



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

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MAY 2020

JODO SHINSHU BUDDHIST STATEMENT ON COVID19 PANDEMIC

The Covid19 pandemic has spread throughout the world and shows little sign of ending. Here in Japan, we have entered a new stage with the announcement of the state of emergency.

First, I wish to express our sincerest condolences to those in Japan and the rest of the world, who have passed on due to Covid19 pandemic. And to those who have become ill, we send our best wishes for a speedy recovery. Moreover, we express our deepest admiration and gratitude to all the doctors, nurses and medical staff for their heroic effort to treat and save the patients, even at the high risk of danger to themselves.

During this crisis, people around the world are confronting the enormous set of challenges by working together through mutual cooperation and encouragement. However, it has been pointed out that one of the causes for the spread of the disease lies in the actions of asymptomatic people who are unaware that they have contracted the virus. We must, therefore, understand its dangers and the correct response to the virus and act accordingly. We are requesting everyone to show genuine concern for one another so as not to allow the spread of any kind of discrimination and prejudice. Let us act properly based on our careful consideration of the implications of our action.

The Buddha taught us that ignorance and afflictions are the cause of our suffering. And Shinran Shonin revealed to us of the truth of our self-centeredness that lurks at our core through the words, "we foolish ordinary beings possessed of afflictions." Given these truths, isn't it important that we share in the joys and pain precisely because we are in such a difficult time? In Buddhism, we value the teaching of 'interdependence,' which points to the reality that 'all things exist by being connected through the workings of causes and conditions' and are, therefore, 'without any fixed substantial entity.'

The spread of Covid19 is due to the person-to-person contact. Consequently, we no longer feel relief but, instead, anxiety about our 'human connectedness,' which was originally something that was highly cherished. Therefore, we must not come to regard our 'human connectedness' negatively as something of great danger. Precisely because we are now facing this worldwide pandemic, we must become even more cognizant of the original meaning and the importance of our 'human connectedness.'

What is crucially important at this time is for us to be guided by the Buddha's wisdom and to work cooperatively together within the workings of Buddha's great compassion. In so doing, we can reaffirm the importance of being alive and to bring an end to the spread of this disease. It is not the governmental announcement of the state of emergency that will defeat this Coronavirus crisis. Instead, it is the

thorough and appropriate actions of each one of us, in cooperation with many others, which will determine whether or not we can bring the current crisis to its end.

Precisely because my very existence is made possible within the connectedness with the people of the world, we shall be able to rejoice with them when we eventually overcome this difficulty together. Within our respective personal circumstances, we are encouraged to think about what we can do to combat this crisis without diminishing the Lamp of Dharma and our tradition. And we shall cooperate and pool our resources as we receive the mind of Nembutsu that reaches us from Amida Buddha, promising to "liberate us just as we are." So, let us do our part to the best of our abilities in order to regain our society, in which everyone can live with a peace of mind.

April 14, 2020

Chiko Iwagami
Governor General, Jodo Shinshu Hongwanjiha

BISHOP'S CORNER



Let me, first, express my hope that you are well. However, even in Hawaii, 17 precious lives have been lost to COVID-19 and more individuals have yet to recover. My condolences and well-wishes. Fortunately, in Hawaii we have been able to keep our numbers low. I attribute it to the strong sense of togetherness, respect and mutual acknowledgement of each other that we have for one another in Hawaii. Truly, let us not forget that we are all in this together.

The most difficult period was when COVID-19 was spreading very quickly and the death toll kept rising, but we may be entering another very difficult phase of this Pandemic. Great economic loss is being felt, people are experiencing "Quarantine Fatigue" and many who live alone are in social isolation and in some cases even getting the basics are challenging. Let us help each other. Let us do our best to act in a way that will be beneficial for others too. It is a difficult balancing act. We can be torn by our individual wants and what might be best for society as a whole.

In Buddhism, there is the saying "Human beings tend to move in the direction of their thoughts" (The Teaching of Buddha, BDK) and thus what we think is very important. Especially in these challenging times, let us be especially cognizant of our thoughts.

