

“THE CALLING VOICE”

# Ka Leo Kāhea

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII

VOLUME 4 • ISSUE 1 • MARCH 2024

## HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII'S TRIPLE CELEBRATION

# Early Registration Underway, Closes March 31

## A Q&A With Keynote Speaker Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji on ‘Why Life Is Great’

When Rev. Ai Hironaka asked Rev. Takashi Miyaji if he could be the keynote speaker for Hawaii Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's Triple Celebration, Rev. Miyaji assumed it was for a short Zoom talk and he thought, “Oh, man!”

No warm beaches, no eating shave ice from Waiola. When he was told the request was to appear in person,

he immediately bowed his head in gratitude, realizing what an honor it would be to speak before hundreds of people in the main convention room.

The minister of Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church in Union City, California, Rev. Miyaji is no stranger to Hawaii, having spoken to Honolulu and Kauai audiences over the years.

But his Sept. 7 appearance at the two-day event will be his largest, first statewide one, likely to be one of many highlights of the auspicious weekend at Ala Moana Hotel.

To put the occasion into perspective, Ka Leo Kāhea asked him questions about his keynote speech, how he views the significance of the conference and what those who attend can expect to take away:



Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji

**Question:** Can you put into context the significance of September's Triple Celebration? It seems like a fortuitous, important event, but how should ordinary sangha members view it?

**Answer:** The Triple Celebration can be viewed as the planets aligning once every few hundreds of years or even rarer than that! This is something extraordinary to encounter.

It is fortunate in the sense that we have the opportunity to take a step back and see the long tradition that we uphold today.

We can be proud of our religious heritage, not just as Jodo Shinshu Buddhists who originally came from Japan, but as Jodo Shinshu Buddhists in Hawaii.

Not many Buddhist organizations can say they existed for 135 years in the Americas where Buddhism was unheard of before.

We were among the first ones, if not the first ones to share the Buddha's teaching with the West.

If that doesn't strike a chord in your spiritual identity, I don't know what will.

**Q:** Have you chosen a title for

your speech and can you explain its meaning?

**A:** The title of my message is, “Why Life is Great: Understanding Our Moment in Timelessness.”

I want to address what Amida Buddha's Primal Vow means for us today which is the promise that all sentient beings will have a path to spiritual liberation provided for them in the form of the name of Amida Buddha or Nembutsu.

Coming to this understanding makes life great, but not in the nor-

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## Choosing the Right Workshops for You

Early Registration is underway and will close on March 31 for Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's Triple Celebration on Sept. 7-8. As part of the registration process, all attendees are asked to indicate their workshop preferences. Session I from 2 to 3 p.m. and Session II from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Sept. 7 will focus on five subjects from the “Historical Highlights of the Hongwanji in Hawaii” to social concerns to “Greening the Hongwanji.”

In order to help registrants make in-

formed decisions, here are brief summaries of each session as explained by the workshop leaders:

• **“The Significance of the Establishment of Jodo Shinshu Tradition and Doctrine”** with Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara, Berkeley Buddhist Temple; 2 and 3:30 p.m.

Jodo Shinshu Buddhism has become the largest Buddhist organization in Japan, a country of Buddhism.

We celebrate the 800th anniversary of the establishment of this school of Buddhism based on the idea that Jodo Shinshu Buddhism was established with the completion of Shinran Shonin's “Kyogyoshinsho” in 1224.

Shinran Shonin clarified the essence of Amida Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion, receiving guidance from Shakyamuni Buddha and Pure Land

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Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara

## AN UPDATE ON LAHAINA HONGWANJI

# Emotional Returns to Where a Temple Once Thrived

## Out of Ashes Sprout Green Leaves and Hope for Recovery

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

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



Courtesy of Maui News / Matthew Thayer

Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani, left, Rev. Ai Hironaka and Business Manager Derrick Inouye visited the grounds of Lahaina Hongwanji in late November to survey the property. As they stood where the temple remained, they chanted the “Sanbutsuge” before donning protective suits to examine the ruins.

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## Recalling a Night of Flames, Smoke, Loss and Bravery

Note: The following article from the Dec. 2 Maui News is reprinted by permission.

