



“The Calling Voice”

# Ka Leo Kāhea

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## 111th Legislative Assembly Held



Left: Bishop Eric Matsumoto (center) holds a check for \$250,000 given to Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH) by the West Kauai Hongwanji Mission to establish the Shinji and Sumako Hironaka Minister's Welfare Fund. Pictured are (left to right) HHMH President Dr. Warren Tamamoto, Mrs. Shirley Kakuda, Bishop Matsumoto, Ms. Faye Tateishi, and Rev. Tomo Hojo. Right: The 2023 Board of Directors of the HHMH who attended in person. Front row, left to right: Rev. Shingo Furusawa, Rev. Shawn Yagi, Rev. Joshin Kamuro, Rev. Jeffrey Soga, HHMH President Dr. Warren Tamamoto, HHMH Bishop Eric Matsumoto, Rimban Rev. Kazunori Takahashi, Rev. Shinkai Murakami, Rev. Blayne Higa, and Rev. Satoshi Tomioka. (Photos courtesy of Alan Kubota)

### Sharing Joy Together In Person

BY EDYTHE VASSALL  
HONPA HONGWANJI  
HILO BETSUIN

From February 10-11, 2023, after two years online only, the 111th Legislative Assembly took place at the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin (HHHB). The Legislative Assembly or Giseikai is the annual meeting of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH) Board of Directors, which includes the Bishop, Ministers, temple leaders, and temple members to create policies for the Hawaii Kyodan.

A pre-Giseikai “rap session” was held on the evening of February 9. The theme of this motivational and educational event was “Toward A Flourishing

Sangha.” The rap session was led on Zoom by Revs. Bob and Patti Oshita, retired ministers from the Buddhist Church of Sacramento, and Mr. Pieper Toyama, former head of the Pacific Buddhist Academy, who presented in person. The main points shared were that first, there must be a common goal or vision that unites everyone in a common purpose, and second, ministers and sangha members must work together and learn from each other.

The Oshitas described how they created meaningful programs that grew their sangha. Their underlying message was, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Pieper Toyama shared reasons why organizations decline and more importantly, how to avoid organizational decline. Attendees shared their viewpoints and questions with the presenters and

each other. (See the article “Rap Session” in the March 2023 issue of *Ka Leo Kāhea* for more details.)

This year’s theme “Sharing Joy Together” was evident in the return to an in-person event. (All programs were also conducted on Zoom.) On Friday morning the temple social hall buzzed with joyful greetings and conversations between HHMH ministers, delegates, directors, observers, and guests from every district of Hawaii. Special guests who attended in person included Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) President Mrs. Terri Omori and her husband Mr. Ford Omori, BCA Secretary Mrs. Darlene Bagshaw, Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada (JSBTC) Bishop Tatsuya Aoki and JSBTC President Mrs. Laura Sugimoto, and Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara from the Jodo Shinshu International Office.

Enthusiasm echoed in

the voices singing and chanting at the opening service in the hondo. Inspirational messages were delivered from Governor General Bishop Chiko Iwagami, Mrs. Linda Nagai and Rev. Shingo Furusawa. A memorial service was also held in honor of individuals who received a posthumous title (*ingo*) in 2022. After the service, the group returned to the social hall to hear HHMH Bishop Eric Matsumoto’s Welcome Message, and then the business meeting began.

The following resolutions were discussed and passed by delegates from the Hawaii Hongwanji temples:

1. 2023 HHMH Budget
2. Dissolution of the Implementation Maintenance Committee
3. Establishment of a Hawaii Kyodan Communications Coordinator Position (passed with amendments)
4. Commemorating the

Triple Celebration of Shinran Shōnin’s Birth, Establishment of the Jōdo Shinshu Teaching, and Founding of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

5. Resolution of Condolence and Appreciation for Reverend Midori O. Kondo, Mr. David Ikawa, Mrs. Jane Fumiko Obana Uyeno, and Mr. Sadao Aoki

Before breaking for lunch, a special collection for the Ministerial Training Fund was held, which raised \$3,931. After lunch, several presentations were given, including by Mr. Josh Hernandez-Morse, Head of School for the Pacific Buddhist Academy; one on the Future of American Buddhism Conference Report (<https://futureofamericanbuddhism.com/>) by Mr. Jon Matsuoka, Rev. Blayne Higa and Rev. Cristina Moon (a Rinzaï Zen priest living at Daihonzan

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## PBA Celebrates Student Artists

BY MEGAN LEE  
DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT,  
PACIFIC BUDDHIST ACADEMY

On April 7, Pacific Buddhist Academy (PBA) hosted its first-ever Fine Arts Showcase in celebration of student talent and art teacher Wayne Takazono’s retirement after 17 years working at the school. The PBA Weinberg Building was opened to the public and transformed into an artist night market. Attractions included alumni and staff small business vendors, food and craft stations by PBA’s senior economics class, live music from the PBA rock band and Toyofuku Sensei, and classrooms full of artwork and student presentations.

Wayne Takazono, Head of School Josh Hernandez Morse, and ceramics teacher Verena Mellein were tasked with choosing a winner from each category: Ceramics, Acrylics, Jewelry Making, Pastels,

Abstract Art, Photography, Knitting, and Drawing. Deserving students would receive the Dragon Artist Award in honor of their creativity. But the judges weren’t the only ones to impress that night. Students presented on their technique and vision to parents, friends, siblings, and even their other classmates, as guests had the opportunity to vote for their favorite pieces online. The winners would be announced later that same night and take home the Voter’s Choice Award.

To choose a favorite amongst all the unique submissions was nearly impossible. In good spirits, the students encouraged one another, voting for their peers most passionate about the fine arts who they felt were deserving of an award over themselves.

There were many other enthusiastic people involved in the event, including parent volunteers Kim Winter, Gwyn Mihara, and Yvette Lee, without whom



The PBA Dragon Artist awardees cheerfully display certificates acknowledging their artistic accomplishments. (Courtesy of Megan Lee)

the night and fine art’s giving tree would not have been made possible. Head of School Emeritus Pieper Toyama was present to sign his new book, *Family Stories from the Plantation*

and Beyond. And members of the community who hadn’t yet stepped foot in the new building got the chance to see the lively atmosphere of student life at PBA.

We’re thrilled with everyone who supported us in this endeavor, congratulate the students on their achievements, and look forward to putting on this event again next year!



By Rev. Eric Matsumoto  
BISHOP, HONPA HONGWANJI  
MISSION OF HAWAII

Bishop Eric Matsumoto was invited to be the Key-note Speaker for an Interfaith Breakfast on February 13, 2023, sponsored by the International Academy for Interfaith Studies. The theme was “East Meets West with Aloha: Rekindling the Bonds of Interfaith Relationships.” The following message is a shortened version of the message he shared with the group of Interfaith leaders of Hawaii.

Aloha Kākou.

Personally, my involvement in interfaith started with the wish for more peace and harmony in the world guided by All-Inclusive Wisdom and All-Embracing Compassion (Amida Buddha) and words of our Sectarian Founder Shinran who was born 850 years ago and who said, “May there be peace in the world.” I am inspired by persons such as Former Bishop Rev. Yoshiaki Fujitani of my own Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii and the Rev. John Heidel of the United Church of Christ. I am sure many would agree that they both had/have a certain presence about them. That is what touched me.

Similarly, the same can be said about the combination of various greetings which I started with this morning. Currently, saying “Aloha Kākou” with my

## “Aloha to All of Us”

### BISHOP'S CORNER

hands in *anjali/gassho* (palms together) with a slight bow is my favorite greeting, as I find a powerful presence and message in the combination of the three elements. Please indulge me as I briefly explain my thoughts with my amateur understanding.

We are all familiar with “Aloha” and deep meaning imbedded in the word so I won’t go into that (today), but when the word “Kākou” is added to “Aloha,” it adds another dimension, expressing “Aloha to all of us.” This is my interpretation, but to me, it promotes more inclusiveness and lessens dichotomy. In groups of three or more when “Aloha Kākou” is used, it includes the person who is uttering “Aloha.” “Aloha Kākou” embraces with “Aloha” all persons of the group or crowd includ-

ing the person offering “Aloha.” Again, with “Aloha Kākou” the “Aloha” now goes beyond the dichotomy of speaker and the listener and includes literally all. The implication is valuable in that, once again, it aids to lessen a possible dichotomy which could keep us separate from each other and unconsciously prevent us from feeling even closer to each other. Aloha Kākou is a precious gift that Hawaii has to share with world.

