



“The Calling Voice”

Ka Leo Kāhea

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Bishop's Statement on Lahaina Fire



Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, pictured in 2018, was destroyed by the wildfire. Rev. Hironaka and his family escaped safely. (Courtesy of Alan Kubota)

By **REV. TOSHIYUKI UMITANI**
BISHOP, HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII

Statement Regarding the Disaster on Maui

I would like to express my deepest condolences to those who lost their lives as a result of the disaster in Maui, and my heartfelt sympathy to those who have lost their homes and are living as evacuees.

The fire that broke out on August 8,

2023, devastated the city of Lahaina. As of today, 93 people are confirmed to have died, and more than 2,000 buildings have been damaged or destroyed. The historic town of Lahaina, which was once the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom and a beautiful tourist destination visited by many people, was burnt to the ground.

Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, located in the center of the city, was not spared the destruction by the fire. The Resident Minister, Reverend Ai Hironaka, his family, and many of the temple members have safely evacuated and are currently living a life of inconvenience.

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Mahalo, Former Bishop Eric Matsumoto!

Thank You For 12 Years Of Service

By **EDYTHE VASSALL**
HONPA HONGWANJI
HILO BETSUIN

A very special event was held on July 8 at the Ala Moana Hotel Ballroom in Honolulu. It was the Mahalo Luncheon for Outgoing Bishop Eric T. Matsumoto, who spent the last 12 years providing religious guidance to the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH) and as part of the Interfaith community. Over 200 people turned out to show their gratitude for his wise and compassionate leadership. His wife Tamayo, son Caden, and brother Alan were present for the festivities.

Before lunch, attendees talked story and praised the former bishop. “The fact that the Samaritan Counseling Center Hawaii has remained a financially viable institution is in large part due to the ongoing support of Bishop Matsu-

moto,” said Rev. Dr. Robert Steele, SCCH Vice President, who attended with his wife, Jean. Samaritan Counseling Center Hawaii provides professional, accessible mental health counseling to people of all faiths, regardless of their ability to pay.

Words of Thanksgiving were given by Rev. Blayne Higa of Kona Hongwanji Mission, and after a delicious lunch, Master of Ceremonies Mr. Dennis Sekine opened the formal program. There was a performance of songs from the musical *Peace On Your Wings* by several of the cast members. *Peace On Your Wings* is based around the story of Sadako Sasaki, the girl who attempted to fold 1,000 cranes after surviving the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. This successful show has gone on tour in the United States and Japan.

“The cast and creative team of *Peace On Your Wings* would like to wholeheartedly thank Bishop Eric



Sharing the special mahalo luncheon event with family: (left to right) Mrs. Tamayo Matsumoto, son Caden, Former Bishop Rev. Eric Matsumoto, and brother Alan. (Courtesy of Rev. Daido Baba)

Matsumoto for planting the seed to create a musical with a Buddhist message which brought *Peace On Your Wings* to life,” said Jenny Taira, *Peace On Your Wings* composer and Ohana Arts executive director. “His unwavering support, and that of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii has

been so instrumental in spreading Sadako’s message all over the world. We are honored that this musical is one of the many facets of his powerful legacy that represents his peaceful and harmonious leadership.”

After the performance Rev. Eric and Tamayo Matsumoto were called up

on stage, where they received leis and gifts from many friends and associates.

Dr. Warren Tamamoto, HHMH President, followed with a welcome address.

“Words that come to mind when I think of Rev.

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Joint Celebration and 17th World Buddhist Women’s Convention

By **LOIS TOYAMA**
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT,
HAWAII FEDERATION BUDDHIST
WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION

In May, one hundred and thirteen men and women flew from Hawaii to Japan to attend the Joint Celebration and the 17th World Buddhist Women’s Convention (WBWC). At Honzan, the group joined participants from Japan, the Buddhist Churches of America, Canada, and South America.

The Joint Celebration commemorated the 850th Anniversary of Shinran Shonin’s Birth and the 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching. The gates opened at 5:30 with a morning service, followed



Doreen Sakamoto and Claire Tamamoto share some aloha with Fumiko Yasuda and Etsuko Yoshida from Japan. (Courtesy of Honzan Photography)

by a Dharma talk and opening remarks. The very formal and impressive Joint Celebration included the playing of gagaku, traditional court music. A confirmation ceremony was held

following the service.

The 17th WBWC was held on May 11 and 12 at the beautiful Kyoto International Conference Center, set in a heavily wooded area by a lake. We knew we were

in for a very special conference when we walked down an entryway flanked by Buddhist Women’s Association (BWA) members from Japan holding welcome signs, greeting us, and leading us to a room where we enjoyed drinks and entertainment. Workshops included “Life of Shinran Shonin,” ikebana, a theatrical performance, and origami lotus flower making.

At the evening program there was a gift on one chair in each row. People from outside Japan were told to sit at those seats. As we opened our gifts, we began to talk with each other. We shared lei with our rowmates, communicated as best we could, and tried hard to talk with each other. It was a wonderful way to make connections with

other BWA members.

At each BWA World Convention, there is a panel made up of a member from each area. Hawaii’s panel member was Cindy Alm of Hawaii Betsuin. Cindy was kind enough to share a portion of her talk. She said, “I focused my message on the conference theme: ‘Life of Nembutsu enables us to appreciate every encounter.’ I spoke about how joining the Buddhist Women’s Association led me to a deeper understanding of living the life of Nembutsu. For example, during the pandemic, there was uncertainty and fear. Our lives were severely disrupted. BWA members reflected on the pandemic as an extraordinary and unrepeatable experience.

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BY REV. TOSHIYUKI UMITANI
BISHOP, HONPA HONGWANJI
MISSION OF HAWAII

As I write my first message as the new Bishop of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, my heart is filled with joy and gratitude for all the causes and conditions that brought us together to be a part of the Hongwanji Sangha here in Hawaii. First, I would like to express my appreciation to each of you for the support and dedication you have put into your local temple, district, and the Honpa Hongwanji Mission

of Hawaii. Thank you very much. I am humbled to be surrounded by such inspiring ministers and Dharma friends. I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to meet you and share precious moments at any of the events in the months to come.

The book, *A Grateful Past, A Promising Future* says, "Anyone passing by Kojima Hotel at #1 Beretania Street in Honolulu the evening of March 3, 1889, would have heard sounds never before heard in the kingdom of Hawaii. The clear sweet striking of a small gong. The sonorous rhythm of a sutra chanted in Sino-Japanese. The first Shin Buddhist service in these islands was being held by the Reverend Soryu Kagahi, a young priest from the Kyushu province of Oita-ken."

As it says, the seeds of the Buddha-Dharma in Hawaii were planted over

BISHOP'S CORNER

130 years ago. I wonder how people who attended this first service in the Kojima Hotel in 1889 would have heard the sound of the Nembutsu. For the Issei immigrants who left their home country and were living in a challenging environment of discrimination and economic hardships, the sound of the Nembutsu must have provided them comfort, assurance, and joy. As the dried soil absorbs water, the Buddha's teachings of wisdom, compassion, gratitude, and self-inspection permeated the hearts and minds of those who listened to it. And in grateful response to Amida Buddha's compassionate calling, ministers and members throughout the history of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii have laid a strong

foundation, a foundation on which we are standing today.

The history of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii is the history of ministers and members encountering, appreciating, and living within the Nembutsu. We are truly grateful for all the causes and conditions that enabled us to be a part of this history here and now. Even though we may not be able to repay them thoroughly, we feel even more responsible that we must endeavor to share the voice of the Nembutsu with the people of today and the future.

