



# Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

## HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

1727 Pali Highway, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 522-9200 Fax: (808) 522-9209

Web: [www.hongwanjihawaii.com](http://www.hongwanjihawaii.com) Email: [hqs@honpahi.org](mailto:hqs@honpahi.org)



December 2023

### MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP

#### Return to Lahaina Hongwanji

As the re-entry restriction to zone 12B was lifted for the residents of Lahaina on Monday, November 27, 2023, Rev. Ai Hironaka, Business Manager Derrick Inouye, and I returned to the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission for the first time since the wildfire devastated the town of Lahaina on August 8, 2023.

Upon arrival at the temple, the three of us stood on the top of the stairs leading to the temple's front entrance. We placed our hands together in Gassho and chanted the sutra Sanbutsuge as we overlooked the debris-filled altar area destroyed by fire. The sound of the Nembutsu echoed through the quiet town.

We then entered the Nokotsudo (columbarium) building. The exterior seemed to have minor damages, such as cracks in the glass doors and some heat damage to the roof, but the interior, including all the niches and the altar, was intact. This is truly good news for the temple family, especially for those who have their loved ones interred in the Nokotsudo. We offered the incense and again chanted the sutra Sanbutsuge in front of the altar. It is indeed fortunate that the Nokotsudo was intact.

We then wore protective gear and began searching through the burnt rubble and assessing the situation. Although cloudy on the day, it wasn't easy to continue working with protective clothing for a long time. It was necessary to take breaks every 30 minutes or so to rehydrate. The temple building, minister's residence, garage, temple office, social hall, and the Japanese School building were all burned down, leaving only a few remnants, such as the stone pillars and walls. We carefully and respectfully searched the remains, especially in the altar area, while taking photographs of the damaged area. It is truly regrettable to report that the *Gohonzon* (Amida Buddha's statue) and the other altar ornaments, such as picture scrolls of Shinran Shonin and Rennyo Shonin, *Daikin* bell, *Shumidan*, *Maejoku* table, pews in the *Gejin* area, etc., were all burned to the ashes. We discovered some altar ornaments, but they were all heavily damaged, and it was hard to identify what they were.

In the desolate scenery, the statue of Shinran Shonin was still standing firmly with great dignity. His back, blackened by fire, indicated the fierceness of the blaze that engulfed the temple. By the side of Shinran Shonin, the small tree that the Gomonshu planted during his official visit to Hawaii in 2017 survived the fire and sprouted some new green leaves. The blackened statue of Shinran Shonin and a humble tree with greenery symbolize our resilience and commitment to the future. The road to recovery has just begun. We never know what the future holds. But we will move forward together. The Lahaina Hongwanji's statue of Amida Buddha has disappeared, but in our own voice of the Nembutsu, the three of us clearly heard the voice of Compassion that still embraces and sustains us warmly. Namo Amida Butsu.

On behalf of Rev. Ai Hironaka, the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, and the people of Lahaina, I would like to humbly ask for your continued support.

In Gassho,

Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani  
December 4, 2023

Note: Go to the HHMH Website at <https://hongwanjihawaii.com/blog/2023/12/05/return-to-lahaina-hongwanji/> for some pictures and video we took during our visit on Monday, November 27, 2023, along with the link to the Maui News article and the Kyodo News video.

## TOKUDO

The English Tokudo Shurai (training) was held from December 6-16, 2023, at the Nishiyama Betsuin in Kyoto, Japan. Participants were ten from BCA and one from Hawaii who was Linda Nagai from Kona Hongwanji. Below is her sharing of Tokudo Experience. Congratulations, Linda!



My Tokudo Experience by Linda Nagai, Kona Hongwanji

Trying to memorize sutras and various recitations, and then having memorization requirements change at the last minute was very stressful. However, I realized that I was actually living the teachings. The teaching of impermanence, nothing remains the same and our suffering is due to the fact that we cannot accept change. It was then that I was able to accept the many changes that came along with my Tokudo journey.

December 3, was the beginning of the final leg of my Tokudo journey. We arrived in Japan and for 2 days received orientation and training at the Hongwanji International Center, as well as receiving the remainder of the items we would need when we went to the Nishiyama training center for Tokudo. On December 6, all of our electronics were put aside, and for 10 days we had no outside contact, which I do have to admit was quite refreshing, and peaceful. Our day began with a wake up to music at 5:30 a.m., followed by chores, and morning service, (some of which we had to lead), classes, and meals. Our day normally ended at 9:00 p.m. and lights were out at 11:00 p.m. Yes, it was quite rigorous.

We were able to visit Shoren-in Temple where Shinran Shonin was ordained, and Mt. Hiei where Shinran Shonin studied for 20 years. However, the highlight of Tokudo for me was the actual ordination. Not that

I was receiving my Tokudo, but ordination itself. We were ordained in the evening in candle lights, depicting Shinran Shonin's ordination.