As I pondered on our theme for today, “East meets West with Aloha: Rekindling the Bonds of Interfaith Relationships,” it brought to mind Rudyard Kipling’s “The Ballad of East and West”; in particular the verse “*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet*” which points to things or matters which are so different that they cannot

come together or agree. But it seems like, actually, the latter part of the verse which reads, in part, “*But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!*” is just as important, if not more important, as this is the point Kipling wanted to emphasize.

If we get too caught up or attached or focus only on the differences, it will be difficult to come together or agree on anything. What becomes important or precious is, at minimum, the thought or idea that though we may have differences, we also have commonalities and that hostility towards each other is, definitely, not answer. For me, generally speaking, religions, spiritual traditions and secular philoso-

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## The Accidental Minister

By Rev. Charlene Kihara,  
HONPA HONGWANJI HAWAII  
BETSUIN

I call myself an “accidental minister.” Like the 1988 movie, *The Accidental Tourist*, which follows the twists and turns in the life of the main character, Marcon, so my *tabi* 旅 journey in Jodo Shinshu begins.

My family has been Jodo Shinshu since before they came from Japan as immigrants in 1905 to Hawaii to work as laborers in the cane fields on Oahu, then became farmers on Farmer’s Road in what is now known as Kahala. During

those early years, Kamehameha Schools leased plots of land to Japanese farmers. Grandma would sell the vegetables the family had grown on their field at Waialae Avenue in Kaimuki, dragging a small cart about a mile and a half to the town. My grandfather worked as a carpenter and as a contractor. My father and grandfather told me stories about what Grandpa Kaku and his crew had built. His projects included the retaining wall for Hilo Bay, the buildings at Mid-Pacific Institute, and Saint Francis Girls’ School in Kaimuki.

In the 1950s, the Kaku family moved to Palolo Valley, where I am the

*makaainana* or steward of the family property. I use this lofty title because it captures in some sense what I do for my family and as a Hongwanji minister.

My “accidental” journey began when I intentionally set foot into the temple, rather than as an occasional attendee to services and events. I remember my first Sunday service at the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin, thinking I knew everything about Buddhism because my family was Japanese and Buddhist. However, this was my ego talking. I had learned much about General Buddhism but not much about Jodo Shinshu. In



Rev. Charlene Kihara

college I took a survey course in world religions, and my professor was Dr. Alfred Bloom.

From my first foray into the temple, I wanted to learn more and more about Jodo Shinshu. The chants and the incense offering were familiar, and I felt a

sense of comfort. The familiarity of the rituals stemmed from my home life, where my father and grandparents burned incense twice a day and chanted in the morning and evening. However, I

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## Listening to the Nembutsu: Amida Buddha’s Profound Calling



By Rev. Ai Hironaka,  
RESIDENT MINISTER, LAHAINA  
HONGWANJI MISSION

This newsletter is titled “*Ka Leo Kāhea*,” which translates to “*The Calling Voice*” in English. The Calling Voice represents the voice of Amida Buddha calling out to us. In this article, I would like to explore how we can listen and attune ourselves to this calling voice.

“Hearing” and “listening” are important concepts in Jodo Shinshu teachings. Actively listening to Dharma messages delivers Amida Buddha’s working through Shinran Shonin’s teachings. And also, when we recite the Nembutsu, we are hearing our own voices. What made me pay

attention to the world of sounds was a power outage. Suddenly, the tweeting of birds entered my ears, and the only human-made noise was from passing cars. With no refrigerator or washing machine humming in the background, I noticed the birds’ songs more acutely. I’ve experienced the same feeling when temple members take me offshore to fish. As they reach the fishing point and turn off the boat’s engine, the only sounds I hear are the gentle waves lapping against the boat. I could not even hear birdsongs. In such situations, the information that enters through the ears creates a sense of deep awareness. As I am not used to being on a boat, the sound of waves hitting the boat makes me aware of the depth of the sea, and the color of the sea appears to be a deeper shade of blue.

Sometimes when I’m listening to someone, I don’t always understand what they’re saying, even though I can hear them. It happens to me sometimes with my family. They’ll ask me if I’m really listening, and I realize that I’m not. “I told you, Papa.” “Are you listening?” In Jodo Shinshu, we recite “*Namo Amida Butsu*” in our daily life, not just

important to really listen to what we’re reciting and not just repeat the words without thinking. There’s a big difference between just hearing it and truly listening.

For example, in a park, a group of teenagers were hanging out, playing music and chatting. Jake played a new song he had written on his guitar. While the other teens heard the music, Nicole was actively listening. She asked Jake about the song’s lyrics, the emotions he conveyed, and how long it took to write it. Nicole was curious and engaged, while others heard the music in the background.

Nicole’s story exemplifies active listening by asking questions and understanding the music’s meaning. While listening needs more effort than just hearing, songs like “*What a Wonderful World*” or “*Imagine*” show how people listen to the music when they ask about the meaning behind the lyrics.

I find it fascinating to explore the meanings of “hear” and “listen” in order to enjoy the teachings of Jodo Shinshu. Whether we’re listening or hearing, it’s essential to pay attention to the significance behind the words, “*Namo*

*Amida Butsu*.” As Shinran Shonin teaches in his *Kyogyoshinsho*, “*The word ‘hear’ in the passage from the [Larger] Sutra means that sentient beings, having heard how the Buddha’s Vow arose—its origin and fulfillment—are altogether free of doubt. This is to hear.*” (CWS p.112)

In essence, what we must hear and listen to is the origin of why Amida Buddha’s Vow arose through the Name, *Namo Amida Butsu*. In Jodo Shinshu, “*to hear*” means understanding why the Primal Vow reaches and enters into an individual. Speaking for myself, as a person who is “*a foolish being of karmic evil caught in birth-and-death, ever sinking and ever wandering in transmigration from innumerable kalpas in the past,*” I cannot liberate myself through my self-power. Amida Buddha recognized this and found a way to save people like me who are self-centered and not wise enough to see the truth. That is why the Primal Vow arose, and why it became the six-character *Namo Amida Butsu* for us to understand easily, which penetrates our heart, mind, and body, filling us with Amida’s heart of Shinjin. As we recite *Namo Amida*

*Butsu*, which is the Calling Voice of Amida, “*Come as you are. I will save you without fail, just entrust yourself to me,*” the Buddha’s wish flows from our lips.

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## Remembering the Tsunami of 1946



**By Dr. Warren Tamamoto**  
PRESIDENT, HONPA HONGWANJI  
MISSION OF HAWAII

Aloha kakou! I hope that you are doing well, physically and spiritually.

On Saturday, April 1, I had the privilege of attending the Annual Tsunami Memorial Service held at Laupahoehoe Point on the Big Island of Hawaii. The service was held in memory of the 24 individuals (students and teachers) who lost their lives in the April 1, 1946

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

tsunami that swept across the beautiful peninsula of Laupahoehoe just before the start of the school day. The tsunami was triggered by a powerful earthquake in the Aleutian Islands. In Hilo, 173 people also died.

The Tsunami Memorial Service is sponsored and organized annually by members of the Papaaloa Hongwanji (now the Honohina-Papaaloa Hongwanji Mission). The tradition was started by long-time President Richard Fujii in the 1970s. Honohina-Papaaloa Hongwanji members Jerry and Rose Broughton have carried on the tradition. Jerry and Rose organized the planning for this event, along with Harold Uyeno, President of Honohina-Papaaloa Hongwanji temple.

Saturday morning was a beautiful sunny day, although a little windy. The pavilion was filled with people. The broader Laupahoehoe community

participates in the event, reflecting the close ties that keep this community together. Many had driven to Laupahoehoe Point from Hilo or even Puna. The drive from Hilo takes about 40 minutes.

Rev. Satoshi Ka'imipono Tomioka of Puna Hongwanji shared a wonderful Dharma message with those present. Rev. Tomioka told the parable of a beautiful pearl. A pearl is created when an irritant such as a grain of sand or grit becomes trapped in the shell of an oyster. The grit is a source of constant irritation or pain. The oyster endures the pain and secretes a substance that coats the grit or sand. Over time, the irritant is transformed into a beautiful pearl. The pain caused by the 1946 Tsunami disaster was indescribable. Over time, family and friends endure the pain with the support of the community. They draw strength from others and life continues. It is a story

of pain, perseverance and love. As Buddhists, we are aware that Amida Buddha is always reaching out to us with limitless compassion through good and bad times. Thank you, Rev. Tomioka for a beautiful service and Dharma message.

