



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

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APRIL 2020

BISHOP'S CORNER



First, let me express my hope that you are safe and well. More than ever, in these challenging times of the COVID-19 Pandemic we are need of both Wisdom and Compassion.

Right now, many of us, are feeling isolated, separated and alone. I believe the Buddha's Teaching has something to offer us which could change the way we feel by changing the way we look at things. There is a beautiful and meaningful metaphor known as Indra's Net found in the Garland Sutra which expresses the profound truth of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all life, all existence. Every phenomenon, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, has an effect on all existence in the universe and conversely that the totality of everyone and everything in the universe including the universe is dependent on the individual parts which comprise it. I am able to exist because of all others and all others are connected to me. This awareness or understanding, then, leads us to appreciate all others for without them I would not exist. From this awareness or understanding arises a profound gratitude and an aspiration to also help or be of benefit to others.

Applying this Wisdom to our circumstances with COVID-19, let us see that our individual actions and behaviors such as staying indoors/at home as much as possible, quarantine when needed or applicable, wearing masks, but leaving PPE equipment for health care providers and those who critically need them, not hoarding, practicing good hygiene and physical distancing with social solidarity and the like which are being recommended by our local government contribute to the total picture of all of our well-being. Let this perspective or view of interdependence guide us.

Another unexpected outcome of this gratitude which comes from this understanding of interdependence is the sense/feeling/thought of knowing that we are never alone or completely cut off from others. Granted, as human beings social interaction and human relationships are important. However, our relationship with others is not limited to only fellow human beings. In Buddhism, we often speak of "Gratitude to all sentient beings." I do not and cannot live all by myself. My life and living, day to day, even moment to moment is made possible by the contributions and sacrifices of so many others including the natural environment including the food I eat each day. It is because of the gift of life of the plants and animals that I am able to live. This realization results in a deep sense of humility, indebtedness and gratitude to the natural world and animal and plant life. This perspective or understanding destroys my arrogance, sense of superiority, nurtures a feeling of mottainai and arigatai or "How undeserving and yet

I am precious receiving all that is necessary for me to live.” Surprisingly, it also addresses, believe it or not, isolation, loneliness and separation. Even, right here in Hawaii, I have heard of individuals who are so grateful for the food they eat that it changes the way they feel. They feel so supported and connected to the food they consume each day that it changes the way they look at their own life and living. They do not feel isolated and alone, but see the support they are receiving even if no human person is around them.

The Dharma shares with us that all life is precious. For Shin Buddhist, there is a deep lament that one is the cause of suffering for other forms of life. The ultimate goal is to eventually attain an enlightened state of being so as not to be a cause of others’ suffering with birth in the Pure Land. However, even in the midst of samsaric life, imperfect as I am, there is an aspiration to try to be of some service to society.

In Japanese Buddhism, the equality and preciousness of all life came to include even the inanimate world. The presence of Immeasurable Life and Infinite Light is always ever present and includes all. There is no time or place in which Amida Buddha is not present. Of course, we are human and so we do long for human companionship and thus I am not saying we have no need for human love and relationships, but there is another force or presence which also makes a difference in our life and that is the presence of Wisdom and Compassion which never leaves our side and is always with us and makes us aware that we live because of others!

To finally conclude, as we honor Shinran Shonin in May with the observance of Shinran Shonin’s Birthday Celebration or Gotan-E, let us reflect on his words,

“A verse of the Garland Sutra states, ‘On seeing a bodhisattva, Perform various practices, Some give rise to a good mind and others a mind of evil, But the bodhisattva embraces them all.’ ”

“Although I too am in Amida’s embrace, Passions obstruct my eyes and I cannot see the Buddha’s Light; Nevertheless, Great Compassion is untiring and illumines me always.”

“This Buddha pervades the countless worlds; it fills the hearts and minds of...(all) beings. Thus, plants, trees, and (even the) land all attain Buddhahood.”

Namo Amida Butsu

In gassho,
Eric Matsumoto, Bishop

DIRECTIVES & RECOMMENDATIONS FROM HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII HEADQUARTERS - COVID-19 MEMO #5 (APRIL 24, 2020)

No in-person services & activities until further notice. HQ will work with Districts to decide on when it is safe for them to reopen. We need to follow Federal, State & County mandates and recommendations or guidelines to determine when it will be safe to resume in-person services and activities at the temple. Please be advised that opening of temples could vary from county to county. Please keep in mind that higher risk individuals (older people 65+, those with compromised immune systems or other underlying medical conditions, etc.) are urged to stay home to the greatest extent possible.