65 Aspirants from Japan, BCA, and yes me from Hawaii arrived at Honzan in the late afternoon. We assembled in Goeido (Founder's Hall) the building that enshrines Shinran Shonin, and in front Shinran Shonin's image we received our Tokudo ordination. It was a beautiful ritual very serene, and peaceful, as Gomonsu came by and taped each aspirant on the head, followed by all 65 aspirants reciting the New Ryogemon. Reciting the words of the Gomonsu which echoed through Goeido, taking the Jodo Shinshu teachings from Amida's compassion to how to live each moment of our lives, a feeling that I cannot describe and will never forget.

My journey towards Tokudo was worth every step. And as I took each step, I could feel Amida guiding me through the many people who helped me along this path. And as I watched the beautiful white snow fall in Hiroshima after Tokudo, I could feel Amida's embrace, realizing that Amida's all encompassing Wisdom and compassion, will continue to guide me as I continue to walk the Nembutsu path. With deep gratitude and palms together, I recite the Buddha's name "Namo Amida Butsu."

## **PERSONNEL MATTERS**

**Reverend Mieko Majima**, the Resident Minister of Kapaa Hongwanji Mission, will resign from Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii as of December 31, 2023, and transfer her ministry to the Buddhist Churches of America. Rev. Majima has been serving Hawaii Kyodan as a Kaikyoshi Minister since March 2015. After Rev. Majima's departure, the Ministers of the Kauai District Ministers Association, chaired by Rev. Shawn Yagi, will oversee the Kapaa Hongwanji Mission during the absence of their Resident Minister.

**Reverend Charlene Kihara** received the letter from the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha on October 24, 2023, officially appointing her as a Kaikyoshi Minister of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

**Reverend Charlene Kihara**, an Intern Kaikyoshi Minister currently serving at Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin and the Headquarters, will be assigned to Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin as its Associate Minister as of January 1, 2024.

**Ministers of the Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin** will be assigned to oversee Honohina-Papaalooa Hongwanji Mission, Honomu Hongwanji Mission, and Papaikou Hongwanji Mission as of January 1, 2024. Reverend Kazunori Takahashi, the current Rimban of Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin, in collaboration and teamwork with Rev. Joshin Kamuro, temple presidents, and Hilo Betsuin staff, is responsible for making the necessary arrangements and providing service and guidance to the Hamakua Temples. Accordingly, ministers of the Hawaii District Ministers Association will be relieved from their responsibilities of overseeing the Hamakua Temples as of December 31, 2023.

**Reverend Bert Sumikawa**, a minister who currently serves at Moiliili Hongwanji Mission as a Retired Kaikyoshi Minister (Part-Time), will be relieved from his current assignment at Moiliili Hongwanji Mission as of February 29, 2024. Rev. Sumikawa will continue to guide the Kailua Hongwanji Mission (Windward Buddhist Temple), where Rev. Barbara Brennan serves as a Kaikyoshi-ho under the mentorship of Rev. Sumikawa.

**Reverend David Fujimoto**, the Resident Minister of Mililani Hongwanji Mission and the Overseer Minister of Ewa Hongwanji Mission, will be assigned to Moiliili Hongwanji Mission as its Resident Minister as of March 1, 2024. Rev. Fujimoto will continue to serve Ewa Hongwanji Mission as its Overseer Minister.

**Ms. Emi Hashi** currently serves as the Children and Youth Activities Specialist and works at the Buddhist Study Center (BSC). Her working shift will change from January 2024. She will work on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

## 2024 LIVING TREASURES OF HAWAII

The Living Treasures of Hawai'i Committee has selected five outstanding awardees for 2024 from a large pool of highly qualified nominees.

The awardees for 2024 are:

- **Julian Ako**, retired Teacher and Administrator, Kamehameha Schools; Hawaiian music composer and musicologist, leader in the indigenization of curriculum, promoter of international studies and relations, and regenerative tourism
- **Douglas Chong**, Leader in the Hawai'i Chinese Community, member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, historian of Chinese in Hawai'i, retired University of Hawai'i Professor
- **Sarah Keahi**, leader of the Hawaiian musical renaissance and reviver of Hawaiian language and education; long-time instructor and mentor at Kamehameha Schools
- **Davianna Pomaika'i McGregor**, Professor Emeritus, Ethnic Studies Department; Director Oral History Center, University of Hawai'i; one of the primary leaders of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana; author of seminal book, "Na Kua 'Aina: Living Hawaiian Culture.
- **Ricardo "Rick" Trimillos**, Professor Emeritus, Ethnomusicology, University of Hawai'i, perpetuator of Hawai'i's cultural, music, and artistic traditions, international consultant on ethnomusicology.

The Living Treasures Awards luncheon is scheduled to be held on Saturday, February 10, 2024 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Coral Ballroom.

## IMPORTANT UPDATE: TRIPLE CELEBRATION BUDDHIST EDUCATION SERIES

Please use this new link for the Buddhist Education Series registration. The link in the November Headquarters Update doesn't work now.