This year, four members of the Laupahoehoe School graduating class of 1952 were present to participate in the service. The LHS Class of 1952 was the last class to graduate while the school was still located down at "The Point." After 1952, the school was moved to a new, beautifully designed facility that was constructed on the bluffs above Laupahoehoe Point, safe from future tsunami. Tomoko Izumi Mohideen and Dr. Ronald Yamaoka, two members of the LHS Class of 1952 organized a class effort to plant a Gold tree and install a monument from the Class of 1952. Classmates Frankie DeCaires and Miwako Miura Tsuruda also at-

tended the service.

Tomoko Izumi Mohideen is the daughter of Rev. Kakusho Izumi, who served as resident minister of Papaaloa Hongwanji in the 1940s and 1950s. Tomo is very sharp at age 90 and shared her memories of the events of that day. She had ridden the bus to school, so she fortunately was not at the Point when the tsunami struck.

Class President Dr. Ronald Yamaoka was there, and he shared what happened to him. He was swept up by the tsunami and carried out to sea in spite of his efforts to hold on to tree branches and other debris. He was eventually rescued while hanging on to debris floating on the ocean.

At the service, there were other speakers and presenters. Former Laupahoehoe School first-grade teacher Pearl Fujimoto Yamamoto presented the members of the Class of 1952 with leis of woven

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## Incoming Bishop Acceptance Remarks

**By Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani,**  
BISHOP-ELECT, HONPA HONGWANJI  
MISSION OF HAWAII

*Editor's Note: These remarks were presented at the 111th Legislative Assembly (Giseikai) on February 11, 2023*

Bishop Eric Matsumoto, Kyodan President Dr. Warren Tamamoto, Mrs. Terri and Mr. Ford Omori and Mrs. Darlene Bagshaw from the Buddhist Churches of America, Bishop Tatsuya Aoki and Ms. Laura Sugimoto from the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada, Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwa-

hara from the Jodo Shinshu International Office, fellow ministers and lay leaders of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, and delegates and observers attending this Giseikai Legislative Assembly, good morning!

I stand here in front of you today, humbly and gratefully accepting your vote of confidence. I would like to first take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Bishop Selection Committee chaired by Mr. Jerry Tamamoto for successfully concluding a complex and sensitive task. I would also like to thank the Legislative Assembly, ministers, and dharma-friends for

your support and encouragement.

In 2001 in Kyoto, Rev. Hayashi, my boss at the Hongwanji International Center, told me to come to the conference room. When I opened the door, Bishop Chikai Yosemori, Mr. Fred Nonaka, and Mrs. Lois Yasui were sitting on the sofa. When I went inside, they stood up, approached me, shook my hand, and said, "We are looking forward to having you in Hawaii." I still remember their firm handshakes that welcomed me into a community that would soon become my home. A home where I

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Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani, Bishop-Elect of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, gave his acceptance remarks on the final day of the 111th Legislative Assembly.



Project Dana's 30th Anniversary was in 2019. Founding Administrator Rose Nakamura (right) and Cyndi Osajima, Current Executive Director (left). (Courtesy of Kevin Kawamoto)

Project Dana, the almost 35-year-old "Faith-in-Action" community-based organization based at the Mo'ili'ili Hongwanji Mission, has had a positive impact on the lives of frail elders, disabled persons, and caregivers on both Oahu and the neighbor islands, particularly on the Big Island and Maui, where Project Dana sites have been operating for many years. In fact, the first neighbor island Project Dana site was started in 1992 at the Kona Hongwanji in West Hawaii, launched only a few years after Project Dana was established in 1989 by co-founders Shimeji Kanazawa and Rose Nakamura.

Both Kanazawa and Nakamura had deep roots on the Big Island, according to Project Dana Executive Director, Cyndi Osajima, who knew and worked with both of these women from the earliest days of Project Dana's inception. The eldest of 11 children, Kanazawa was born in Kamuela, Hawaii, into a working class family whose parents demonstrated the value of hard work and perseverance. Nakamura grew up in Hilo, where she witnessed and experienced the importance of community and family support, especially during times of greatest need, such as in the aftermath of a devastating 1960 tsunami that

## Project Dana Honors and Celebrates Its Neighbor Island Partners

**By Cyndi Osajima,** PROJECT DANA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN COLLABORATION WITH **Claudia Uyeda,** **Janie Karimoto,** AND **Kevin Kawamoto**

claimed dozens of lives, including her aunt. Both Kanazawa and Nakamura have passed away – Kanazawa in 2014 at the age of 98 and Nakamura in 2020 at the age of 92 – but their connection to the neighbor islands ensured that Project Dana's reach would always extend beyond O'ahu, a priority that Osajima continues to support and reinforce today.

Osajima is making a point of visiting the neighbor islands in person to let site coordinators, volunteers, recipients, and their caregivers know how much Project Dana appreciates them all. On March 3, for example, she visited the east side of the Big Island, a special trip that Hawaii Island Coordinator Claudia Uyeda, a retired social worker, helped coordinate. At various sites on the Big Island covering the Hilo, Puna, and Kona districts, Uyeda explained, Project Dana services might include planning stimulating social events such as

activity days, group exercise classes, information about healthy aging, home-delivered meals to older adults who need them, and respite time for family caregivers. Each site has developed its own ways of serving elders in the community based on needs and volunteer capacity.

Because Project Dana's headquarters is located on O'ahu, the Hawaii Island Coordinator stays in touch with Osajima through phone calls, emails, and Zoom meetings. "I am like her eyes, ears, and feet on the ground on the Big Island," Uyeda explained.

As mentioned earlier, Kona Hongwanji was the first neighbor island site to be established. On the Big Island, other sites include those located at Daifukuji Soto Mission, Hakalau Jodo Mission, Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin, Papaikou Hongwanji Mission, and Puna Hongwanji Mission.

Project Dana also has sites on Maui located at Kahului Hongwanji Mis-

sion, Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, Makawao Hongwanji Mission, Maui Okinawa Kenjin Kai, and Wailuku Hongwanji Mission. Each site has its own coordinator. One of the things volunteers provided on Maui was to offer rides to spiritual services for recipients who needed help with transportation. Rides were also given to events, activities, doctor's appointments and, at times, grocery shopping.

As services expanded, volunteers also did visits to hospitals and to elders who were homebound. Project Dana helped coordinate support with other organizations' elder recipients, according to longtime former Maui Site Leader Janie Karimoto.

"Being that Makawao Hongwanji was the first temple on Maui to start a Project Dana, we helped Rose Nakamura organize and coordinate workshops or seminars," Karimoto

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## Green Dreams for an Earth-Touching Sangha

## Honolulu Hongwanji Council (HHC) Adopts a Resolution to Recycle



By **STEVE LOHSE**  
CHAIR, GREEN HONGWANJI  
COMMITTEE  
HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF  
HAWAII

We interdepend on our environment for everything, and when our environment is in crisis, we suffer. Going to the Dharma for guidance, we commit to addressing the causes of suffering, clearly also including the causes of environmental crises. Because natural systems run in cycles and waste nothing, recycling is

one good way to put Dharma guidance into action and live in better harmony with sustainable natural systems. As an example of District-level action, the Honolulu Hongwanji Council recently adopted the following Resolution regarding compostable food wares:

**Resolution:**  
**Encouraging All Honolulu Hongwanji Council (HHC) Temples to Use Compostable Food Wares**

September 2022

Whereas, microplastic waste, which results from the breakdown of plastic products, including single-use food ware, has been found in water, air, wildlife, food and human bloodstreams; and  
Whereas, the twentieth

and twenty-first centuries have been dubbed “the Plastic Age” due to the omnipresence of plastic waste worldwide, with conservative estimates the world has approximately 25.3 million metric tons of plastic waste littering the ocean alone; and

Whereas, there is still much habitual attachment to such plastic conveniences despite their ecological and Karmic footprints; and

Whereas, in September 2022, Honolulu’s Disposable Food Ware Ordinance required that food vendors can no longer use plastic ware; and

Whereas, many Temples routinely use non-compostable plastic food wares when more sustainable alternatives are readily available for mindful consumption; therefore,



Some examples of compostable food ware. Are you using these at your temple?