- Following services are permitted:
 - Bedside / Makuragyo services
 - Other End of life related services
 - Funeral services
 - Temple Hondo / Main Sanctuary can be used only for the above services.
 - The above services must be conducted with less than 10 people, physical distancing, and other precautions as dictated by the Federal, State and County mandates. Please keep abreast of local county ordinances (which could vary from county to county) too.
- Online Services are permitted.
 - Any type of services including Sunday services can be held online, however this must be done from the minister's home.
 - Virtual marriage ceremonies are not permitted by State law.
 - Recommendations and suggestions for safety and security for websites and when using social media will be distributed.
- All air travel except for emergencies is suspended until further notice.
- HQ staff including BSC continues working remotely from home until further notice.
- All temples are also asked to comply with minimum basic operations until further notice including following good hygiene, physical distancing, wearing of face masks, etc.

The situation with COVID-19 is still fluid that matters could change anytime and very quickly. Currently, in addition to State-wide requirements, counties also have practices in place. Please keep yourselves informed about local requirements too. Ministers and temple leaders, please use your best judgement. Further memos will be issued as needed. Let us be safe, patient with each other and not let fear overrun us. Let us go to the Buddha-Dharma for guidance.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully,

Rev. Eric Matsumoto, Bishop and Dr. Warren Tamamoto, President

COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS

The Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii believes that food security is an essential and basic need in our community. Recently, the Committee on Social Concerns made donations, totally \$5,000, to food banks which are providing food in their communities as part of its regular effort to help our communities across the State.

In addition, due to the significant increase in families seeking food assistance, many now experiencing financial difficulties because of COVID-19, the CSC has sent subsequent donations to food banks and other programs to help replenish food inventory. In collaboration with the Office of the Bishop and State President, donations have been sent to:

- A \$2,000 donation to the Hawaii Food Bank (Oahu)
- A \$1,000 donation to the Food Basket (Big Island)
- A \$1,000 donation to the Maui Food Bank
- A \$500 donation to the Hawaii Food Bank, Kauai Branch
- A \$500 donation to the Kauai Independent Food Bank
- A \$1,000 donation to Honokaa Hongwanji's "Feed the Keiki and Kupuna" program

Funding for community giving is made possible through the Social Welfare Fund administered by the Hawaii Kyodan Committee on Social Concerns. This is the power of your Dana (Selfless Giving) at work. Mahalo for your support of the Annual Social Concerns Fund Drive!

BWA MEMBERS MAKE MASKS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS AND MORE

Members of the Buddhist Women's Associations have been busy making masks to help protect hospital workers, residents of care homes, and community volunteers during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Hawaii Betsuin members have been sewing masks for several weeks now, some of the women working 4 to 8 hours a day to provide masks for about 1,500 people thus far. Aiea, Mililani, Moiliili, Puna, Makawao and Jikoen Hongwanji members have joined the effort.

Masks have been donated to Hawaii Pacific Health, Kaiser, Craigsides, Kahala Nui, and residents at various nursing homes. Kona BWA seamstresses are sewing masks for Kona Auntie's Angels. They are in particular need of 1/8" elastic for the masks, so if you have any in your sewing kit, please consider donating.

Directions for making the masks are available in this [YouTube video](#):

If you'd like to join the mask making team, please contact HFBWA president, Lois Toyama. Each person who sews masks does so at her own home to comply with social distancing recommendations.

NEW REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR CHORALFEST 2020

The Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's Choralfest 2020 will be held this year on September 26 and 27 at Hawaii Betsuin. This is the eighth such event since 2005. If you wish to participate as one of upwards of 150 singers in the festival choir, please register with your temple office by April 30. For a small fee of \$30, you will receive in May a booklet of choral gathas, a practice CD with which to learn your vocal parts over the summer, all meals at the two-day event, and the chance to sing with friends under the guidance of one of Hawaii's top choral directors, Nola Nahulu, who is also the esteemed conductor of the Hawaii Opera Chorus. Five beautiful choral gathas will be featured, including a remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki seventy-five years ago and a BWA World Convention theme song of 1998 by the Lady Noriko Otani. Whether you are a singer or listener, please note the dates – Choralfest 2020 on September 26 and 27.

Because of current uncertainties arising from public health concerns, singers considering participating in Choralfest 2020 will have until June 15, 2020 (previously April 30) to send in their registration forms. Thank you for your understanding and interest.

KAHUKU HONGWANJI SCHOLARSHIP

The Kahuku Hongwanji Mission closed its doors in February 2013 after serving its membership for 111 years. To maintain the legacy of the Kahuku Hongwanji Mission and to develop the future generations of the Hongwanji, Kahuku Hongwanji Mission established a scholarship to support students at the college level.

Eligibility:

- The applicant must be a member of the BSC Fellowship Club or an active member of a Hawaii Kyodan organization.
- The applicant must be a full-time student of an accredited college, university, or a post-high school program in the State of Hawaii, and earn a minimum of 12 college credits per semester.
- The applicant must have a required minimum college GPA of 2.5.
- The applicant must be of college age up to 35 years old.
- The applicant must submit the application form with an essay on "Dharma and My Life".

Application Deadline: July 31, 2020

Scholarship Amount: \$2,000.00 each / two recipients

For more information of this scholarship, please contact the HHMH Headquarters at (808) 522-9200 or email at hqs@honpahi.org