BY MATTHEW THAYER  
THE MAUI NEWS

Conversation in the car drifts to a stop as Rev. Ai Hironaka makes the turn onto Prison Street.

Houses flattened into white squares of ash, charred trees, burnt-out cars and trucks, each with an “X” spray-painted on the side to let searchers know it has been checked for bodies. This is the first time Rev. Hironaka and his passengers have been back to the heart of Lahaina town since the fires of Aug. 8. As with most returnees, the devastation hits like a punch to the soul.

On the corner of Wainee Street, several houses inexplicably stand, passed over by the flames. Around them, nearly every ruin has people in white hazmat suits picking through debris. This is the first morning residents have been allowed in this zone and they are wasting no time.

Rev. Hironaka waves to a neighbor, then turns into the parking lot of Lahaina Hong-

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# Amida Buddha, the Ultimate Shelter



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

At the beginning of December last year, I had an opportunity to be a part of the Tokudo Shurai training as one of the instructors, together with other Overseas Bishops and Ministers.

The Tokudo Shurai was

held at the Nishiyama Betsuin in Kyoto with about 60 participants from Japan and 11 from BCA and Hawaii. They all gathered from different backgrounds and their ages ranged from their early 20s to their late 80s.

Still, one thing they all had in common is that they all aspired to become ordained ministers of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha tradition and share the messages of Shinran Shonin. I partially joined the Tokudo Shurai, but I was inspired by their positive and enthusiastic attitude to complete the training session.

I am also proud that Linda Nagai, the only participant from Hawaii, completed the Tokudo and received the ordination.

After the Tokudo Shurai and some other business in Kyoto, I took a day off and

## BISHOP'S CORNER

returned to my home in Hiroshima. My home temple is now taken care of by my older brother and his family. It has been awhile since I have returned there.

When I opened the house door, my sister-in-law welcomed me by saying, "Okaeri! (Welcome Home)!"

I replied to her, "Tadaima. (I'm back)."

This open-hearted welcome from my sister-in-law made me feel at home instantly. How wonderful it is that there is a place where I can go back to, and there are people who welcome me without any justification!

In the Tannisho, Shinran Shonin stated, "Know that the Primal Vow of Amida makes no distinction between people young and old, good and evil; only shinjin is

essential. For it is the Vow to save the person whose karmic evil is deep and grave and whose blind passions abound."

Amida Buddha's Great Compassion recognizes each life as precious and irreplaceable as all others and embraces all lives equally. Amida Buddha always welcomes us all with open arms. What we call *Shinjin* is our awakening to the Buddha's such an openhearted and unconditional Compassion.

Our Hongwanji temples are the places where the Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion permeate throughout. Whether a fully ordained minister or a lay follower, we are all limited and imperfect, yet always within the Buddha's great embrace.

Hongwanji temples are our spiritual home where we can return to at any time.

Shinran Shonin wrote that Amida Buddha is our "Ultimate shelter." It is where we experience a sense of belonging, comfort, security, stability and a place of refuge.

I invite you to visit your spiritual home (your local temple) and hope you will find joy and comfort within the Buddha's embrace. I conclude my message with a quote from Rev. Rikisho Kuriyama:

"Those who do not have a place to return to, no matter how well and smooth life may be, come to a dead end and will be in a pitiful plight in the end. But those who have a place to return to, no matter how difficult life may seem, never come to this dead end and are able to live with great dignity and great joy. It is because they are always connected with something eternal and infinite."

## Amida's Vow and My Wish for 2024



BY REV. JEFFREY SOGA  
WAIPAHU AND WAIANA  
HONGWANJI

Dear Dharma Friends,

I'm writing this in the middle of January and it's been a tough start to the new year.

The war in Ukraine and Russia has been ongoing for a long time, and we can't seem to see the end. There is the continuing conflict between Palestine and Israel.

On New Year's Day, a large earthquake hit, the epicenter near the Noto Peninsula in the Ishikawa Prefecture, triggering a tsunami. As of January 15, 200 deaths have been confirmed. Many people continue to live in fa-

cilities and are experiencing very difficult lives every day in the cold Hokuriku winter.