Be It Resolved, that the HHC shall encourage all HHC Temples to use only compostable food wares (and to compost); and

Be It Further Resolved, that the HHC shall encourage the statewide Green Hongwanji Committee (GHC) to share this Resolution with all HHMH District Councils.

As your Green Hongwanji Committee (GHC) shares this Resolution with all HHMH District Councils, we ask, “What is our District-level commitment to recycling, and how can Hongwanji Districts support our Temple-level actions?”

Namo Amida Butsu.

## Sangha Day: Fellowship in a Sustainable World

By **CAROLYN UCHIYAMA**,  
WAHIAWA HONGWANJI MISSION,  
CO-CHAIR, OAHU DISTRICT  
SANGHA DAY

The eight temples of the Oahu Hongwanji Council sponsor an annual Sangha Day on the first Sunday in March to promote fellowship. In the 1970s, the gathering was called Dharma School Field Day to celebrate Hongwanji Day commemorating the first Jodo Shinshu service in Honolulu.

There was a transition to the name Sangha Day, but it still follows the same purpose of gathering in fellowship. It has always been a dharma-centered event that welcomes whole families, from young children to senior citizens. One memorable year, the Oahu Hongwanji Council members went on a temple bus tour. The first stop was at Jikoen Hongwanji. Next we traveled over the Pali to Kailua Hongwanji, and finally, we ate lunch at Kahuku Hongwanji. We learned a lot about each temple and gained new friends.

In another transition, Oahu District temples hosted the Sangha Day highlighting the “unique-



Breakout session collaboration to seek ideas for a sustainable future. (Courtesy of Mavis Takabayashi)

ness” of their town as the purpose of the event. Waipahu Hongwanji hosted “Plantation Days” with guest speaker Barbara Kawakami and her stories of plantation days in her hometown of Waipahu. Students were able to play plantation era games such as talking with paper cup telephones, buzzing buttons on a string, and juggling bean bags.

On March 5, 2023,

Wahiawa Hongwanji hosted Sangha Day. The day began with the morning service led by Rev. Jeffrey Soga and the Oahu District ministers, Rev. Mariko Nishiyama and Rev. David Fujimoto, with guest ministers Bishop-elect Rev. Toshiyuki Umitsani and Rev. Daido Baba. Everyone chanted, “Gassho to Amida,” and many voices resounded throughout the temple.

The theme for the event

was “Sustainability: Ancient Practices in a Modern World.” Our guest speakers were from Na Mea Kuponu in Waiialua. Ku`uipo Garrido shared about Hawaiian values and how that helped them work in their ahupua`a, or land division, from the mountain to the sea. In the Hawaiian way of life, everything had a reason or purpose. They respected the land and took proper care of the aina.

They were self-reliant and practiced sustainability. They could not import food, like we do today.

Steven Bolosan shared with the adults about Korean Natural Farming. Compared to American farming today, this practice mimics nature. The forest is a naturally nourishing place because the leaves fall to the ground, decompose, and nourishes the soil. In Korean Natural Farming, the farmer collects the soil from under the tree to multiply the microbes to remedy the farmer’s soil. Adding microbes conditions and enriches the soil without chemicals.

After the presentation, the adults and students were placed in small groups for a discussion about what they learned and how that may help them influence people in the community to create a more sustainable place. The groups were very excited to share their understandings and viewpoints. Each group chose two or three ideas that they presented to the whole group. Then each person had one vote to choose the best idea they felt would promote the sustainability idea into their community.

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## English Gathas From Japan

By **FRANCIS OKANO**  
CHAIR, MUSIC COMMITTEE  
HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF  
HAWAII

When the late Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani formed the Hawaii Kyodan Music Committee in 1979, he gave it a broad mandate: Do what is necessary to advance the temple’s music interests. Soon after it was organized under chairman Rev. Yasuaki Hayashi, the Committee agreed that the most pressing need was for more English gathas in an increasingly English-speaking Hongwanji.

The English gathas of the

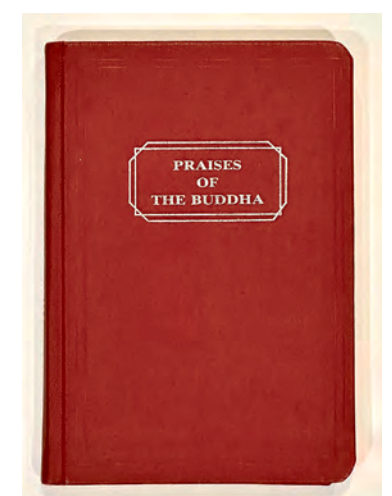
1920s-1930s by the Hunts, Bode, and others had served the temple well. A few of them had become endearing classics, but many, “sounding Christian,” had begun to feel outdated by the 1980s. By the mid-1950s, temples everywhere had been singing the appealing melodies coming from California by respected musicians and ministers’ wives Jane Imamura, Yumi Hojo, Chizu Iwanaga, and poet Kimi Hisatsune. Hawaii Kyodan, not to be outdone, had run statewide gatha contests in the early 1960s, setting their winning lyrics to music in Japan and producing such standards as “At Our Altar,” “Quest of

Life,” “With These Hands,” and “Diamond Faith.”

Against this backdrop, the new Music Committee set out to create English gathas in three ways. First, it adopted the proven formula of gatha contests to attract winning lyrics, for which music was composed locally, resulting in delightful gathas as “Flowers at Amida’s Altar,” “May Peace Prevail,” “The Law of Change,” and “Buddha’s Great Light.” Second, it encouraged the composing of gathas by gifted Kyodan members and friends, including Lily Horio, Mitsuyo Saito, Lee Suan Chong, Jenny Taira, B. J. Soriano, Debbie Kubota,

and others. Third, it made English versions of Japanese gathas, sung to the original melodies – about which more follows.

The Issei and Nisei recognized that Japanese lyrics often expressed a profound faith, born of centuries of Buddhist influence. But the Sansei and later-born and non-Japanese speakers had no clue. When, in 1965, an ad hoc Gatha Translation Committee had free-translated some twenty general and twelve children’s gathas and published them in a booklet, *Translated Japanese Gathas*, Mrs. Toku Umehara, the body’s chairperson, penned a prescient preface:



“It had been an oft-expressed desire and hope among those vitally interested in Sunday school and youth work to have the Japanese gathas translated into the English language so that they could be more readily understood.... It was

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HHMH Triple Celebration "Sharing the Joy of Nembutsu Together: Our Living Heart of Gratitude" - Sept. 7-8, 2024  
850th Anniversary of Shinran Shonin's Birth, 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching,  
135th Anniversary of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

## The Spirit of American Jodo Shin Buddhism



By **TOMOE MORIYA, PH.D.**  
DIRECTOR, NANZAN INSTITUTE  
FOR RELIGION AND CULTURE,  
PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF  
HUMANITIES

In celebrating the Triple Commemoration, I would like to review the remarkable history of American Jodo Shin Buddhism and Bishop Yemyo Imamura (1867-1932). To understand history is to see a chronological aspect of Indra's net; to be aware of how our current surroundings have been constructed so we can more reasonably figure out the way to proceed.

The history of Jodo Shin Buddhism in Hawai'i started with Japanese immigrants on sugar plantations, working under semi-servile conditions, but perhaps we do not know much about their mortality.

Early temple records reveal that, besides religious services and dharma talks at temples and plantations, ministers conducted funerals several days a week. Let us imagine our neighbors die often while working abroad without equal treatment, and we do not have the freedom to hold Buddhist funerals for

our deceased colleagues. As a result, quite a few workers felt desperate and compelled to numb their pain with alcohol and gambling.

However, instead of surrendering to this harsh reality, a group of Buddhist workers searched for spiritual guidance. As early as 1897, they petitioned Honzan in Kyoto to send missionaries to Hawai'i, proposing to bear the expenses for local temples, which exemplified the start of the Honpa Hongwanji's self-support mission. This petition also reminds me of the epilogue in the *Tan-nisho*, which reads, "[in] this impermanent world, [...] all things are empty and vain, therefore, untrue. Only the nembutsu is true, real, and sincere." The immigrants could have given up to despair; instead they chose to trust the Great Compassion of Amida Buddha who would never desert anyone.