Society has changed over the years, and our lifestyle has changed drastically. However, what we experience as human beings in our daily lives, such as our joy, sadness, hindrances, and setbacks, always exist. Shinran Shonin wrote that "(Amida Buddha) is a great

torch in the long night of ignorance." ("Hymns of the Dharma-Ages" #36). Amida Buddha has been calling us with great compassion from the realm of enlightenment, saying, "Entrust yourself to me. I will never abandon you. Feel assured that you will be born in the Pure Land." That is "Namo Amida Butsu" – Amida's voice of compassion. Our life is a journey with Amida Buddha. We are never alone. A person who lives within Amida's compassionate light takes each of his or her steps with great joy and assurance.

The next time you visit your temple, please sit in front of the Buddha, place your hands together in Gassho, and recite the Nembutsu "Namo Amida Butsu." We are truly grateful for this opportunity to hear and recite the Buddha's Name, "Namo Amida Butsu."

How Do I Say Goodbye to You, My Dearest?



BY REV. SATOSHI KA'IMIPONO TOMIOKA
RESIDENT MINISTER, PUNA
HONGWANJI MISSION
OVERSEEING MINISTER, PAHALA
AND NAALEHU HONGWANJI
MISSIONS

"We can't meet without parting." This is an unforgettable phrase. Once we have a chance to meet someone, it promises a parting. It could be simply

meeting friends on the street and saying, "See you again," or it could be a separation from our loved ones. Although meeting guarantees parting, parting doesn't always guarantee meeting again. This is also true of anything we've received in our life. Whatever we have or receive is constantly changing and will not remain the same forever. Our age, youth, car, health, status, possessions, and anything that exists according to causes and conditions are subject to change. It is a part of life, but it is not easy to say goodbye, especially to someone we love. So, how do I say goodbye to you, my dearest?

Once, there was a husband who was near the end of his life. One day, his partner asked him, "Were

you happy with me?" The husband smiled and answered, "There was never even a single moment that I wasn't happy with you." In his mind, however, he was thinking, "I wanted to ask you if you were happy with me, and my concern is about you after I am gone. How do I say goodbye to you, my dearest?" Both had a fear of losing the other. It is hard to say goodbye to someone after being together for life. They never thought that their story would end, but it was happening.

Suddenly a phrase he heard from a minister came to his mind: "We can't meet without parting." It helped him to understand and accept this situation as a truth of life. However, when he looked into his partner's wet eyes, he

couldn't and didn't want to say goodbye. Then he remembered that there was another phrase that follows the first one: "We can't meet without parting, but there is no goodbye in Amida's embrace."

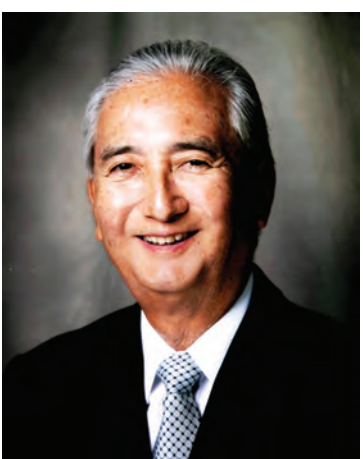
The husband recalled part of a dharma message. The minister said, "Amida is the Buddha of vigorous compassion and transcending wisdom, who pledged to alleviate the struggles of people and bring ultimate tranquility to all. Observing the struggles of human beings on this shore of life, Amida Buddha established the Vow to embrace all and assure us birth on the other shore of the Pure Land when a person passes away, so that there is no continuation of attachments and suffering from this present life. By the

virtue of Amida Buddha, all attachments and pain will be transformed so no one will suffer anymore, but will have only true tranquility." The husband was reflecting upon this and found comfort in the realization that it is I, who has been struggling, who is embraced by Amida Buddha, and birth in the Pure Land will be assured. However, he was still concerned about his partner. "What will happen to my partner when I die?"

The rest of the minister's message gave him the answer. "In the compassionate embrace of Amida Buddha, we meet each other again in the Pure Land, with the most beautiful appearance, praising, loving, and caring for each

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A Special Connection



BY ROD MORIYAMA
WAHIAWA HONGWANJI MISSION

"The past is already gone. The future is not yet here. There is only one moment for you to live." — Buddha

At our 60th high school reunion planning committee meeting, someone suggested that we have bits of fond memories drawn from a hat and shared with everyone during our reunion party.

One memory quickly came to mind. In our junior year, a fun-loving classmate asked me, for a strange favor. She had gotten a traffic ticket and



After learning of the death of one of his high school classmates, the author realized that all connections we make, no matter how small or brief, are of great importance.

didn't want her father to know about it. Would I call the police station, pose as her father and ask that she be forgiven without a court appearance, as "I am too busy to go to court with her?" I made the call but it didn't work.

My last memory of her was the morning after our all-night graduation party. As my parents picked me up after breakfast at the cafeteria, this pixie haole girl ran up to me, gave me a big hug and whispered, "Have a wonderful life!" To this day, I remember the shocked expression on my

father's face.

Now planning our 60th reunion, I decided to look her up. What was her name? I poured through the school archives and found her in our yearbook. I hurried home that evening and frantically searched our long alumni listing that was divided into three sections: contactable, lost and deceased."

To my dismay, I found her on the deceased list. She died in October 2021. There was no other information. I looked her up online. Amazingly, her

obituary from Virginia popped up. It stated she had a very happy, successful life. She and her husband of 52 years created a unique chain of four private schools for pre-kindergarten youngsters throughout southeast Virginia. She impacted more than 5,000 students over several generations.

Her death deeply touched me, and I felt grateful to have known her. All connections no matter how brief, are important. A gentle smile, or simple comment can make a world of difference.

Thank you, Jan, for your wonderful outlook. I look forward to seeing you again!

Born and raised in Wahiawa, Rod Moriyama worked for IBM on the mainland and abroad before returning to Hawai'i. He is an active member of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i as a board member, and president of Wahiawa Hongwanji.

This article appeared in "Chasing The Light" and is reprinted with the author's permission.

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The Ka Leo Kāhea provides a variety of articles on Jodo Shinshu Buddhism for Hawaii residents.

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Editorial rights are reserved to postpone, edit, or withhold from publication anything submitted which does not meet those specifications or the specifications of the editorial staff.

The meaning of any submission will not be altered, but we reserve the right to correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation when necessary.

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“Let’s Green Our Temples!”



By DR. WARREN TAMAMOTO
PRESIDENT, HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII

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

Aiea Hongwanji recently hosted a Going Green Community Recycling event for the first time. The event ran very smoothly, thanks to coordination by Going Green volunteer Rene

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mansho (Mililani Hongwanji member), volunteers from the Manoa Lions Club, and energetic Aiea Hongwanji members. Several other Hongwanji temples on Oahu, such as Ewa and Mililani, also host Going Green recycling events.

The next day at morning service, Rev. Eric Matsumoto followed the theme of the previous day with a Dharma talk titled “Buddhism and Recycling.” At about the same time, I reviewed the agenda for the August 5 Hawaii Kyodan Board of Directors meeting, which includes a report by the Green Hongwanji Committee titled “Goals and Action Plan for a Green Hongwanji Initiative.” Also, I recall that the theme for the State Jr. YBA Convention held in June was *Sangha: Our Interdependent Environment*, focusing on environmental

sustainability. Going Green seems to be a timely topic to think about.

The Going Green E-waste Recycling program accepts items such as computers, monitors, printers, scanners and TVs. These items, unfortunately, often end up in Hawaii landfills. The Going Green program keeps these items out of Hawaii landfills. They are collected on a pallet and shipped to the mainland by T&N Computer Recycling Services, where they are dismantled and recycled as much as possible. With the help of Going Green partner businesses, items such as auto batteries, Hi-5 containers, used eyeglasses, hearing aids, gently used clothing, and canned goods are also accepted. We look forward to participating again in 2024. Thank you, Rene for bringing the event to Aiea Hongwanji!

