larger community (beyond the Japanese-American community) to connect with other individuals, groups and organizations. This is what I, as your Bishop, have been emphasizing from the beginning of my term and also, now we see it as part of Honzan’s 10 Year Plan. We must go beyond our temple walls. Temples of Hawaii Kyodan, if you have a minister who is good at certain things share your minister with the rest of district and your larger community. Please know how essential it is for us, the Hongwanji Sangha, to be guided and live the Dharma or Teachings on a daily basis and share our joy of the Buddha-Dharma. Let us each ask ourselves,

“What is a Sangha?” “What is the purpose of the Sangha?” and “How does a Sangha think, speak and behave?” You may be thinking “Why is this so important?” Again, I am convinced that this is the key to our future! Once more, it is the Dharma that will save us, both spiritually and as an organization.

Now, the question in your mind might be how does Dharma apply to our organization and how we operate? A quick example, about which we will cover more in detail later, is the Temple Effectiveness Model and Minister Evaluation. Currently, we are moving towards the idea of Temple Effectiveness in which minister and lay work closely as team, in partnership, to achieve goals mutually set. We are moving away from the employer verses employee and minister verses lay, kind of relationships. So in the case of the Minister Evaluation, we are moving away with the old style of evaluation based primarily on a western model of rewards and punishment and changing our approach to the Temple Effectiveness Model which recognizes that ministers and lay are working together as a team, partners which is supported by Buddhist Teachings where ministers provide the Dana of the providing the Dharma to lay people (Hou-se) and lay people provide the Dana of physically caring for the well-being of the clergy (Zai-se). This is common throughout Buddhism. However, there is a third Dana known as “Mu-i-se” which is the Dana of the Removal or Absence of fear. It is a Buddhist teaching that no one should have to live in fear. Fear is a terrible thing. So, if we apply this Dana of Removing Fear, the fact that Minister Evaluation, as it was being presented, caused so much fear and anxiety amongst the ministers it shows us that it is not the most ideal way to do it. However, our SCBP does call for a minister review and thus with the Dharma guiding us, we have changed it. What we present may still have to be tweaked, but I hope you can see how different things can be if we truly go to the Dharma for guidance.

My conviction that the Dharma can truly make a difference is based on an episode from the life of the Historic Buddha. A story relates that on a certain day, a certain king went to Sakyamuni Buddha and bowed to him to show his great respect. Sakyamuni Buddha asked the King “Why do you come today to show your respect? The King answered that as I look at the Sangha, I see the members of the Sangha following the Buddha’s teachings throughout their life. Again, many people of all stations and walks of life even family members many times quarrel and fight amongst themselves, but in the Buddha’s Sangha I do not see that. I see mutual appreciation of each other. The Buddha’s Sangha is always neat and tidy, cheerful and smiling, full of joy and delight. By the actions of the Sangha, I have come to realize how great the Buddha is. We must become the Sangha/Buddhist community which the Dharma describes. For more concrete examples of what a Sangha is, I can refer you to passages that I have collected in a document “Passages related to (nurturing) the Sangha” which I have given to all ministers so you can become aware of the characteristics of the sangha and how we live our lives as Buddhists.

Buddhism is one of the 3 world religions which means it is possible for anyone to become Buddhist. This is how universal Buddhism is and our temples must reflect this aspect of the Dharma. I am not saying it is easy for I am a bonbu. However, the Buddhist Teachings nurture us to become more open and accepting, less critical and judgmental, less self-centered and opinionated, kinder and gentler, more aware of self and others and how we impact one another and the importance of peace and harmony. The Dharma shares

“If one wishes to follow the Buddha’s teaching one must not be egoistic or self-willed, but should cherish feelings of good-will toward all alike; one should respect those who are worthy of respect; one should revere those who are worthy of service and treat everyone with uniform kindness. (From *“The Teaching of Buddha”*, BDK, *Duties of the Brotherhood, Lay Followers*, page 402).

One of the great contributions of Buddhism and especially Jodo Shinshu as it travels across the world, is the emphasis on reflection including self-reflection. The Buddha-Dharma always encourages us to reflect on the world and my own self. The Dharma reminds me “Take a look at yourself, Eric” “Notice what is happening” “What is the best response?” This is the Dharma at work.

We often hear the question “Is Buddhism a religion or a way of life?” My response would be it is both. It is a religion, a religion that shows me how to live my life. Buddha wants all life to be free of suffering. Buddha wants everyone to be safe, at peace and happy. As we come to know the Buddha, the Buddha’s aspiration

becomes my aspiration. However, the big difference between the Buddha and me is that the Buddha is enlightened and I am not. So, I cannot express or manifest or live exactly like the Buddha, however, the Buddha's aspiration I can embrace, hold dear to my heart and try to live in such a way that there is less fear, less anxiety and hopefully suffering in the world in grateful response to Amida Buddha's unconditional compassion. Shinran Shonin may not have written too much about this aspect of the Shin Buddhist's life except in his Letters, but I see it in the way that Shinran Shonin lived his life. I strongly think, we need to look not only at Shinran Shonin's writings, but his life.

To slowly conclude, as our two Spiritual Leaders, Their Eminences, the Former Go-Monshu Koshin Ohtani and our current 25th Gomonshu Kojun Ohtani say

"The Three Treasures are the Buddha, his Teaching (the Dharma), and (the Sangha) the community that gathers to listen and live by the teachings of the Buddha." (24th Spiritual Leader)

and

"In reflecting on the present circumstance 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."

"Let us...cope with various problems and hardships of the contemporary world, walking together towards realizing a society in which everyone is equally respected." (25th Spiritual Leader)

To conclude, our Hongwanji Sangha must become that Sangha that the Dharma talks about. We must become even more so the Sangha/community that people want to be a part of. People who come to Jodo Shinshu must think and feel "I want to be a part of that Sangha/temple community." The main purpose of a Sangha is to help each other understand and live the Dharma and to share it with others. For us, Jodo Shinshu Buddhists, the Sangha exists to encourage each of us and others to understand the Jodo Shinshu Teachings and encourage us to live the life of Nembutsu both as individuals and as an organization!

Namo Amida Butsu/Entrusting in All-Inclusive Wisdom and All-Embracing Compassion.