One of the pioneer ministers, Reverend Yemyo Imamura, was born in snowy Fukui Prefecture. The 31-year-old arrived in Honolulu in February 1899, and was frequented by members asking him to recite sutras for memorial services, give dharma talks, and conduct funerals. He also regularly traveled to Aiea, Ewa, Waipahu, and Waianae plantations (as well as the Punahou "branch") for dharma talks. Considering Issei members were mostly from southwestern Japan, it was probably inevitable that the young, "not-so-eloquent" minister with an unfamiliar dialect sometimes had only a

handful in the audience. As indicated by the 1897 petition, American Jodo Shin Buddhism is inseparable from active lay participation. In this sense, the Mahayana tradition of lay-oriented Buddhism matches American Jodo Shin Buddhism.

December 1899 witnessed an outbreak of bubonic plague in Honolulu, followed by quarantine and the Great Chinatown Fire in January 1900. Rev. Imamura and a veteran minister, Bishop Honi Satomi, halted most religious services except for increased numbers of funerals, while initiating fundraising to assist members in the quarantined areas. The Hongwanji ministers stood by the most vulnerable in society. It seems their selfless efforts improved the Japanese immigrants' impression of Buddhism, because the number of sangha members increased following the epidemic.

Bishop Satomi returned to Japan, and Rev. Imamura was inaugurated as the second bishop in February 1900. Narratives of Japanese American history tend to depict Bishop Yemyo Imamura as: a mediator leaning toward sugar plantation owners; a nationalist who supported Japanese imperialism; and an imitator of Christian churches to impress the host society. The truth was not so simple. In the early 1900s, Bishop Imamura intervened to convince Japanese workers on the picket lines to end strikes because they only listened to him. However,

what is crucial is that he advocated the right for higher wages by the early 1910s, consequently supporting a large-scale strike on Oahu with bishops of other Buddhist sects in 1920.

Regarding Japanese nationalism, Bishop Imamura insisted that the Hongwanji-affiliated schools teach the Japanese language and maintain religious education for Nisei students of Japanese ancestry, which was a guaranteed constitutional right. However, proponents of Americanization believed such foreign language schools would promote divided loyalty and targeted Buddhist language schools as an epicenter of "Mikadoism" (emperor worship) and hence "un-American." Interestingly, as early as the late 1900s, Bishop Imamura said that ministers needed to study American culture to educate the Hawaii-born students at temple-affiliated schools, because the Hongwanji members consisted of Japanese-speaking Issei parents and English-speaking Nisei children. Just like other Issei immigrants, Honpa Hongwanji ministers and members wished for their language schools to foster better communication at home and more advanced career opportunities for bilingual Nisei youth.

Moreover, in *American Spirit and Religious Freedom* (1920), Bishop Imamura described "Americanism" as an inclusive concept that would accept religious pluralism. He asserted, "[It] is nonsensical to discriminate against someone

because of his or her religious affiliation." And in *Democracy According to the Buddhist Viewpoint*, published in 1918 during WWI, he quoted a famous antiwar passage from the *Larger Sutra*, which reads, "There is no need for soldiers or weapons." He also detailed inclusive ideas of Buddhist democracy that would grant citizenship to all and praised an ethnically diverse society.

Regarding the "imitator of Christianity" discourses, it is appropriate to stop focusing on the superficial similarities of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA/YBA). The YBA should be seen as an Americanized form of the traditional lay-oriented *ko* (fraternity) that was prevalent in Jodo Shinshu strongholds. Comparing *ko* to the YBA, with Bishop Imamura's leadership, gives fair treatment to the role of Buddhism and best explains the actual functions of the organization and its activities.

Lastly, I would like to conclude by saying that the history of American Jodo Shin Buddhism exemplifies three significant legacies: 1) the Mahayana tradition of lay-oriented Buddhism; 2) advocating diversity and Buddhist democracy to build an inclusive, egalitarian society; and 3) standing by the most vulnerable. These are essential in American Jodo Shin Buddhism and something we should pass on to future generations.

## IREI NO HI: The Day of Solace

By **PIEPER TOYAMA, JIKOEN**  
HONGWANJI MISSION

On June 25, Jikoen Hongwanji Mission's *Irei No Hi* Memorial Service will remember all of those, including Okinawan civilians and American and Japanese soldiers, who died during the Battle of Okinawa that raged from April through August 1945. So fierce was the battle, it is known as the "typhoon of steel" in English, and *ko-tetsu no ame* ("rain of steel") in Japanese. The battle is known for the horrific loss of life among Okinawan civilians. 149,611 Okinawan lives accounted for 62% of the deaths; more civilian deaths than Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined. Over 240,000 lives were lost during the three-month battle.

Though the Battle of Okinawa officially ended on August 15, *Irei No Hi* is observed on June 23. This is the day that Lt. General Mitsuru Ushijima, Commander of Japanese forces, committed suicide, which ended effective resistance.

In 1961, the Ryukyu Government officially made June 23 a holiday called "*Irei no Hi* 慰霊の日," a day to provide solace and remember those who lost their lives and to pray for peace.



13th memorial service in Okinawa for all the war dead—military and civilian, American and Japanese.

May 1957: These Jikoen members were part of the group of 300 people who represented Hawaii at the *Irei No Hi* Service in Okinawa. Jikoen resident minister, Rev. Jikai Yamasato (far right), was instrumental in planning the international memorial service, at which Gomonsu Kosho and Lady Ohtani were present.

In 1991, *Irei no Hi* was declared a prefectural holiday. The Okinawa Prefectural Government holds an annual memorial ceremony on June 23 at the Peace Memorial Park. Okinawan citizens observe one minute's silence across the island at 12:00 midday.

The *Irei No Hi* memorial service has a long connection with Jikoen. In 1957, Rev. Jikai Yamasato, Jikoen resident minister, initiated an international project to mark the 13th anniversary memorial for all those who died in the Battle of Okinawa, both civilians and American and Japanese soldiers. The memorial service, organized by Rev. Yamasato, took place in Okinawa. About 300 people from Hawaii participated in this historical event as well as then Gomonsu Kosho and Lady Ohtani. Their attendance at the memorial service was the first time that the highest official of any Buddhist denomination visited Okinawa.

The Gomonsu's and Lady Ohtani's participation was the catalyst for all other Buddhist groups to

conduct propagational work in Okinawa, which theretofore had seen only Christian groups.

This year Jikoen will observe its *Irei No Hi* Memorial Services on June 25 at 9:00 am. Over the years, the Jikoen service has grown into a memorial service not only to remember all those who died in the Battle of Okinawa, but to remember all people who died in all wars, and all who are even now dying in wars raging on our planet this very moment. The service offers a time

and place for us to recommit ourselves to the peace of the world, beginning with our own communities. In this way, Jikoen's *Irei No Hi* service encourages us to reflect on the primacy of life as is expressed in the Okinawan proverb: "*Nuchi du Takara*," which means, "Life is a precious treasure."

At Jikoen, all who are present are invited to offer incense during the temple service. This act of participating in *oshoko* with all those present not only symbolizes the act of purification before hearing the teachings but as importantly, it is reminder that as the fragrance from even the smallest pinch of incense fills the entire temple, so does the smallest act of kindness fill our entire community with peace.

All are invited to Jikoen on June 25 to its *Irei No Hi* service to provide solace for those intimately connected with the Battle of Okinawa, in all wars, and especially in wars raging today. Join us and offer incense to remind ourselves that the smallest act of kindness matters to the peace of the world.

*Jikoen Hongwanji Mission is located at 1731 N. School Street, Honolulu, HI 96819, Phone (808) 845-3422 email jikoen.info@gmail.com*

# PBA's Buddhist Club Visits Big Island Temples

## Annual Gratitude Tour Resumes After 2020 Hiatus



PBA Gratitude Tour students pose with ministers, teachers, and Hilo Betsuin youth in the hondo. (Courtesy of Sandy Taniguchi)



PBA Gratitude Tour students on the steps of Kamuela Hongwanji Mission with Rev. Masanari Yamagishi (back row, far right). (Courtesy of Josh Hernandez Morse)



PBA junior Lycan De Vol interacts with preschoolers at the Hilo Betsuin. (Courtesy of Josh Hernandez Morse)

By **LIANE VILORIA**  
DEAN OF STUDENTS,  
PACIFIC BUDDHIST ACADEMY  
ADVISOR, PACIFIC BUDDHIST ACADEMY BUDDHIST CLUB

The Pacific Buddhist Academy (PBA) Buddhist Club returned home from the 2023 Gratitude Tour (January 27 – 31), restoring a much-loved tradition and valuable learning experience about the history of Buddhism in Hawaii, the variety of temple communities across the state, and dana. It was the school's first Gratitude Tour since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first Gratitude Tour was held in 2017 following the completion of the PBA Weinberg Building as a means of expressing thanks for the support given to PBA by temple sanghas across the state.