Every day, newspapers and TV news reminds us that humans are testing the limits of what our planet can provide for life to thrive. Here are a few headlines from the news: *Global temperatures Set to Reach New Records in the Next Five Years* (World Meteorological Organization), *This Year Is Already on Track to be the Hottest Year Ever Recorded* (Bloomberg.com), and *Is a Mega Ocean Current About to Shut Down?* (Scientific American).

Furthermore, humans often endanger other species. Just one example, and there are many; bluefin tuna populations have declined severely from overfishing and illegal fishing over the past few decades. Not just Atlantic bluefin tuna, but also Pacific and Southern bluefin tuna. Population declines have been largely driven by the demand for this fish in high end sushi

markets (according to the World Wildlife Fund). Yes, even sushi could be endangered!

Recognizing the need to educate our Sangha on ways to live sustainably on our planet, the State Lay Association (2015) and the HHMH Legislative Assembly (2016) adopted Resolution 2016-03 to establish a Green Hongwanji initiative and a Kyodan committee tasked with providing leadership to implement the Green Hongwanji Initiative. Under the leadership of chair Steve Lohse, in August 2023 the Green Hongwanji Committee (GHC) has submitted their document, “Goals and Action Plan for a Green Hongwanji Initiative.” The plan sets three goals for a Hawaii Kyodan Green Hongwanji Initiative: 1) Dharma Guidance for Green Action, 2) Align Green Action with Strate-

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New Books Available at HQ Bookstore

By YOSHIKO UMITANI
HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII HEADQUARTERS BOOKSTORE

HHMH Bookstore introduces four newly published books.

Dharma Is Everywhere: Reflections Shared at the California State Assembly by Reverends Bob and Patti Oshita, \$20, Published by American Buddhist Study Center, 2022

Reverends Bob and Patti Oshita are retired Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) ministers. They served at the Buddhist Church of Sacramento for 32 years. When they retired it was among the BCA temples with the largest numbers of members.

team) to serve the Assembly. Their two-term chaplaincy ended in December 2020. *Dharma Is Everywhere* is an inspiring collection of their mindful and heartwarming messages to the California State Assembly. Each reflection observes a specific occasion, honors a famous person, or shares a personal memory with universal meaning.

Living Nembutsu: Applying Shinran’s Radically Engaged Buddhism in Life and Society by Dr. Jeff Wilson, \$25, Published by The Sumeru Press, Inc., 2023

The central focus of *Living Nembutsu* is an exploration of how the life and teachings of Shinran Shonin, founder of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, can provide guidance in facing the social

oppressed experiences, with particular relevance to the LGBTQ+ community, refugees, racialized persons, and other groups. *Living Nembutsu* also provides examples of Jodo Shinshu Buddhists in action, working to combat climate change, religious intolerance in prisons, racism, and other challenges.

Dr. Jeff Wilson is a Professor of Religious Studies and East Asian Studies at Renison University College (University of Waterloo) in Ontario, Canada. He received his tokudo ordination at Nishi Hongwanji in 2012 and serves as a minister’s assistant for the Toronto Buddhist Church. Dr. Wilson is also the author of *Buddhism of the Heart: Reflections on Shin Buddhism and Inner Togetherness*, among other books.

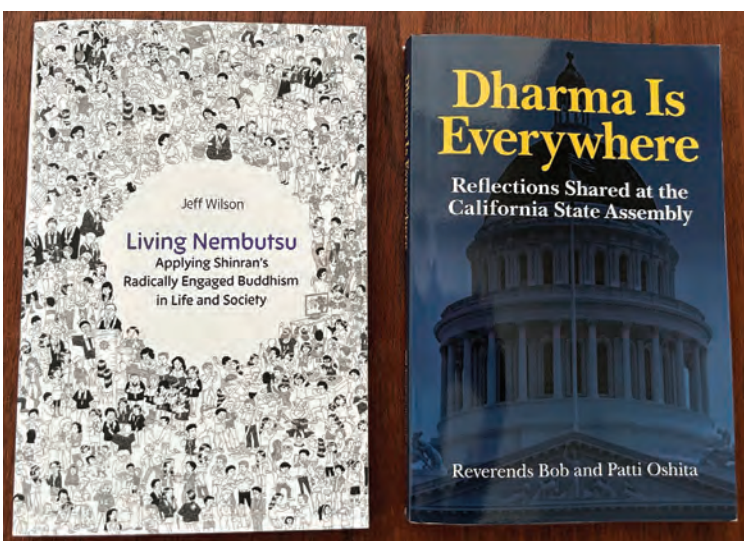
Crossing Over to Jodo Shinshu: Discovering the Buddhist Path, Free, published by Jodo Shinshu International Office (JSIO), 2022

This is a collection of essays by people who have found Jodo Shinshu and are sharing their joy in discovering the Nembutsu. Many are written by BCA members and/or recently ordained ministers. Two essays are by Hawaii Kyodan sangha members: Ms. Ann Ishikawa of Mililani Hongwanji, and Ms. Edythe Vassall of Hilo Betsuin (and *Ka Leo Kāhea* editor).

BCA Bishop Marvin Harada notes in the preface,

“The ... following essays written by those who have encountered the Shin Buddhist teachings and have ‘crossed over’ from various other religious traditions and backgrounds... are powerful and moving, as they share their unique life experience that brought them to Shinran Shonin’s teachings and the Nembutsu.... May their essays be the start of a new era in which Shin Buddhism reaches many more who are waiting to hear and encounter the path that embraces and accepts all.”

plets appeared in the *Daijo* (Hongwanji Shuppan Press) from April 2003 to March 2011. They are excerpts from the publication *Tsukizuki no kotoba*, which contained articles written by eminent Jodo Shinshu ministers and scholars who elaborated on the meaning of the Dharma quotes featured on the Shinshu Kyodan Rengo calendar for those years. The Dharma quotes were from a variety of sources, including Shinran Shonin’s writings, the sayings of Rennyo Shonin, passages from the



In 2016, they were invited to be chaplains for the California State Assembly. They were the first Buddhists (and first husband and wife

and environmental challenges of our times. It examines how Shinran’s unique Buddhist philosophy centers marginalized and



Gleanings on the Pure Land: Volume 1, Free, published by Jodo Shinshu International Office, 2022

The Dharma messages in this book are in both Japanese and English, translated by Rev. Gene Sekiya of the Hongwanji International Center.

Rev. Gene Sekiya writes, “The short Dharma messages in this series of four pam-

Pure Land Sutras and scriptures, and notable Nembutsu practitioners.”

These books are available at HHMH Bookstore. Books make wonderful gifts! If you are interested in purchasing or receiving these books, please email hqbooks@honpahi.org or call (808) 522-9202. Donations for JSIO books will be gratefully accepted.

The Oahu District Poster Contest Returns

By SUSAN OSHIRO
CHAIR, OAHU DISTRICT BUDDHIST EDUCATION COMMITTEE

After a two-year hiatus, the Oahu District Poster Contest returned this year! The poster contest, previously sponsored by the Dharma School Teachers Organization (DSTO), was last held in 2020. Last year, the Oahu District Buddhist Education Committee (ODBEC), consisting of

representatives from all eight temples in the Oahu District and under the Office of Buddhist Education and the Commission of Education, decided to resurrect the annual contest.