Then there was an accident when a Japan Airlines plane collided with a plane about to takeoff to deliver supplies to the Ishikawa Prefecture.

Also in Hawaii, on New Year's Day, there was a terrible incident involving two police officers who were injured in a shooting where the suspect died.

It was the start of a year of grief and hardship for many people.

If Buddha or Shinran Shonin were here and observed such worlds, what would they say?

As I see people fighting and hurting each other, I always recall the first vow of Amida's 48 Vows:

*If, when I attain Buddhahood, there should be hell, the realm of hungry spirits, or the realm of animals in my land, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.*

—The Three Pure Land Sutras, Vol. II, Page 20

To explain this quote:

Amida Buddha vows there

## MINISTER'S MESSAGE

is no Jigoku (hell), Gaki (hungry spirit) and Chikusho (beast or animal) in my (Amida Buddha's Pure) Land.

Master Genshin (942-1017) wrote in detail about Jigoku in "Ojoyoshu (Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land)." I would like to briefly offer my thoughts:

At first, there is Tohkatsu Jigoku (the hell of living equally and continuously.) People in this hell have an aggressive and hurting mind. When people who don't know each other first encounter another, they start fighting.

Because people in hell have nails as sharp as knives, as they grab each other, flesh is cut, blood is scattered and nothing but bones and pieces of bodies are left. After the fighting, as cool winds blow over the bones, bodies are healed and fighting and suffering continued.

And this suffering never ends.

It is kind of gross, but in war and battle, this happens daily, not with nails but with weapons and warfare.

Individual soldiers may not have any hate and reason

to kill the other personally, but as they encounter individually, they start to fight. If one soldier kills the enemy and survives, he or she lives with the awful memory of it for their whole lives.

In our everyday lives, war is not the only place where people hurt each other. If we have greed and anger and start to grumble with each other, the words that come from our mouths may be like sharp knives that hurt each other.

We end up suffering together.

A deep scar remains in the heart.

Doing this is the same as creating a realm of hell, of hungry ghosts.

I believe Amida Buddha observed such a realm, as well as human being's spiritual lives, and then Amida Buddha vowed, as the first vow, in his Pure Land, there is no realm.

Those young soldiers in Russia, Ukraine and Palestine have fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, children and friends. All are waiting for them to come back safely.

As I read Amida Buddha's Vow, I wish all soldiers, with-

out hurting and killing each other, are able to return home where their families are waiting.

I wish all who read this message here continue to listen to the Amida Buddha's Vow and learn about the Pure Land which is not the realm where you go after your life ends.

The Pure Land is the work of Amida Buddha to illuminate the real world of human beings in which people are hurting each other and suffering together.

And then please recite the Nembutsu as you listen to the Amida Buddha's Vow and receive the Buddha's Great Compassion.

I humbly ask you to find peace and happiness by uttering the Nembutsu in your everyday lives.

Then as you wish for happiness and peace in your heart, may it spread throughout the world and continue in the future — in our children and grandchildren.

Please take care of yourselves and have a wonderful Nembutsu life throughout 2024.

In Gassho.

## Nembutsu and Daily Living

BY CINDY ALM  
HAWAII BETSUIN BWA

Note: Last May, at the 17th World Buddhist Women's Convention in Kyoto, Hawaii Betsuin's Cindy Alm represented the Hawaii delegation and spoke at the Kyoto International Conference Center. Following the theme "Life of Nembutsu Enables Us to Appreciate Every Encounter," she delivered the following address:

It is an honor to be with you today. My life has been enriched by Buddhist teachings, the kindness of our ministers and the life lessons shared by members of the Buddhist Women's Association, or BWA. It is with deep gratitude that I offer these reflections.

Recently, I was asked, "When did you become a Buddhist?" In truth, I have always thought of myself as Buddhist because my family is Buddhist. We are descendants of Japa-

nese nationals who went work on Hawaiian sugar plantations more than 100 years ago. In 1881, Hawaiian King David Kalakaua traveled by ship to Japan. It was his first stop on a worldwide tour. He met with Emperor Meiji and encouraged immigration of Japanese agricultural workers to Hawaii.