Although exhausted, we can all say that it was a fun and purposeful trip! The students learned so much about neighbor island temple communities of the Big Island and how they support and love PBA. Temple members shared the history of their temples and explained how they helped create the foundation of Pacific Buddhist Academy.

Beyond that, the most fulfilling part of the trip was seeing the students in a different element and watching them step up as leaders.

On day one of the trip, junior Lycan De Vol impressed us with his confidence leading activities with Hilo Hongwanji preschoolers. He was interactive, goofy, and fun and the kids absolutely loved him. "I loved the energy of the kids and how excited they were to play," said Lycan. "It's fun when they all get into it and want to do the activities we planned." Other club members followed suit as they played Red Light, Green Light and Duck Duck Goose with the preschoolers, who looked up to the big kids wearing ninja turtle crocs just like them.

The students continued to demonstrate their work ethic, positive attitude, and engagement at the clean-up of the Puna Hongwanji columbarium the following "For our community service project, we helped Puna Hongwanji clean the windows of their temple and columbarium.

Since the pandemic, they have not been able to hold their annual cleanups, so we were glad to be able to offer our assistance," said Chad Okawa. "One thing I have come to appreciate about the various Hongwanji temples and their members is their generosity and hospitality. In the evening, the congregation and Sr. YBA hosted a potluck for us. It was very enjoyable to talk to all the members and they made it a priority to get to know us. I was truly grateful for the opportunity to play their taiko group's odaiko. The sound shook the room!"

The next day, we attended the morning service at the Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin. Karli Koyanagi's family are members of the Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin and she looked forward to the visit. "I was really excited to see friends and family at the Hilo Hongwanji," said Karli. "It was nice reconnecting with them after a long couple of years."

Immediately after, we joined the BWA (Buddhist Women's Association) for a meeting and luncheon. It was great for our students to see how hard this group works to raise money for organizations such as PBA. They gave reports about their craft fair fundraisers and disbursement of funds to various Hongwanji groups. It was evident that these ladies work hard for various missions. We are honored that they include PBA as an organization to support.

Our last stop was at Kamuela Hongwanji. Using what they learned from the beginning of the trip, Chad Okawa and Chase Sukekane delivered an inspiring dharma talk. Chad spoke about the neighbor island temple community and their ties to Pacific Buddhist Academy. Notably, he spoke about Fred Nonaka and his service to the Kyodan and PBA. He shared our gratitude and wish to connect with neighboring communities as PBA belongs to them as well. Chase shared his experiences at PBA and how

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## Bishop

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phies which are inclusive, though they are diverse in approach and sometimes certain content, they are endeavoring to have us try to reach our highest potential.

I came across an interesting article written by Darryl Seland in a magazine titled *Quality Magazine*. I would like to quote parts of his article, "East Meets West: From Polarization to Collaboration."

East meets west. It's a common idiom that has been around for so long that it has evolved to both express agreement and collaboration as well as to describe polar opposites, and just about everything in between.

The distinction between east and west has a lot to do with perception. In 1884, the...Greenwich Mean Time divided the world into an Eastern Hemisphere and a Western Hemisphere.... From then on, and further widening our perceptions, "Every place on Earth was measured in terms of its

distance east or west from this line."

Whether you chalk it up to geography, coincidence, or perception, the gap continued to grow as our differences in culture, food, religion, and more were distinguished as either eastern or western.

In the opening of his classic poem, "The Ballad of East and West," Rudyard Kipling writes, "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." As the poem fleshes out, Kipling was not advocating one as superior to the other. In fact, just the opposite. The characters representing east and west were of equal strength. He was simply attempting to describe two things that were too different to ever agree or be in harmony. In fact, so contradictory that if brought face-to-face would most certainly mean conflict.

However, today the expression east meets west has come to be synonymous with two things that come together in harmony. Now, the idiom has come to describe things that blend aspects of eastern and



HMH Bishop Eric Matsumoto (back row, second from left) delivered the keynote address to this group of spiritual leaders at an Interfaith Breakfast on Feb. 13. (Courtesy of Rev. Dr. Cynthia E. Lynch)

western culture.

In a similar way, the core of each of our religious or spiritual traditions does not change, but certain elements may become more highlighted, due to the influence of other traditions, with the possibility of bringing out a more rounded flavor. In this way, we can learn from each other as long as we have an open mind acknowledging that diversity is not always necessarily negative. We may not totally agree a hundred percent with each other,

but we can agree that we are all trying and that we can each learn something from each other while retaining our respective values and traditions. This is the message I received from Rev. Fujitani and Rev. Heidel and this is the message, I think, Hawaii—including the interfaith community of Hawaii—has to offer the world.

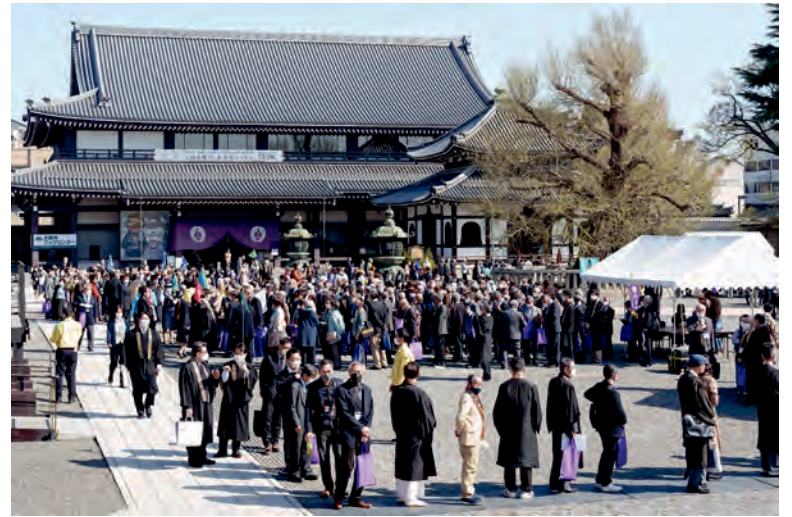
There is no doubt that we do impact and influence each other, whether it is intentional or not and sometimes it could be negatively, but

hopefully it will be positive more than negative. In the Buddhist tradition, we have the metaphor of Indra's Net which originally comes from Vedic sources, but became highly developed and central in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. To quote Douglas Richard Hofstadter, "The Buddhist allegory of 'Indra's Net' tells of an endless net of threads throughout the universe, the horizontal threads running through space, the vertical ones through time. At every crossing of threads is an individual, and every individual is a crystal bead. The great light of 'Absolute Being' illuminates and penetrates every crystal bead; moreover, every crystal bead reflects not only the light from every other crystal in the net—but also every reflection of every reflection throughout the universe.... To paraphrase sinologist Joseph Needham, reality is in the relation."

The rekindling interfaith relationships is crucial in that, for many people,

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# 850th/800th Joint Celebration at Hongwanji in Kyoto



From March to May 2023, Jodo Shinshu Buddhists celebrated the 850th anniversary of the birth of Shinran Shonin, founder, and the 800th anniversary of the establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching. For more information, please visit the Hongwanji International Center website: <https://international.hongwanji.or.jp> Clockwise from upper left: outside the Goeido (Founder's Hall) is decorated with banners for the occasion; flowers are offered during the service; people wait to enter the Goeido (the An' nonden (bookstore) is in the background); the inside of the Goeido during the joint celebration service. (Courtesy of Yoshiko Morioka)

## Sangha Day

Continued from Page 4

The idea that received the most votes was the Mottainai Project, which means “No Waste” or “No Poho.” Temple members would bring their own plates, utensils, and containers for refreshment after Sunday service. The other idea that received a close second was the Green Hongwanji. The ideas encapsulated in this were about bokashi (kitchen composter/composting kit), recycling centers, temple gardens, and green seminars. Oahu Hongwanji Council will try to put these ideas into practice in 2023 and try to spread the ideas within their temples and

the communities.

