



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

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BISHOP'S CORNER



Like a good neighbor, Amida is here!

Bishop Eric Matsumoto

In June, the Hawaii Federation of Jr. Young Buddhist Associations will be having their Virtual 64th Jr. YBA State Convention. The theme is “My Neighbor Amida” based on the movie “My Neighbor Totoro.” It reminded me of some Buddhist quotes about friends and friendship “An insincere friend is to be feared more than a wild animal. A wild animal may cause you physically harm, but an insincere friend can harm your mind.” “It is a person’s own mind, not an external enemy or foe, that lures one into unwholesome ways.” “To conquer oneself is a greater victory than to conquer thousands in a battle.” and “The one who protects one’s mind from greed, anger and ignorance, is the one who enjoys real and lasting peace.”

Further, the Dharma encourages: “speak...with kindness, work for their benefit, always be thoughtful, and treat them with honesty.” “...make (the) effort to prevent...friends from falling into wrong ways, protect their property...listen to their concerns when they have problems, lend them a helping hand in times of trouble, and support their family when necessary. Thus, the way of friends...will be one of peace without sorrow.” “A true friend, the one with whom a person may safely associate, will always stick closely to the right way, will worry...about one’s friend’s welfare, will console the friend in misfortune, will offer... a helping hand, ...will keep...secrets, and will always give...good advice. It is very difficult to find a friend like this, and, therefore, one should try very hard to be a friend like this. As the sun warms the fruitful Earth, so a good friend shines in society because of one’s good deeds.”

Shinran Shonin, when he deeply reflected on himself though, lamented about himself “Lacking even small love and small compassion, I cannot hope to benefit sentient beings.” But at the same time he also gratefully remarked, “Were it not for the ship of Amida’s Vow, How could I cross the ocean of painful existence?” Shinran Shonin heard the Compassionate Call of Amida Buddha, who says “Come at once single-heartedly with right mind. I will protect you. Do not fear that you may fall into the calamities of water (greed) or fire (anger).” This message of Amida Buddha was so compelling that he (Shinran Shonin) had no doubt about its authenticity and experienced great joy in knowing that Amida Buddha accepted him just as he was, full of imperfections, unconditionally promising him the Great Enlightenment!

To me, out of profound appreciation for the Buddha’s benevolence and a deep lament about his shameful self, Shinran Shonin, together with reciting the Nembutsu of gratitude, embraced the aspiration to reject

the evil of this world. In Letter 19, he shares about a person of nembutsu *“Signs of long years of saying the nembutsu and aspiring for birth can be seen in the change of heart that had been bad and in the deep warmth for friends and fellow-practicers; this is the sign of rejecting the world.”*

For most of his life, Shinran Shonin did not live in a secluded monastery away from people, but rather like a good neighbor lived together with people and shared with them the wisdom and compassion including the joy of Namu Amida Butsu. We learn from him that Amida Buddha is not a Buddha far away in some distant Pure Land relevant only after we die, but that Amida Buddha as Namu Amida Butsu (or The Buddha’s Name That Calls Me to entrust) is right here, right now. Amida Buddha like a good neighbor is always inviting everyone to come to his house of enlightenment. Amida Buddha, now and forever, like a good neighbor promises to always be with us! When we look at the life of Shinran Shonin and Lady Eshinni, I see them responding in gratitude to the Buddha as they guided and cared for people.

Finally, today, let me share our Hawaii version of Gomonshu Kojun Otani’s “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.

COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS & RESOURCES ON HHMH WEBSITE

The Office of the Bishop has issued a series of memos (1-16) to provide directives and recommendations regarding temple activities and procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic. These are available in the following page of our Hawaii Kyodan Website. The latest memo was issued on June 13, 2021 because of the anticipated lifting of inter-island travel restrictions, in-person services, and other topics.

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