In the book, "Leaves of My Heart" published by American Buddhist Study Center, translated and edited by Wayne S. Yokoyama, Lady Takeko Kujo, daughter of the 21st Spiritual Leader of the Hongwanji, writes about a single stem rose on her desk. Looking at it blooming with all its might she says she is inspired by it. She continues by saying that precious works of art of the past are not awe-inspiring because they were created a long time ago, but that contained in those works of art is "an eternal life." The artwork exudes something that the artists realized by looking deep within themselves. She continues by saying that one seeks to nurture one's course of life because of a "fulfillment of being constantly in the light of eternity."

In other essays, she says that it is only natural for people to admire good and despise bad, but unless we deeply reflect on the negative in our own selves we can never become free from it. She encourages us to deeply reflect on our limitations. By reflecting on my spiritually foolish self, then, I will be able to appreciate the Buddha's Vow equally promising enlightenment to all.

As I was reflecting on her thoughts and words, I, then, recalled a statement by Monshu Emeritus, His Eminence Koshin Ohtani, the 24th Spiritual Leader of Hongwanji, from his book "The Buddha's Wish for the World." He said, "When this vast and great vow of Amida Tathagata touches our hearts, one does not think, "Well, as long as I am happy, that's all that matters...""

Putting their thoughts together, "Our Pledge" composed by the His Eminence Monshu Kojun Ohtani, the 25th Spiritual Leader of Hongwanji, immediately came to my mind.

Our Pledge

Reaching out to others,
I will share a smile and gentle words.
Just like the Buddha, who always calls out with Aloha.

Breaking away from my greed, anger and ignorance,
I will try to live in peace and harmony.
Just like the Buddha, who shares tranquility and kindness with all.

Moving forward from self-centeredness,
I will share a life of joy and sorrow with others.
Just like the Buddha, whose caring heart always embraces us.

Realizing that I live because of others,
I will strive to live life to the fullest with an attitude of gratitude.
Just like the Buddha, who promises to embrace us all.

Illuminated, embraced and nurtured by the Light of Infinite Wisdom and Immeasurable Compassion (Amida Buddha), in grateful response to that Wisdom and Compassion which totally understands my plight and predicament, let us take Gomonshu's words to heart. May it guide us every day, but especially in today's difficult time as we continue to deal with the challenge of COVID-19. Again, we are all in this together. Let us humbly support others and be appreciative of the support we receive from others. Thank you. Namo Amida Butsu/Entrusting in All-Inclusive Wisdom & All-Embracing Compassion.

Namo Amida Butsu

In gassho,
Eric Matsumoto, Bishop

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Aloha! I hope that you are well, physically and spiritually in this “Act with Care” period of the COVID-19 pandemic. It appears that our islands have escaped the worst of the pandemic when compared to other areas of the country such as New York. However, the nightly news reminds us that the virus is still causing significant illness and death in our state. In addition, for many thousands of people there is an emotional toll as well because of employment and income insecurity.

The world changed drastically just as I was elected to be President of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii on February 7, 2020 (unrelated). As we gathered for our Legislative Assembly in early February, we were just starting to have concern about the disease COVID-19 caused by the coronavirus that started in China in late 2019. Since that time about 3.5 months ago, the COVID-19 pandemic has dominated our thoughts and actions. Temples were closed in mid-March. Per directive by our State and County leaders, temples will remain closed until at least June 30th. It is still not clear when we will be able to fully open our temples and we may not be able to have large gatherings until 2021.

Challenges that we face because of the COVID-19 pandemic include financial strain because of loss of donations and inability to have fund-raisers. Ministers and temple members cannot connect in-person. Social and emotional isolation is a problem for some elderly members. Many (possibly all) Bon Dances in 2020 are cancelled or will be cancelled.