After the delicious bento lunches and desserts, members participated in lucky number drawings. Wahiawa area businesses donated prizes for the event. Many members waited in anticipation for brownies from Kilani Bakery, gift cards from Shige's Saimin Stand, gift cards from El Palenque Mexican Restaurant, Wahiawa t-shirts from Duke's Clothing, carrots and lemons from the Leilehua High School Agriculture Department, and much more.

A fun-filled day for all: meeting old friends again, learning and sharing ideas, eating yummy food, and winning prizes! Can't wait for Sangha Day 2024!!!

## Bishop

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religion seems to be the division or the dividing line which separates people. To me, distinctions are fine, but when it turns into discrimination coupled with hate and violence, that is too extreme. We must come together to promote mutual understanding, respect, non-violence, and compassion.

A beautiful expression of coming together is the greeting with which I started this morning. The gassho or anjali, of palms together, in the Buddhist tradition expresses oneness and togetherness as symbolized by the two separate palms coming together. It is also expressing one's respect to another and in the case of the Buddha, one's highest reverence to the Buddha, but also incorporates equality into it. I express my reverence to the Buddha by placing my hands together, but the Buddhas also place their hands together in gassho to show their respect to the potential in me to become a Buddha (enlightened), too. The bow in East Asian

cultures, especially China, Korea and Japan, expresses one's respect to another and is ideally equal. In Hawaii, we have the Aloha Spirit as a common thread weaving us together, which is Hawaii's Indigenous culture's gift to the world. Let's share these wonderful gifts from the East and West with Aloha.

I conclude by expressing my appreciation once again for this opportunity to share. Although I don't think I have shared anything that everyone did not already know. Finally, I would like to share a quote from the Buddhist tradition as a closing reflection.

“If one wishes to follow the Buddha's teaching one must not be egoistic or self-willed, but should cherish feelings of goodwill toward all alike; one should respect those who are worthy of respect; one should serve those who are worthy of service and treat everyone with uniform kindness.”

Aloha Kākou and Mahalo nui loa.

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

## Gatha

Continued from Page 4

the consensus of the members that it would be impossible to translate the gathas in meter adaptable for singing.... It is to be hoped that the gathas may be adapted for singing sometime in the near future.” Some Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) gatha books were at this time showing on their pages their own free translations of Japanese gathas. With Hawaii and BCA thinking alike, perhaps the time had come for translations to be usefully sung.

The Committee proceeded to shape its translations so as to be sung to their original melody, and it found the task both easy and hard. Gaining new English gathas by adopting the Japanese gathas' music was easy. The process of creating English poems expressing Japanese poems, sung to the tunes to which the Japanese poems were sung, proved difficult beyond imagining, involving, as it did, the dictates of two disparate languages, of poetry, and of music. It sometimes felt writing new gathas

from scratch would be far simpler. The Committee persevered, nevertheless, committed to preserving the meaning and poetic beauty of Old World lyrics, both to enrich New World sanghas and to possibly inspire New World expressions. If some melodies “sounded Japanese,” no apology was needed for adding to the fabric of American diversity.

By the late 1980s, the Committee had completed fifteen singable translations, ranging from “On this Morn” (*Asa no Uta*) to “Evening Bell” (*Yuube no Uta*). Grateful for helpful reviews by ministers, musicians, and educators, the Committee recommended these *English gathas – not Japanese gathas* with appended translations – be included in the Centennial edition of *Praises of the Buddha* (fourth ed., 1990).

After a translation hiatus, the Committee in 2005 formed a Translation Subcommittee to resume English versifying, this time, of not only congregational but also *choral gathas*. Choral fest was starting, and more choral gathas in English were needed. The Translation Subcommittee toiled, even

through the pandemic years, to complete by 2022 some 75 English renditions, of which 42 were congregational and 48 choral gathas; many lyrics having both congregational and choral arrangements.

Counting the 15 translations already in *Praises of the Buddha* and two done in the hiatus, by 2022 the Committee was responsible for a total of 92 English renditions, comprising 57 congregational and 51 choral gathas. No overseas mission, it is believed, has undertaken such a sustained translation effort.

Many of the translated congregational gathas are expected to appear in the upcoming new gatha book, a fifth edition of *Praises of the Buddha*, in commemoration of the Triple Celebration in Hawaii in 2024. As successor to the current *Praises of the Buddha*, the new gatha book will feature a number of original gathas by composers of Hawaii Kyodan as well as many gathas from the current volume. It is hoped that this new gatha book, with its range of English gatha offerings, will receive wide use in the years to come.

## PBA

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it shaped him into the person that he is. His positive message put a smile on everyone's faces! After a fun nagashi somen activity, we ended the day taking pictures of the cherry blossom trees and snow-capped mountains as we enjoyed shave ice with all the fixings. We knew that the message of gratitude was instilled in our students when they began to clean-up without any prompting from the adults.

The trip was an experience that students will remember for a long time.

On behalf of the PBA Buddhist Club, we would like to thank the following for their support of our trip:

- Sophia Price and family for their donation of yummy brownies with proceeds going towards the trip.

- Dash Lauritsen and David Burkett for their generous monetary donations.

- The Koyanagi family for their delicious spam musubis, which sustained us during the early morning of our first day.

- PBA students, faculty, and families who supported the club through our drink, pizza, and Panda Express fundraisers.

- PBA faculty and administration for their support and flexibility in making this trip possible.

- Debbie Nakanelua-Richards and TEAM Kokua for their sponsorship and generous donation of Hawaiian Miles, enabling us to travel.

- Rev. Tomioka, Rev. Takahashi, Eugene Nishimura, Clifford Furukado, Alison Tateishi, and Fred Nonaka for their help in organizing our temple visits.

- Puna and Hilo Hongwanji (and their YBA, BWA, and Jr. YBA members) and Kamuela Hongwanji for their delicious meals! We were so pebbled!

## Legislative Assembly

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Chozen-ji in Hawaii); a New Dharma Partnership presentation by Ms. JoAnn Yosemite-Ito and Rev. Shindo Nishiyama, and a special request by Honokaa Hongwanji President Miles Okumura to help Ukrainians stranded in Hawaii by the war in their home country.

Rev. Tomo Hojo, Ms. Faye Tateishi, and Mrs. Shirley Kakuda of the West Kauai Hongwanji gave a special presentation in which a \$250,000 donation was made to establish the Shinji and Sumako Hironaka Minister's Welfare Fund (to be administered in the same manner as the Richard Taniguchi Fund).

At the Saturday morning

service, Bishop Matsumoto installed our 2023 Hawaii Kyodan officers, directors, advisors, sanmu, and kanji ministers. Special recognition was given to retired ministers Rev. Richard Tennes and Rev. Arthur Kaufmann, as well as Mr. Alan Kubota for his many years of service to HHMH as a photographer.

The plenary session resumed, and Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani was confirmed as the next Bishop of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii by a unanimous vote. Bishop-elect Umitani shared his appreciation with the assembly. Following this, the Hawaii Federation of Jr. Young Buddhist Associations (Jr. YBA) shared a slide and video presentation of their activities.

Lastly, Bishop Eric Matsumoto shared his special report and remarks

with the Assembly. This was his last Legislative Assembly as Bishop of the HHMH, and he was recognized with a warm and sustained standing ovation.

HHMH President Dr. Warren Tamamoto expressed after the event, "My personal feeling is that the 111th Legislative Assembly was a success and should be continued as an in-person activity. There was opportunity to renew old friendships and meet new people. There was time before and after sessions to network with other participants. There was lots of time to think about and answer the question, 'Why are we here?' My hope is that ministers, lay persons, districts, and temples will modify and/or renew their efforts to build healthy Sanghas by sharing joy together."

## Kihara

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wanted to learn the deep meaning of why our family followed the rituals and recited the chants.

I "accidentally" stumbled on classes given at the temple by the Hawaii Betsuin ministers. I started learning more about Jodo Shinshu by taking courses that Rev. Muneto and Rev. Hagio gave. I also enjoyed the opportunities to learn through the Dharma Light classes.