As was the tradition in past contests, the theme mirrors the year’s Hongwanji theme and slogan. Therefore, the 2023 contest theme was, “Building Healthy Sanghas: Sharing Joy Together.” The district’s youth, from preschool to high school, were

tasked with sharing their artistic interpretation of the contest’s theme when creating their poster entries. While in the past, the contest participants were primarily the district’s Dharma School students, currently not all of the Oahu temples have formal Dharma School classes. So, all youth from the district were encouraged to enter in one of five divisions, categorized by grade.

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Division III (Grade 3-5) first place poster created by Dayton Uehara, Mililani Hongwanji. (Courtesy of Susan Oshiro)

Green Dreams for an Earth-Touching Sangha

Dharma Guidance for Green Action



By **STEVE LOHSE**

CHAIR, GREEN HONGWANJI
COMMITTEE
HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF
HAWAII

The Three Jewels of Buddhism are the Buddha (the Awakened One), the Dharma (the Buddhist teachings), and the Sangha (the community of fellow Buddhists). These Three Jewels are so precious to all schools of Buddhism that we are considered to be Buddhist when we accept them as central in our lives and go to them for guidance.

Recognizing that Planet Earth's environment is also central in our lives, because we depend on healthy environments for everything that sustains life, and

that we ourselves create the crises that give rise to so much social, economic, political, and spiritual suffering, what does Dharma guidance offer us for effective, green environmental action?

First, we might notice that Dharma guidance for root causes of suffering appears relatively straightforward. From Shakyamuni to Shinran, Buddhism's inspiration is liberation from suffering caused by our natural Blind Passions – greed, anger, and ignorance. In Jodo Shinshu, our goal is awakening simultaneously to our bombu nature as ordinary beings and to the boundless compassion of Amida Buddha.

Dharma teaches that we minimize anger and judging others through awareness that the same blind passions live equally in us all, which we demonstrate every time we slide into anger, judgment, and blame. Dharma guides us to inspire others as allies in awareness of shared blind passions

rather than judge or blame others as enemies.

Second, we might notice that Dharma guidance for specific topical, issue-based Green action is not so straightforward, as Dharma intentionally addresses the few root causes of suffering rather than the innumerable topical symptoms of those root causes.

However, if we frame root-vs-topical as a range of causes rather than a duality, plus a little intentional effort on our part, then wisdom, compassion, basic cause/effect, and scientific best practices will guide effective actions that address topical green issues as well as their root causes. After all, there is one Dharma, regardless of innumerable topical concerns or opinions of the moment.

Going to the Three Jewels for guidance, we can create Sanghas that celebrate environmental harmony and that support sustainable societies based on social-economic-envi-



ronmental interdependence, universal human rights, respect for future

generations, and a culture of peace. Namō Amida Butsu.

“Sharing Joy Together!” 4th Virtual State Dharma School Gathering

By **DEBBIE KUBOTA**

CHAIR, STATE DHARMA SCHOOL
GATHERING PLANNING
COMMITTEE

“Sharing Joy Together,” our 2023 Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii slogan, was the theme of our 4th State Dharma School Gathering held virtually on Zoom on Sunday, February 19. All districts across the state were represented: Hawaii Island, Honolulu, Kauai, Maui, and Oahu.

The morning began with a service featuring Dharma School student emcees representing each district. Ty Wakahiro (Oahu District) from Mililani Hongwanji welcomed everyone and introduced Rev. David Fujimoto, Oahu District Dharma School Advisor. Sierra Kosaka (Maui District) from Makawao Hongwanji recognized Rev. Kerry Kiyohara, Maui District Dharma School Advisor, then introduced the “Vandana Ti-Sarana.”

Cole Diamond (Kauai District) from West Kauai Hongwanji introduced Rev. Tomo Hojo, Kauai District Dharma School Advisor, who led the sutra, “Gassho to Amida” then led everyone in reciting the “Golden Chain of Love.”

Our guest speaker, Acting Rimban Yuika Hasebe, who is also the Honolulu District Dharma School Advisor, was introduced by Doken Baba from

Hawaii Betsuin. Acting Rimban Hasebe shared a delightful Dharma message about sharing joy and interacted with online participants to ask what brings them joy.

Following this wonderful message, Doken introduced our song, “Happiness” written by Clark Gesner, from the musical *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. The song reminded us that it's the simple things in life that make us happy.

Rev. Joshin Kamuro, Hawaii District Dharma School Advisor, was introduced by Keiko Gervais (Hawaii Island District) from Hilo Betsuin and led everyone in singing the Nembutsu. Keiko read a wonderful aspiration about sharing joy. At the end of the service, Ty Wakahiro thanked everyone for attending.

Next, everyone moved into breakout rooms. Adults were in a room with Acting Rimban Hasebe, who shared a more in-depth Dharma message about sharing joy, together with a Q&A session and Dharma discussions on this topic.

Dharma School students were divided into age groups. Breakout rooms were facilitated by Jr. YBA members and Planning Committee members. Students created beautiful haiku poetry on sharing joy together.

At the end of the breakout sessions, everyone reconvened in the main

Level One Haiku – K-2nd Grade

•Any number of syllables in each of three lines about things that make you happy.

*I like to play with my friends.
We like to run, jump and swim together.
This always makes me very happy.*

My Family

We will go camping
We will go on Saturday
Going to the beach

By: Tenzen Rita

Riding dirt bike, surfing, friends, fishing, boogie boarding, nintendo, 🏆

I'm Happy


Eating my ice cream
I like my family time
Ballet is fun, too.

By: Zyli Azay Rita

reading books is fun
i like the fun adventures
I can write one too!!
by: Nahe Tomita 🌸

Reading Dr. Seuss on my bed

Natural
Thunder lightning
flood
A natural disaster
Safe and sound at
home
By: Tenzen



Ariana:
Doing gymnastics
Spending time with family
Genki sushi
Tap dancing



Haiku poetry and smiling faces were shared by Dharma students over Zoom at the 4th State Dharma School Gathering in February 2023.

room. The Dharma School students shared their haiku poems with the entire group. Everyone enjoyed their creations. Our gathering was a success. What a wonderful gathering we

had!

After a short break, Dharma School teachers and educators remained online for a presentation by Rev. Kevin Kuniyuki. Rev. Kuniyuki shared a *Study*

Guide for Ministers Assistants and Dharma Educators. The purpose of this guide is to help in educator's understanding of Buddhist and

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President's Message

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gic Needs, and 3) Green the Temples! To quote just a portion of the document: “Inspired by Dharma guidance, this is the heart of the Green Hongwanji Initiative. This Plan presents an EcoSangha Model

that goes to the Dharma for guidance, recognizes that we are interdependent with all life, and considers what we can do to create EcoSanghas in sustainable harmony with our environment. The Plan then presents extensive options for effective green action.”

It is important to remember that this plan is the start and not the end of the “going green” process. It is also important to point out that

the Green Hongwanji committee has been very thoughtful with their recommendations. The plan includes many suggestions/options for helping our environment while recognizing that each temple's situation is different, and therefore the solutions will not be identical for every temple. They have tried to align the Green Action Plan with other strategic needs of our temples such as membership and

finance. With the guidance of the Green Hongwanji committee, I hope that every temple will take action in a thoughtful and deliberate way. Thank you, Green Hongwanji Committee!

“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, one finds it attached to the rest of the world.”

— John Muir

In Gassho

“Shinran’s Challenge” Buddhist Study Center’s 2023 Summer Session Held In Person

By **DEXTER MAR**
HONPA HONGWANJI HAWAII
BETSUIN

After four years on Zoom only, the Buddhist Study Center (BSC) was filled with fellow Dharma travelers once again from June 5-9. The 49th Annual 2023 Summer Session was held both in-person in Honolulu and via Zoom. Each night, over 55 combined attendees listened, learned, and appreciated the insights of Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji, a minister from the Buddhist Churches of America and the Institute of Buddhist Studies.