Here is the new link: <https://forms.gle/fDZmLGBZuW1AHata8>

The QR code for registration in the December Ka Leo Kahea is also broken.

Please use this new QR code for registration.



The first two sessions are on Saturday, January 13 & Saturday, January 20 from 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. (Hawaii Standard Time). The featured speaker will be Dr. David Matsumoto of the Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley. His lectures are “What is Mahayana Buddhism?” and “What is Pure Land Buddhism?”

## KA LEO KĀHEA

The next issue will be distributed at the beginning of March 2024. If your temple has any updates for your member’s information (new member/address change), please let the committee know by using the email address below.

You can also submit an article or temple report for the March issue. The deadline for submission is January 15, 2024. Please send it to <[newsletter@honpahi.org](mailto:newsletter@honpahi.org)>

Gail Tagashira, a member of Moiliili Hongwanji, will be the new chief editor for KA LEO KĀHEA from the next issue.

## JIKOEN HONGWANJI MISSION 85<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY AND KEIROKAI RECOGNITION CELEBRATION

Jikoen’s celebration of its 85th Anniversary held in 2023 was combined with our annual Keirokai event that honors members’ 80th, 88th, 90th, 97th, 99th and 100th birthdays. Nearly twenty Keirosha or honored members were recognized. Many of our Keirosha are of Okinawan descent, and Okinawa has historically been known for longevity. This year we honored a centenarian – Mrs. Nancy Zukemura.

We were joined by special guests Dr. Warren Tamamoto, Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii President, Honolulu District Presidents Wayne Yoshioka (Hawaii Betsuin), Joanne Kealoha (Moiliili) and Dennis Tashiro (Windward), and Hawaii Betsuin Rimban, Reverend Yuika Hasebe. A strong contingent from the Windward Buddhist Temple sangha also joined us for our service and celebration.

Everyone was treated to traditional Okinawan entertainment by members and temple friends like Hawaii Okinawa Creative Arts (HOCA) who performed traditional and contemporary Shisi Mai - Shishi means “lion” and Mai means “dance”, a festive dance performed in lion costumes at celebrations.

It was truly a Jikoen style celebration when everyone was asked to end the event with a Kachashi - a festive dance performed at the end of a celebration or party.



Group Shot Photo by Wayne Shinbara

## 2022 KAUAI HONGWANJI COUNCIL NEMBUTSU SEMINAR

Kauai Hongwanji Council will host a Nembutsu seminar in February 2024.

Date & Time: Sunday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.(HST)  
Guest Speaker: Rev. Satoshi Ka'imipono Tomioka, resident minister of Puna Hongwanji.  
Topic: Buddhism and Contemporary Music  
Place: Lihue Hongwanji Mission and Zoom  
Free Registration: <https://forms.gle/HVVa9sXCCRq4ZrSc7>  
Registration Deadline: Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024

See attached flyer for more details.

## HONOLULU HONGWANJI COUNCIL EVENTS

- **Queen Lili'uokalani Ho'oku'ikahi Reconciliation Service**  
Date & Time: Friday, January 19, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.  
Place: Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin (1727 Pali Highway, Honolulu)  
Events Highlights: Reenactment of historical scenes, Choral Music, Project Dana Dancers, Taiko Drummers
- **Two Events with George Takei on Sunday, February 18, 2024**

Actor, author, and civil rights activist **George Takei** will be visiting Honpa Hongwanji Hawai'i Bestuin on Sunday, February 18, 2024. He is best known for his role as Hikaru Sulu in the Star Trek series and as a vocal civil rights advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community, ethnic minorities, and the injustice of internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. A lifelong Buddhist, he and husband Brad Altman were the first civil union to occur at Nishi Hongwanji in Los Angeles. He will be speaking on Sunday, February 18, at 9.30 am in the Honpa Hongwanji Hondo on the topic, "What Buddhism Means to Me" (free admission), and at a fundraiser at 5.00 pm on the topic, "Reflections on Day of Remembrance". There is a reception to follow with food and entertainment at the Pacific Buddhist Academy. All proceeds will go to social justice initiatives at the temple and other nonprofit organizations.

Please use the QR code on the flyer to register or contact Jon Matsuoka at [jmatsuoka@hawaiibetsuin.org](mailto:jmatsuoka@hawaiibetsuin.org) or 808-536-7044

## SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, March 10 - **6th Virtual Dharma School Gathering** - Open to All Ages

Theme: Sharing Nembutsu Moments - "The Golden Chain of Love"

Guest Speaker: D. Trinidad Hunt, granddaughter of Reverend Dorothy Hunt, author of The Golden Chain of Love and numerous gathas

8:45 - 9:45 am - Dharma School Teachers Meeting (with D. Trinidad Hunt, speaker)  
10:00 - 10:30 am - Service with D. Trinidad Hunt, speaker  
10:30 - 11:30 am - Breakout Rooms - Adult Breakout Room (D. Trinidad Hunt - speaker)  
11:30 am - 12 pm - Dharma School Students share breakout room creations  
12:00 pm - Pau