Soon after, Rev. Muneto asked me, "Why don't you go for Tokudo?"

I already had that designation from a Tendai temple I attended in college. I was given a Buddhist name at that time. I told him so. Rev. Muneto said, "That is okay. You can get Tokudo at the Hongwanji, too." So I got Tokudo in 2016.

My Tokudo class consisted of 11 people. I was convinced they were much more qualified and deserving to receive Tokudo than myself, who was struggling with the chanting, memorizing the "Ryogemon" by Rennyō Shōnin, and struggling to copy the mannerisms of the reverends. I felt like I was a tourist in a foreign land.

This was doubly so because the Tokudo session was my first trip to Japan.

A very memorable event happened a few days before the end of the Tokudo Session. I developed a severe sinus infection. I had to take a test while I had a fever. I was supposed to recite the "Ryogemon" from memory but kept fumbling with the pronunciation and the timing. I could not think with a fever, and congestion made my voice raspy.

I became a minister to share my joy in reading and hearing Shinran's words. I want to share the beauty and wisdom of our founder's understanding of Amida Buddha with the Sangha so that anyone can understand. Shinran and Shakyamuni taught the Dharma using *hoben* or *upaya*, expedient means to teach Buddhist concepts. Both teachers told stories to illustrate key concepts in Buddhism. The ideals of Shakyamuni are reflected in the words of the Golden Chain by Mrs. Dorothy Hunt, who, along with her husband, Rev. Ernest Shinkaku Hunt, were ordained as ministers by Bishop Yemyō Imamura. I mention the Hunts here because they are ministers that I would like to emulate. The Hunts tried to

teach the Dharma in ways everyone could easily understand and follow.

In our Jodo Shinshu gathas and Shinran's writings, beautiful lyrical passages show Shinran's view of our nature and our position in the world. Shinran is aware of who we are as flawed human beings. In the *Kyogyōshinsho*, in a very lyrical manner, Shinran writes about the bodhisattvas and disciples that populate the literary landscape of the work. The beauty of the Jodo Shinshu teaching is shared by making the teaching easier to understand. Continuing to make Jodo Shinshu more understandable to the modern Sangha are teachers such as Dr. Taitetsu Unno, Rev. Ken Tanaka, Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto, and Dr. Takashi Miyaji.

My Jodo Shinshu journey continues, and my identity as a Jodo Shinshu minister continues to evolve. Our tradition is about the voices of Amida, Shinran, and Shakyamuni, and the Sangha. I want to share the stories that abound in the Jodo Shinshu sect and within our Sangha. I learned so much from the Sangha members and my fellow ministers, and I am grateful for the life I have been given.

## President's Message

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blue and gold ribbon (the Laupahoehoe School colors) and pointed out the special beauty of Laupahoehoe Point—the ocean, the sky, and the surrounding cliffs constantly blessed by the rain and trade winds. Dr. Walter Dudley from the Pacific Tsunami Museum read an emotional letter from former teacher Ms. Marsue McGinnis, who was rescued by Dr. Leabert Fernandez. Mr. Maurice Messina, Director of Hawaii County

Parks and Recreation, and Heather Kimball, Hawaii County Councilwoman, also spoke.

If you are interested in reading more about the Tsunami Memorial Service or the 1946 Tsunami, here are some sources: The Pacific Tsunami Museum is a great place to visit in person when you are in Hilo town. You may also visit their website for more information. The Four Temples newsletter (Papaikou, Honomu and Honohina-Papaaloha Hongwanji Missions) May 2023 issue has articles covering the Annual Tsunami Memorial Service. You will find informational videos on You

Tube. Search the following titles: 1) Leonie Poy, Tsunami Survivor, 2) Masuo Kino: Tsunami Survivor and 3) Remembering the Tsunami, Laupahoehoe Point, April 1, 1946.

I hope you'll forgive me for sharing so much of the Tsunami Memorial service and the Hawaii Tsunami of April 1, 1946. Laupahoehoe is my home town. My friends, schoolmates, and relatives were and are intimately involved. My uncle Mitsuji Tamamoto lost his life in the tsunami at age 13.

Thank you to everyone who made Saturday, April 1, 2023 such a special day.

In Gassho

## Rev. Umitani

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could never have imagined my life to unfold.

Since then, I have received indescribable causes and conditions to serve the Hawaii Kyodan for the past 22 years. As I look back on my ministry here in Hawaii, I realize that I was, and am still, embraced and nurtured by the kindness and thoughtfulness of many people who have touched my life. I have seen many ministers and temple members tirelessly dedicating their time and energy toward the spread of the Nembutsu teaching. I have learned so much from them. Some of them have already returned to the Pure Land. I owe so many people a debt of gratitude for all they have done. With a feeling of gratitude, I will execute the duties and responsibilities as the Bishop of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii to the best of my abilities. I would like to inherit the legacy of our forefathers on which we stand today and break new ground so that the people of today and the future will encounter the Dharma and discover a fulfilling way of life.

All that being said, I will be honest with you. I feel anxious and nervous as I take on this challenging position. But at the same time, I feel rest assured knowing that I am not alone in this journey with people like you who have a strong passion and commitment to the betterment of our temples and the people in our community. We are all "fellow travelers" within the Light of Amida Buddha, and sharing the joy of Namō Amida Butsu is the common foundation of our endeavor.

## Rev. Hironaka

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It is important to remember that the significance of reciting Nembutsu lies not in our own voice, but in the Voice of Buddha—Amida's Calling.

Thus, it means more than merely hearing that the Primal Vow was established to liberate deluded sentient beings, and that this activity became the Name of the Buddha. When we nod our heads in agreement—when we humbly accept and entrust the calling voice of the Primal Vow, that is what "to hear," means. Listening to the background of the Name, Namō Amida Butsu is what "listening" is in

We live in tumultuous times filled with uncertainty. In an era of societal divisions and conflicts, our Kyodan is committed to a diverse and inclusive community. As recipients of Amida Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion that promises not to leave anyone behind, we must demonstrate, through our words, thoughts, and actions, how and why diversity and inclusivity are a source of strength and vibrancy in our lives and NOT a source of conflict.

Hawaii Kyodan and its temples are experiencing many challenges, such as declining and aging membership, financial instability, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and a shortage of ministers and lay assistants. These challenges are all complexly intertwined, and these are not something that only one person or a few people can overcome. Our Kyodan is a collection of individuals who have various life experiences, knowledge, and perspectives. Through the collaborative efforts among the ministers and lay, temples and headquarters, Hawaii Kyodan and other Jodo Shinshu organizations, we must face these challenges as opportunities to move forward.

I will have a lot to learn as the new Bishop. I look forward to hearing both your concerns and aspirations. I would appreciate your support, understanding, and active participation toward the bright future of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. Together, let us create a compassionate organization where everyone's life and identity are recognized and appreciated.

Namō Amida Butsu.  
Thank you.

Jodo Shinshu.

This Jodo Shinshu poem was written by the *Wajo* (esteemed teacher), Shin-sui Haraguchi (1808-1893), われ称え われ聞くなれど 南無阿弥陀仏 連れてゆくその 親の呼び声

"It is surely me who recites and hears Namō Amida Butsu, But in fact it is the calling of Amida Buddha, the parental calling to carry me to the Pure Land."

So, at this moment, let us all listen to the heart of Namō Amida Butsu, which is reaching out to your heart and mind, which appears from your mouth, and reaches out to your ear for listening to the meaning behind the calling.

Namō Amida Butsu.

## Project Dana

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said. She also said it made her feel good to put into practice the concept of selfless giving, asking for nothing in return. As secretary for Makawao Hongwanji, she was able to learn what kinds of needs existed in the community for older adults and even started a popular Monday lunch program that included a religious service, simple but enjoyable food, and fellowship.

Karimoto remembers the words of her father who used to say, "If you can help someone, HELP, 'cause you never know

when and if you're going to need help!"

Osajima is grateful to all the neighbor island site coordinators, volunteers, and others who give so selflessly of their time, compassion, and dedication to the Project Dana mission of providing a variety of services to frail elders and disabled adults to ensure their wellbeing, independence, and dignity in an environment of their choice.

"We couldn't fulfill our mission on the neighbor islands without all our wonderful site coordinators and volunteers," she said. "We deeply appreciate all of supporters statewide."



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