As a young American-born scholar who received his PhD from Ryokoku University (Japan) in 2019, Miyaji-sensei brought a fresh perspective to what it means to be a Shin Buddhist in the 21st Century. He issued “Shinran’s Challenge” to develop a Shin Buddhist identity that reaffirms our values in today’s high-speed, chaotic world. On the 800th anniversary of the Hongwanji tradition, American Shin Buddhism shares an enduring legacy of Shinran’s teachings that has been kept alive by many generations of Shin Buddhist followers.

By reviewing several shorter writings of Shinran,



Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji (front, center) posed with 2023 Summer Session attendees at the Buddhist Study Center in Honolulu. (Courtesy of Buddhist Study Center)

Rev. Dr. Miyaji focused on major themes of each work to provide a sense of the unique Jodo Shinshu identity among the many Buddhist, and other, religious paths.

On the first night, Rev. Dr. Miyaji addressed *shinjin* as Shinran’s unique focus that makes Jodo Shinshu (Shin) Buddhism different from other Buddhist paths. This is expressed in the *nembutsu* in which *shinjin* is an essential part. The sincere and true *nembutsu* is triggered by *shinjin* or deep entrusting. This deep

entrusting transforms the formless *Namo Amida Butsu* inside into the spoken *Namo Amida Butsu*. This flash of *shinjin* illuminates the darkness of blind passions that encases every person and provides a moment of hope and thankfulness.

Other topics on the unique identity of Shin Buddhist teachings were covered on subsequent nights, including:

Ekō: In Shin Buddhism, wisdom and compassion are freely received, versus needing to be earned.

Other Power: Truth grasps you, versus you needing to work for enlightenment.

Come as you are: Amida reaches out to grasp ordinary people and never abandons them.

Light: “In the presence of light, there is not the absence of darkness. Rather, darkness is embraced within light.”

Self-Effort: Listening and learning the teachings is essential. This is *not* “self-power.”

On the final evening, a

robust discussion of the Shin Buddhist social ethics brought together the previous four nights’ sessions. The development of both a “personal” and “collective” voice are separate and connected issues.

Shin Buddhism provides each individual the means to decide their personal vision, then as a group we may explore whether a collective vision is possible. The path to a personal vision is through realization of the many layers of human self-interest we create and the illuminating light of *shinjin* piercing those layers. The path to a collective vision is through honest dialogue and posing the right questions, without necessarily finding complete answers.

Rev. Dr. Miyaji will return in September 2024 for the Triple Celebration program, so there will be another opportunity next year to learn, listen, and appreciate. Video recordings of sessions 1-5 are available on the BSC website YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/channel/UCUWzJg0lcuY5tdIGef9O9HQ

The 50th Annual 2024 BSC Summer Session will feature Rev. Dr. Kenji Akahoshi. Please mark your calendars for the June-July 2024 Golden Anniversary event.

HMMH 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 Golden Chain of Love: Its History and Significance

By **REV. TATSUO MUNETO, REV. ERIC MATSUMOTO, AND DEXTER MAR**

(Note: This article was originally written in October 2018, and appeared in the fall issue of *Metta*, official bulletin of Buddhist Study Center. The authors have submitted this article to the editor of *Ka Leo Kāhea* with a few changes and edited for length.)

1. Hopes and Challenges

Written in a plain and simple style, the *Golden Chain of Love* has attracted numerous children to the ethical teaching of Buddhism. It explicitly encouraged the children in Hawaii and the mainland USA to nurture kindness and love for all beings, animate and inanimate. Touched by the Buddha’s loving-kindness, the Dharma school students have become aware of their inner strength to protect the lives of other people and animals.

In order for the Shin Buddhist clergy and lay leaders to guide the congregation to read the words of *Golden Chain of Love* clearly and loudly with personal appreciation for its content, it is necessary to understand its background, namely the author’s intent in writing it, and change in wording that was made by the Honpa Hongwanji

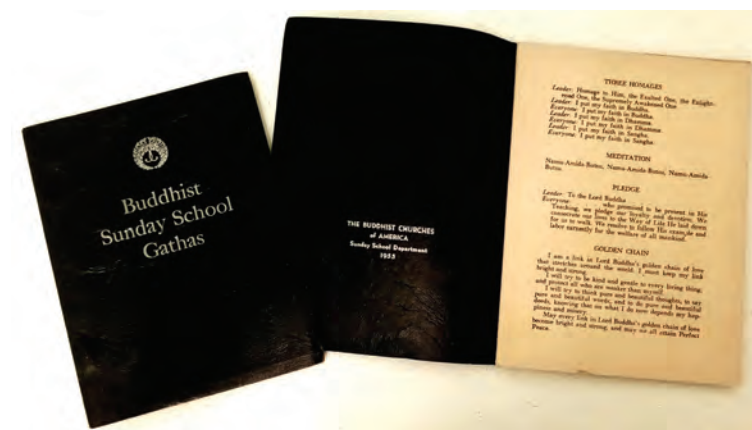
Sunday School Commission in 1970.

2. Reverend Dorothy Hunt’s Contributions and Institutional Problem

It is generally agreed that Reverend Dorothy Hunt wrote the *Golden Chain of Love* to promote the Eight-fold Path, the basic Buddhist teaching taught to children. Ever since its inception in 1927, the *Golden Chain of Love* guided Buddhist children to know that they are inter-related as precious links of Lord Buddha, and to seek and therefore purify their karma, in thoughts, words and actions.

This simple but profound passage became one of the recitations to be used in the Honpa Hongwanji’s Sunday School services from the 1930s to 1970. Adult members of the English Sunday Service began reading the *Golden Chain of Love* in the middle 1970s. There have been several modifications in wording, but they were minor. The basic intent to make one’s thoughts, words and deeds pure and beautiful for the sake of achieving perfect peace of nirvana remained the same. The original version of *Golden Chain of Love* that Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii used until 1970 reads:

I am a link in Lord Buddha’s golden chain of love that stretches around the world. I must keep my link bright and strong. I will try



Rev. Dorothy Hunt’s “Golden Chain” in a 1955 BCA book “Buddhist Sunday School Gathas.” (Courtesy of Hilo Betsuin Library)

to be kind and gentle to every living thing, and protect all who are weaker than myself. I will try to think pure and beautiful thoughts, to say pure and beautiful words, and to do pure and beautiful deeds, knowing that on what I do now depends not only my happiness and unhappiness but also those of others. May every link in Lord Buddha’s golden chain of love become bright and strong, and may we all attain perfect peace.

3. Why “Amida Buddha” instead of “Lord Buddha”?

The major change in the wording of the *Golden Chain of Love* took place in 1970. Honpa Hongwanji’s Sunday School Commission decided to change the key word in the passage from “Lord Buddha” to “Amida Buddha.” Although the reason for the change was not recorded, perhaps the members of the Commission felt that it is natural that this change

takes place, because Amida Buddha is the object of reverence (worship) and because Jodo Shin Buddhists entrust themselves to Amida Buddha. However, the case is not that simple. The reasons why this change was necessary should have been discussed with and explained to the members, children and adults of the Honpa Hongwanji temples.

A discussion would have clarified the difference in meaning with the change from “Lord Buddha” and “Amida Buddha.” The Eight-fold Path teaches that one strives to get rid of blind desire (*klesha/bonno*), the cause of suffering in this life. With the words “Lord Buddha” in the first paragraph of the *Golden Chain of Love*, one is required to have Right Understanding and to purify one’s thoughts (Right Thought), words (Right Speech), and deeds (Right Deed) in order to

attain peace (Right Meditation).