Fortunately, Hawaii Kyodan ministers, temple leaders and Sangha members have responded in a very positive way. For example, our HK ministers quickly adapted by holding live-streaming services on-line and the videos are available on the web such as via YouTube or Instagram. The Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii website was updated frequently in response to requests for guidance from HQ by temple leaders. If you have not done so recently, please go to our website where you can view past HHMH Sunday services, COVID-19 memos, messages from our ministers and links to useful community resources. The Buddhist Women’s Association responded by sewing over two thousand masks and donating them to various groups. Temples and ministers have reached out to their Sanghas by telephone calls, letter writing, emails and in some cases, delivering food and supplies.

As we gradually re-open our temples, we (HHMH) face a difficult road. First, we need to adapt to a new way of interacting with each other and sharing the Dharma. It appears that we will not be able to have large gatherings for many months. We tried to encourage openness and warmth among our Sangha and sometimes that included handshakes and hugging. Now we are instructed not to touch people. However, we can still connect with our smiles, our kind words and our thoughts through letters, phone calls and the internet. Second, we need to improve the way we share the Dharma in this era of social media. Webinars, virtual meetings, Facebook and Instagram are just some of the ways that we can connect with people while being physically separated. These new-fangled modes of communication won’t replace the old ways, but they are here to stay.

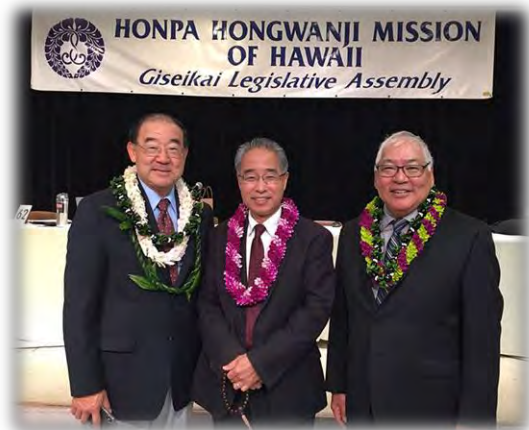
Third, Hawaii Kyodan and individual temples are facing severe financial difficulty because of loss of income. As we try to reduce our expenses, we will have to find ways to increase income for individual temples and for Hawaii Kyodan in general. We do not have all of the answers, but we, the leadership of the Hawaii Kyodan will do our best as we navigate our way through this pandemic. We will be a stronger organization because we will adapt. In turn, we ask for your patience and your support.

In Gassho,
Warren I. Tamamoto MD, President
Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

p.s. Please join me in thanking Past President Pieper Toyama for 6 years of outstanding service to the Hawaii Kyodan and for sharing his knowledge and experiences with me during the transition.

Dr. Warren Tamamoto was newly installed as the President of Honpa Hongwanji Mission on Hawaii on February 8, 2020. He succeeded Mr. Pieper Toyama who served as the President for the past six years from February 2014 to February 2020.

Dr. Tamamoto and his wife Mrs. Claire Tamamoto are members of Aiea Hongwanji Mission on Oahu and have been actively involved in numerous Hongwanji Organizations and Committees for many years. Dr. Tamamoto currently serves as the President of Aiea Hongwanji Mission too.



COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS & RESOURCES ON HHMH WEBSITE

The Office of the Bishop has issued a series of memos (1-6) to provide directives and recommendations regarding temple activities and procedures during the COVID-19 outbreak. The latest memo was issued on May 21, 2020 as the State of Hawaii entered the “Act with Care” phase. These memos are also available in the following page of our Hawaii Kyodan Website:

<https://hongwanjihawaii.com/blog/2020/03/13/covid19/>

This page includes additional important resources which would be helpful to temples, affiliates, and individual members. You can check it periodically to see if there are resources that can help you.

ONLINE JODO SHINSHU SERVICE BOOK

The Jodo Shinshu Service Book is now available online. This is the PDF version of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii’s “red service book.” You can use this online service book anywhere using your digital device. You may click entries in the table of contents to go right to specific sections.

It is available on the HHMH Website: <https://hongwanjihawaii.com/the-jodo-shinshu-service/>

TRIBUTE TO “HEALTH CARE TREASURES” AND ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii has developed a program to express gratitude to all essential workers and especially the front-line medical professionals serving the public during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Each Wednesday at 12 noon, a “Mahalo” video will be premiered on the HHMH YouTube channel for viewing by our members, friends and community to remind us to stop for a moment and think of these self-less beings that courageously face higher risk of infection than those taking refuge at home. The temple bell will be symbolically rung (until the lockdown rules are relaxed to allow us to really ring the temple bells again).