The voyage by ship from Japan to Hawaii took several weeks. Although I do not know all the difficulties my ancestors endured on the ship and on the sugar plantations, I know that they encountered hardship and that Jodo Shinsu teachings were important to them.

One of my early memories is of my grandmother asking me to place an offering of the first portion of freshly cooked rice on her home altar, ringing the small bell, putting my hands together in *gassho*, and saying "Namo Amida Butsu." At the time, I did not understand anything about Buddhist

teachings.

When I was older, my mother and I would stand in front of our family's home altar expressing gratitude for each beautiful day. My mother was an elementary school teacher on weekdays, and on Sundays taught Dharma School. We attended services at a small branch temple within walking distance from our home. I learned about the Eightfold path, recited "The Golden Chain of Love," and sang gathas, but I did not intentionally practice what I had learned.

It was not until my own daughters were adults, and I joined the BWA that I began a journey to a deeper understanding of living the life of Nembutsu.

One of my first activities as a BWA member was learning how to make *tsukemono*, deliciously preserved vegetables to be served as part of a meal. At Hawaii Betsuin, an annual tradition has been selling



Photo by Rev. Daido Baba  
Cindy Alm, Hawaii Betsuin's  
2024-2025 President:  
"Gratitude is most needed  
when it is most difficult to be  
grateful."

*tsukemono* as a fundraiser. Our teacher was the BWA member who made the *tsukemono*. She was in her 80s and wanted to show others how she made *tsukemono* so that we could continue the *tsukemono*-making tradition.

To document the activity, I

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**Ka Leo Kāhea**

(USPS Permit #9044)  
Official Publication of the Honpa  
Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii  
Published four times a year.

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

The Ka Leo Kāhea, a quarterly newspaper published by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, features organizational news and experiences by Jodo Shinshu members, and a variety of articles relating to Buddhist principles.

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.

Editor: Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani  
Managing Editor: Gail S Tagashira  
Print Production: Jeffrey Kimoto

# Cherishing the Third Treasure, Our Sangha



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

**A**loha kakou! Happy New Year! I hope you are doing well physically and spiritually.

This year, we in Hawaii will celebrate our “Triple Celebration” on Sept. 7 and 8.

We celebrate three major events in the history of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and the history of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

First, the 850th Anniversary of the birth of Shinran Shonin, the founder of our Jodo Shinshu Buddhist tradition.

Second, Jodo Shinshu Buddhist teaching is considered to have started in the year 1224. Therefore, 2024 marks the 800th Anniversary of the establishment of Jodo Shinshu Bud-

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

dhism as a religious teaching.

Third, the year 2024 is significant for Hawaii because it is the 135th year since the establishment of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

Our Triple Celebration theme is “Sharing the Joy of Nembutsu Together: Our Living Heart of Gratitude” and our keynote speaker will be Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji who is a captivating speaker.

This will be a great opportunity to see old Dharma friends and make new ones. I hope to see you this September at the Ala Moana Hotel.

One of my President’s Messages last year was titled “What Is the True Value of Membership in Your Temple?” My reply to the person at that time was that he or she would be joining an organization that promotes peace — in the individual, the community and the world.

Meaningful action to promote peace is part of who we are. And our communities and the world are better for it.

Now I would like to continue the topic, “What Is the Value of Temple Membership.” I recall at a committee meeting last year, one person commented to the committee chair, “I don’t know how you do it. I know you’re so busy but you still continue to do so much.”

The chairperson’s reply was something like, “I’m just trying to make

this a better place.”

Yes! This simple statement, I think is why a lot of us continue to work for and contribute to our temples.

Yes, we are supporting the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii and the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist tradition.

Yes, our goal is to share Jodo Shinshu Buddhist teaching so that all beings enjoy lives of harmony, peace and gratitude.

However, aren’t we also trying to leave this world a better place than it is?

So much of what we do as an organization — foster peace in our community, develop a Green Hongwanji, speak out against discrimination and treat people with kindness — is, at its core, our attempt to make this world a better place for future generations.

As we go through life on the Shin Buddhist path, we find joy in life because of our Teaching.

We are happy and grateful to be in the Buddha’s embrace and we share the benefits of the world around us.

As a member of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, you are a part of our Sangha, the third of the Three Treasures or Three Jewels of Buddhism.