In Jodo Shin Buddhism, the *Nembutsu* followers are not able to purify their karma by their own power, but they aspire to do so in deep awareness and gratitude to Amida Buddha’s unconditional compassion which they find embracing them. Amida Buddha’s compassionate heart connects the *Nembutsu* followers with all others through the law of inter-dependence.

Thus, Amida Buddha’s compassion inspires one to work for the happiness of others. The Entrusting Heart from Amida Buddha is the source of such endeavor. It was perhaps for this reason that the Sunday School Commission replaced the terms “Lord Buddha” in the original version of the *Golden Chain of Love* with the term “Amida Buddha.”

The latest version of the *Golden Chain of Love* in the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii reads:

“I am a link in Amida Buddha’s Golden Chain of Love that stretches around the world.

I must keep my link bright and strong.

I will try to be kind and gentle to every living thing and protect all who are weaker than myself. I will try to think pure and beautiful thoughts, to say pure and beautiful words, and to

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So Glad to Be One

BY REV. SHINKAI MURAKAMI
WAILUKU HONGWANJI MISSION

As a Hongwanji minister, I am fortunate to receive many blessings from our Nembutsu Sangha. Nembutsu Sangha is the term we use to describe the Buddhist community and its sentiments, the opening of the heart, or the mindfulness we share of and with the Buddha. In addition to these blessings, I experience a wide range of emotions and sensations, such as empathy and compassion, happiness and sadness, connection, belonging, and love, as we reflect on the path in life that we are following and creating from the wisdom and guidance of those who came before us.

Let me share with you one of my newest and most incredible experiences. After a long while, I was able to officiate a civil union ceremony. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic (and sometimes for other reasons), many ceremonies were canceled. So when an East Coast couple who had a grandma living on Maui asked me to officiate their wedding, I was very happy to oblige.

A few days before the ceremony, I asked the



A civil union ceremony officiated by Rev. Shinkai Murakami was held at Kahului Hongwanji and attended virtually by the couple's family on the East Coast. (Courtesy of Rev. Shinkai Murakami)

temple's office personnel to inform the couple that I would like to have a counseling session to explain the ceremony to them. Additionally, I had many questions and wanted to discuss a few other things. My main concern was that I had words and vows for a traditional wedding but not for a civil union, and there were only a few days to prepare meaningful words for the ceremony. I expected the couple to come to my office, but after waiting a whole day, they didn't come. I called several ministers who had officiated civil union

ceremonies in the past to solicit ideas from them. Fortunately, they were able to share their experiences, enabling me to create appropriate vows for the couple.

I struggled to write the vows because it was the first time in my life that I would preside over a civil union ceremony, and I wanted to do my best for them.

On the day of the ceremony, the couple came with smiles and said, "Reverend Murakami, we are so sorry! We were so busy doing the many things that had to be done within

a few days that we couldn't make it down to the temple."

At the ceremony, there were only six people, including myself. However, the couple set up their cameras to share the ceremony with their families living on the east coast. Though the civil union ceremony was only 20 minutes long, I saw the reactions of the couple with each word I said. They listened intently, and I saw tears coming from their eyes. I was moved by their tears and appreciated them for considering me to be a part of this very important event in their lives.

Despite my concern, everything went very smoothly, and their family members on the mainland were able to view the entire ceremony.

When I think about this wonderful experience, I truly feel *okage samade* — an expression of gratitude acknowledging the support and assistance of a collective group. The human connection, the reasons and conditions that unite us, make our lives meaningful. We all are connected by the excellent guidance of the Nembutsu and live life with the great compassion of Amida Buddha.

The following passage

from our great leader, Shinran Shonin, truly reminds me of this awesome human connection:

"Ah, hard to encounter, even in many lifetimes, is the decisive cause of birth, Amida's Universal Vow! Hard to realize, even in myriads of kalpas, that it is the pure shinjin that is true and real! If you should come to realize this practice and shinjin, rejoice at the conditions from a distant past that have brought it about. But if, in this lifetime still, you are entangled in a net of doubt, then unavoidably, you must pass once more in the stream of birth and death through myriads of kalpas. Wholly sincere, indeed, are the words of truth that one is grasped, never to be abandoned, the right dharma all-surpassing and wondrous! Hear and reflect and let there be no wavering or apprehension.

"How joyous I am, Gutoku Shinran, a disciple of Shakyamuni!"

Me, too! How joyous I am, Shinkai Murakami, that I am a follower of the great guidance of the Nembutsu! I was able to experience a great and wonderful opportunity in this special civil union with a wonderful couple! Namō Amida Butsu

Celebrating the Journey

Pacific Buddhist Academy's Class of 2023 Graduation



Pacific Buddhist Academy's Class of 2023. (Courtesy of Alan Kubota)

BY MEGAN LEE
DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT, PACIFIC BUDDHIST ACADEMY

Pacific Buddhist Academy witnessed a momentous occasion on May 7, as 17 bright minds donned their caps and gowns, signaling the end of their high school journey and the beginning of a new chapter in their lives. The Class of 2023 graduated with pride, resilience, and a deep appreciation for the values instilled within them during their time at PBA.

During the graduation ceremony, the atmosphere was filled with a mix of emotions: excitement for the future, nostalgia for the memories made, and gratitude for the support of teachers, staff, and fellow students who became lifelong friends. Valedictorian Chad Okawa stood before the audience and reflected on the challenges the Class of 2023 had overcome throughout the

COVID-19 pandemic, saying, "There is a Japanese phrase that I would like to dedicate to our class: 'Seiten no hekireki.' Seiten means 'sunny day,' and hekireki means 'rainy day.' When put together, the proverb refers to the fluctuation and sudden changes in life. It reflects that life is impermanent, and how true it was for our Class of 2023."

Full commencement speeches from Chad and salutatorian Brady Blum are available online at [pacificbuddhistacademy.org](https://www.pacificbuddhistacademy.org).

The PBA community congratulates the Class of 2023 on their graduation and wishes them success and fulfillment in all their future endeavors. As these graduates embark on their respective paths, they will forever remain connected, bound by the power of compassion to heal, the wisdom to make informed decisions, and the mindfulness to live in harmony with themselves and others. They are poised to create positive change and inspire others, making the world a better place one step at a time.

Dharma School

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Shin Buddhist teachings, and aid them in developing their own presentations and Dharma education activities from a Shin Buddhist educator's point of view. The guide provides religious and historical information; it is up to the teachers to devise a method and system of education. Follow-up sessions are planned for Dharma teachers with more in-depth presentations and discussions about the various aspects of the guide, including the "Gomonshu's Accession Message," "Our Pledge," and the primary concepts of the teachings of Jodo Shinshu.

All in all, our gathering was a very successful event. We had 74 participants during our service, 48 participants in the adult breakout room, and 35

participants in the Dharma School Educators session. Much gratitude and appreciation goes out to the Jr. YBA members who helped us with our Dharma School breakout rooms: Chihiro Okawa, Emma Fujikawa, Jay Yokoyama, Kaylie Okuni, Sara Igawa, and Ty Wakahiro, and to our Planning Committee: Ann Ishikawa, Joan Tamori, Sandy Taniguchi, Shirley Kakuda, and Rev. Tomo Hojo.

Our next Virtual State Dharma School Gathering is planned for Sunday, October 15. The theme is "Just As You Are." Our featured guest speaker will be Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani. The program begins at 8:45 AM and ends at 12:00 noon. Register at this link: <https://forms.gle/GPg3G8ksvaRd-ZLpE8>

As always, our gathering is for participants of all ages. Please take the time to join us!

Golden Chain

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do pure and beautiful deeds, knowing on what I do now depends not only my happiness or unhappiness but also that of others.

May every link in Amida Buddha's Golden Chain of Love be bright and strong, and may we all attain perfect peace."