The 8-minute videos feature Kansho bell ringing, introductions by Bishop Eric Matsumoto, messages from different ministers, a photo collage accompanied by the Hawaii Betsuin Choir singing, “Because You Are There.” New photos will be shown each week and a “Health Care Treasure of the Week” will be honored. Each week’s video will remain in the YouTube library for viewing at a later time.

Please visit HHMH’s YouTube Channel to watch the videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDuOZdicW9mWq-DNlf19Pyg>

CHORALFEST 2020 POSTPONED

The Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii’s Choralfest 2020, which was scheduled for September 26-27, 2020 at Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin, has been postponed as a result of current public health uncertainties. Registration fees received will be refunded. Determination of a future date for the event will be made at a later time. Your understanding and interest are appreciated.

REFLECTION BY RÜDIGER RÜCKMANN

Have you had a meaningful experience despite the order to remain home? Temple member and PBA Director of Advancement, Rudiger Ruckmann, reflects about his personal experience in the [Midweek Chasing the Light section](#).

<http://midweek.com/pdf/MidWeek/2020/0513/index-h5.html?page=1#page=2>

(Rüdiger Rückmann)

COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS DONATION PRESENTATION



On Friday, February 28, Bishop Eric Matsumoto, along with Dave Atcheson and Dean Sakamoto representing the Committee on Social Concerns, presented a donation check from the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii to MA'O Organic Farms.



On Friday, March 6, Reverend Kazunori Takahashi, Executive Assistant to the Bishop, along with Dave Atcheson and Dean Sakamoto representing the Committee on Social Concerns, presented a donation check from the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii to the American Red Cross, Pacific Region.



On Sunday, March 8, Bishop Eric Matsumoto presented a donation check from the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii to Ohana Arts in support of their Peace On Your Wings world tour. A presentation was also made by Ms. Lois Toyama, President of the Hawaii Federation Buddhist Women's Association.

HONOLULU MAGAZINE: NISEI STORY NATIONAL AWARD

The entire nisei veterans' feature compiled by HONOLULU Magazine won this year's national City and Regional Magazine Association's Award for Multiplatform Storytelling.

This feature includes the articles about Reverend Yoshiaki Fujitani, the 11th Bishop of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, Dr. Fujio Matsuda, a member of Moiliili Hongwanji Mission, and Mr. Ben Kaito, a member of Aiea Hongwanji Mission.

It is available online: <http://www.honolulumagazine.com/Honolulu-Magazine/December-2019/17-Nisei-Veterans-Share-Stories-of-the-Lives-They-Built-in-Hawaii-After-World-War-II/>

Editors of HONOLULU Magazine hope that "this award will bring more attention to the issue as more people learn and read about the nisei and their countless contributions during and after World War II."

SAVE THE DATES: SUMMER SESSION, JUNE 22-26, 2020

"Interlinked: Understanding the Origins and Evolution of American Buddhism"

The Buddhist Study Center will offer its 46th Annual Summer Study Session as a free online class series on June 22-26, 2020 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (HST) featuring the noted scholar, Rev. Dr. Duncan Ryuken Williams, author of *American Sutra*, a ground-breaking book published in 2019.

The study class series will cover the Foundations of American Buddhism, Buddhism in Hawaii during World War II, Religious Freedom and Buddhism during World War II, American Buddhism and Ecology, and Buddhist Social Engagement in a series of five two-hour lecture over five nights.



The study class series will be available online through a link available at the Buddhist Study Center website, <http://bschawaii.org>. Pre-registration is not required and the lectures are free and open to the public. Donations to the Buddhist Study Center are gratefully accepted in the spirit in which they are given. Detailed information and the full syllabus are available at <http://bschawaii.org>. For more information, please call the Buddhist Study Center at (808) 973-6555.