Although Shinran was aware of his true nature as foolish and limited being, he was able, through virtue of Amida Buddha's unconditional compassion, to relate Amida Buddha's love, care and compassion to others, and he encouraged his disciples to do so too in his letters to them:

"Signs of long years of saying the nembutsu and aspiring for birth can be seen in the changes in the heart that had been bad and in the deep warmth for the friends

and fellow practitioners..." (Lamp for the Latter Ages, CWS, P. 551)

4. Live Peace

While being responsible for doing what is good in life for others, the Nembutsu follower is not conscious of his act; instead in saying Namō Amida Butsu spontaneously one is mindful of being embraced by true compassion. This person has become one who will surely attain the peace of Nirvana in the Pure Land.

In the midst of such problems as bullying in addition to the stresses that we experience today, our reciting the *Golden Chain of Love* encourages us to be united with one another as "fellow travelers and fellow practitioners" on the way to birth in the Pure Land and promotes goodness in human life in gratitude to Amida Buddha's compassion.

Bon Dances Celebrated



Bon Dance celebrations were held again at many temples this summer. Left photo: Mel and Della Yamanaka pose in their yukata before a backdrop of Puna Hongwanji (courtesy of Robin Sato). Middle photo: A brief downpour didn't stop the celebration at Hilo Betsuin (courtesy of Rimban Kazunori Takahashi). Right photo: Lihue Hongwanji began a new tradition this year with Honoring Ancestors Lanterns. As one person put it, "This is a wonderful time to stop and reflect on all of the people who have had a part in your life and be filled with gratitude." (Courtesy of Carol Valentine)



At Puna Hongwanji, Haruka Tomioka had a lantern making session with the Kawazoe family children in memory of their great-grandmother, Kay Kawazoe (courtesy of Haruka Tomioka).



Lahaina Hongwanji Mission bon dance was scheduled for August 11 and 12. We offer this image of the Lahaina Hongwanji 2018 Obon celebration in loving remembrance. (Courtesy of Brent Izutsu)

Bishop's Statement

Continued from Page 1

As for the damage to the temple, it is expected to take some time to confirm its state, partly because the town is under lockdown.

The history of the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission began in 1904. Since then, the light of the Nembutsu Dharma has been successfully passed down through the dedication and contribution of Resident Ministers, their families, temple members, and many people in the community. Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, along with other churches and temples, was the place of refuge for the people living in the area. I remember the sound of the Nembutsu reverberating in the Hondo on Sundays. It is truly sad for all of us that such a practice hall of the Nembutsu was destroyed by the disaster.

The Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii established the Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief Fund. Since then, we have received much support not only from within the State of Hawaii but also from all over the world, including the mainland United States, Canada, and Japan. On behalf of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii ministers and members, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to those who extended compassionate words and actions for those on Maui. I would like to humbly ask for your continued support.

Recovery on Maui could take years. Many people are living in anxiety about their uncertain future. As fellow travelers of the Nembutsu, let us stand in solidarity with those who are experiencing suffering and sorrow brought about by this unprecedented encounter.

Even though the temple buildings have been damaged, our sincere aspiration of listening to and sharing the Nembutsu teaching never disappears. This is not the end of 119 years of the history of Lahaina Hongwanji. We are all the more determined to dedicate ourselves to establishing a society where the sound of the Nembutsu prevails.

May the Wisdom and Compassion of Amida Buddha embrace us all. May the sound of the Nembutsu brings us peace and comfort, and gives us the courage to move forward. Namo Amida Butsu.

Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani
Bishop
Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

August 13, 2023

Enjoy reading this issue of Ka Leo Kāhea? Please support our quarterly publication with a donation. You may mail a check to HHMH.

Join Us on September 21 for International Peace Day

By RENE MANSHO
MILILANI HONGWANJI
PEACE DAY COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Every year on Peace Day, September 21, hundreds of us ring bells locally, nationally, and internationally. The international, interfaith "Ring Your Bell for Peace Day" event is organized by the Peace Day Committee of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH). The program is held on Zoom and includes our Hawaiian cultural traditions, interfaith prayers, a minute of silence to honor and remember our Peacekeepers. Then, for five minutes, we share the activity of seeing everyone online ringing their bells for peace!

The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by the United Nations to coincide with the opening of the UN General Assembly. In 2002, September 21 became the permanent date for the International Day of Peace, a period of non-violence to strengthen the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.

To inaugurate the day, the United Nations Peace Bell, originally donated by the UN Association of Japan in June 1954, is rung at UN Headquarters in New York City. The bell tower was modeled after a Japanese *hanamido*, a small temple decorated with flowers that symbolizes the place where Buddha was born. The inscription on the side of the bell reads, "Long live absolute world peace."

In 2007, thanks to the help and hard work of the Hawaii Federation of Junior Young Buddhist Association (Jr. YBA), legislation was passed for Hawaii Peace Day — a new state holiday.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic literally shut down public events. Sadly, the peace parades and temple activities were cancelled. But the Peace Day Committee decided to turn this disappointment into a new opportunity. We learned about a new technology called



Winter and Danielle Smith-Castro, twins from Honokaa, are accompanied by sisters Katalina and Laila Lavaca of Waimea. (Courtesy of Ko'ala School)

Zoom, and our partners made it happen! People connected online from all over the mainland, the neighbor islands, Canada, and Japan. The best interfaith activity brought us together in the true meaning of promoting peace. It was an extraordinary feeling for hundreds of people ringing their bells for peace while it was being captured on Zoom. Individuals in their living rooms — from keiki to kupuna — rang church bells, cow bells, jingle bells, all kinds of bells! This was a novelty for our Hongwanji ohana. To this day, we have continued our new connections with Zoom meetings and conferences, email, and on YouTube.

Support for the International Day of Peace kept growing in 2021 and 2022, with increasing numbers logging in for the "Ring Your Bell for Peace Day" program. Reaching out to the world to share our aloha spirit in promoting world peace, we saw Honokaa Hongwanji helping Ukraine families on the Big Island and in Ukraine by sending food, supplies, and monetary support.

Unfortunately, in 2023 there have been numerous threats to world peace. Let's learn what we can do to shine the light for peace for all the victims of gun violence and war. Too many lives are being needlessly lost to gun violence. It

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Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief Fund

In the spirit of compassionate action, the HHMH Office of the Bishop and Committee on Social Concerns has established the Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief Fund.

All donations collected will go to support Lahaina Hongwanji and relief efforts on Maui. You can donate in the following ways:

1. Online at www.hongwanjihawaii.com by clicking on the “Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief” button under the “Donate” tab.

2. Through GoFundMe at the following link: <https://gofund.me/ff77a520>

3. Check and cash donations can be sent directly to Hawaii Kyodan Headquarters. Please make check payable to HHMH and in the memo line designate “Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief” to ensure proper credit.

Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii
1727 Pali Highway
Honolulu, HI 96813

Mahalo for your generosity and support during this time of tragedy.

WBWC

Continued from Page 1

They focused on gratitude, helping others, and sharing understandings such as, ‘We can make the most of each precious moment.’ *Ichi-go ichi-e* — treasure each unrepeatable moment. Women have had a significant role in supporting and carrying forward Shinran Shonin’s teachings, starting with his wife, Eshinni, and daughter, Kakushinni. I reflected on how the women in my own life, including many BWA members, have taught me about the life of Nembutsu by their examples of daily living and by sharing their stories.”

The entertainment portion of the program was developed by David Atcheson and Wendi Yumori. Members sang and performed American Sign Language to Hawaii BWA’s new pledge. BJ Soriano of Hilo Betsuin wrote the music to the pledge.

The finale of the program was the presentation of the WBWC flag to



Miwa Kakoi, a former BWA exchange student from Japan, reunites with Fay Tateishi of Kauai. Photo courtesy of Honzan Photography

Bishop Matsumoto, since Hawaii will be hosting the next WBWC in 2027. In order to create excitement and inspire people to attend our convention, Joy Nishida and Joshua Chang created a stunning video of Hawaii. At the end of the video, Kristen Alm, Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii BWA member, surprised and delighted us all by dancing a beautiful hula to the song, *Hawaiian Lullaby (Where I Live, There Are Rainbows)*.

Following the conven-

tion, members went on various tours throughout Japan and Okinawa. These experiences were precious opportunities to connect and re-connect with Dharma friends throughout the world.

We would like to express our appreciation to Hawaii Federation BWA President Linda Nagai, to Barbara Fujimoto for teaching us to make the lei, and to Francis Arakaki and Kintetsu for the travel arrangements and support.

one again in the Pure Land. And even after passing away, he will be guiding his partner by virtue of Amida.

He found himself placing hands together in gassho, reciting Namu Amida Butsu with tears and warmth. The minister’s words were echoing in his life. “Namu Amida Butsu is the compassionate calling and commanding voice from Amida Buddha. ‘Come to my embrace! I shall never ever let you go alone.’ Touched by this compassion, a mind of comfort and assurance blooms within us. This is called

the mind of awakening, a profound and warm connection with Amida Buddha, the most essential aspect in our tradition. At the moment of the blossoming of this awakened mind, our birth in Pure Land will be assured.”

The husband shared this with his partner. Both realized that they would have to say goodbye to each other, but there is no goodbye in Amida’s embrace. Together, we are embraced by Namu Amida Butsu.

“Great compassion is untiring and illumines me always.”

— Shinran Shonin

Rev. Tomioka

Continued from Page 2

other, and we are urged to continue to guide people left behind on this earth.

“This is the ultimate love and non-judgmental wisdom of Amida Buddha. Like when a river is flowing into the ocean it becomes one taste with it, we are not living life that simply dies but a life that is to be a part of the compassionate embrace.”

The husband burst into tears as he was reassured that his physical body might disappear, but he shall meet his loved

able mention. The ODBEC is grateful to have a majority of the prize awards generously sponsored by the Oahu Buddhist Women’s Association. We are also thankful to our three judges, Rev. Daido Baba, Karly Alberts, and Debbie Kubota, for their assistance in the difficult job of deciding placement in each divi-

sion.

Our congratulations to all of this year’s Oahu District Poster Contest winners and participants! The winning posters were displayed at this year’s Oahu district temples’ bon dances. We hope you enjoyed the outstanding “Sharing Joy Together” student artwork at your favorite Oahu bon dance.

Poster Contest

Continued from Page 3

We were excited to receive 17 entries, in all five divisions, with participants from four temples—Aiea, Mililani, Wahiawa, and Waipahu. Monetary prizes were awarded for first, second, third place, and honor-

Correction

In the article “111th Legislative Assembly Held” on the cover of the June 2023 *Ka Leo Kāhea*, the names of 2023 Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii Board of Directors in the second and third rows were inadvertently

left out of the photo caption. We apologize for this omission.

Their names are (second row, left to right): Gary Murai, Rod Moriyama, Michael Munekiyo, Miles Okumura, Faye Tateishi, Joanne Kealoha,

Sharon Nohara, Carolyn Uchiyama, Dexter Mar, Evan Watarida, and Alan Tomita. (Third row, left to right): Ivan Nakano, Miles Tamura, John Toguchi, Russell Nonaka, Myra Nohara, Rene Mansho, and Clifford Togo.

Rev. Matsumoto

Continued from Page 1

Eric Matsumoto: Gentle. Compassionate. Thoughtful. Dedicated. Hard-working. Empathetic. He is a scholar with a particular interest in Buddhism, Buddhist Art and Architecture. He is a local ‘rubba slippa’ boy who became fluent in Japanese and had the right combination of personal traits to become the 16th Bishop of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.”

“Rev. Eric has been our voice for the past 12 years at innumerable events.... Wherever he has been, he has shared our message encouraging peace, harmony and good will. He has spoken out on social issues—when there is a need to remind us to have compassion for others, when there is a need to help those who are isolated, when there is a need to remind us that every individual is a valued member of society and every person should be treated as equal. He has been a strong voice promoting peace in our society.”

MC Dennis Sekine introduced dignitaries who gave aloha messages to the former bishop: Hawaii Governor Josh Green, Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi, Consul General Mr. Yutaka Aoki, Bishop Kosen Ishikawa of the Hawaii Buddhist Council, Mr. Josh Hernandez-Morse of Pacific Buddhist Academy, and Mr. Pieper Toyama, Former Kyodan President.

There were additional presentations from the HHMH, Hongwanji State Ministers’ Association, Hawaii Federation of Buddhist Women’s Association, Hawaii Federation of Lay Association, Hawaii Federation of Junior YBA, and Pacific Buddhist Academy.

A slideshow crafted by Derrick Inouye showed the breadth of Rev. Matsumoto’s ministerial history. There were lots of smiles and laughter as people saw

themselves and friends with the Reverend in their younger days. Finally, Rev. Matsumoto shared his heartfelt farewell message.

“Where to begin! Perhaps the conclusion might be the best place to start and that is ‘Namu Amida Butsu,’ the Buddha’s Name that I call in gratitude. If I had to use one word to sum up everything up, today and my entire life, it would be “gratitude” or “on”; benevolence and gratitude....

“In particular, I would like to express my appreciation to the members, both clergy and lay, including the staff at temples and especially the Headquarters office staff and the three presidents with whom I served, of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii for all your support, especially during these past 12 years as your bishop. It has certainly been an honor and privilege to represent you in the community and serve you as your bishop. As I think of our Hongwanji Sangha, the words of our second bishop, Bishop Yemyo Imamura, which I would like to dedicate to you, ring in my ears, ‘To think of all those forgetting themselves for the Hongwanji to make today possible, I feel gratitude and am moved deeply even now.’”

“In the same breath, I would like to thank the people and other community groups in Hawaii for allowing me to be a part of your programs and endeavors. Thank you for welcoming and including me. It has been a pleasure and rewarding to partner with you in serving the people of Hawaii and trying to enhance the well-being of our Islands....”

As we welcome in our new Bishop, Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani, MC Dennis Sekine reminded us, “Whenever you would like to say ‘mahalo’ to Rev. Matsumoto, you are invited to come and attend service at Aiea Hongwanji Mission,” where he now serves as the resident minister.

Peace Day

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has to stop! We hope that everyone will join us on Zoom for the online HHMH “Ring Your Bells for Peace Day” event on Thursday, September 21, at 8:30 AM. Register by September 20 at bit.ly/PeaceDay2023. And yes, our Ambassador for Peace Day, Jake Shimabukuro, will be there once again. Let’s make the world a more peaceful place!

The 2023 HHMH Peace Day Committee is made up of Rene Mansho (Mililani Hongwanji), Marilyn Morikawa (Makawao Hongwanji), Kallie Keith-Agaran (Kahului

Hongwanji), Roberta Yanagawa (Kapaa Hongwanji), Miles Okumura (Honokaa Hongwanji), Carolyn Uchiyama (Wahiawa Hongwanji), Dave Atcheson (Hawaii Betsuin), Jr. YBA presidents, Liane Vioria (Pacific Buddhist Academy), Derrick Inouye (HHMH Business Manager), Joanne Tachibana (United Nations), Ari Eisenstat (KTUH), Catherine Tarleton (public relations manager), Dave Rosen (Shooters Film Productions), and Jake Shimabukuro, “Ambassador of Aloha.”

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