The Three Treasures are Buddha (our Teacher), the Dharma (the Teachings of the Buddha) and the Sangha (those who support and perpetuate the Teachings.)

In the book, “The Teaching of Buddha,” published by BDK, it shares the

following:

*“We speak of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha as though they are three different things, but they are really one. Each one does not stand alone. Buddha is manifested in the Dharma and is realized by the Sangha.*

*“Therefore, to believe in the Dharma and to cherish the Sangha is to have faith in the Buddha, and to have faith in the Buddha means to believe in the Dharma and to cherish the Sangha.”*

Therefore, you are the Sangha, one of the Three Treasures of Buddhism.

You have an important role in the perpetuation of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism by reaching out to others and inviting them to joining us on our journey.

In closing, I would like to thank Edythe Vassall, who served as Managing Editor of *Ka Leo Kāhea* from September 2022 to December 2023.

We are very grateful that Edythe stepped in and capably took the helm when Jon Kawamoto had to cut down on his workload. Edythe did a wonderful job but she has decided to turn the position over to Gail Tagashira, a journalist with experience in reporting, editing and design.

Aloha, Edythe! We know you are still active at Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin and we look forward seeing you in the future on our Dharma journey.

## Jikoek Celebrates 85 Years With Music, Dance

Keirokai honorees join in festivities and take a loving look back at a long, rich history

BY JOHN M. TOGUCHI  
PRESIDENT, JIKOEN  
HONGWANJI MISSION

**W**hen the first group of 26 Okinawan men arrived in Hawaii in 1900, they had left their impoverished homeland hoping for a better life in Hawaii. But the first Japanese immigrants had arrived in Hawaii from mainland Japan 15 years prior and by then, they were established in the community.

Between 1900 and 1924, about 25,000 Okinawan men, women and children emigrated to Hawaii, started new lives in plantation communities throughout the state and faced a less than welcome reception from more established mainland Japanese immigrants. While Okinawa is a prefecture of Japan, much of the culture and language are different.

Rev. Chiro Yosemori, a minister at Waipahu Hongwanji, saw the need to provide spiritual support for Okinawan immigrants, many of whom had little background in Buddhist teachings. Rev. Yosemori was transferred to the Hawaii Betsuin and began to meet regularly in private homes, one of which was the Miyasato family home in Palama.

Miyasato family members would become lay leaders both at Jikoek and the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

As membership grew, besides delivering Jodo Shinshu teachings, Jikoek would be a place for Okinawans to gather to support each other and celebrate their culture. Rev. Yosemori was joined by his



Photos Courtesy of Wayne Shinbara

Above: Jikoek guests closed the event by performing the festive, joyful “Kachashi,” a traditional Okinawan dance of celebration.

nephew, Rev. Jikai Yamasato who assisted him with his ministry.

With support from the Hawaii Betsuin, a temple was constructed and dedicated in September 1938 at 942 Houghtaling Street. Jiro Higa, a member and designer/contractor had built the now destroyed Lahaina Hongwanji. To save cost, the same plans were followed to build the first Jikoek temple.

The name “Jikoek,” which means “Garden of the Compassionate Light and Wisdom of Amida Buddha,” was chosen with the idea that it would be open to members from throughout Oahu. Many came from Kaneohe, Waimanalo, Kaimuki and Kapahulu as well as from the city.



At Jikoek’s 85th anniversary, centenarian Nancy Zukemura, center, was among the Keirosha honored. Celebrating with her were June Nakamatsu, left, and Doreen Toma, right.

Jikoek Hongwanji became a hub for the Okinawan community. Immediately after

World War II, the temple served as a relief effort center that collected resources to

help people in Okinawa recover from the Battle of Okinawa.

But then a large public works project to expand the Kalihi-Palama traffic network required the land in front of the temple. Forced to move, Jikoek leased property at 1731 N. School St. to build a new temple, which opened in 1964.

Jikoek’s celebration of its 85th Anniversary in November, 2023 was combined with its annual Keirokai event that honors members’ 80th, 88th, 90th, 97th, 99th and 100th birthdays. Nearly 20 Keirosha or honorees were recognized.

Many Keirosha are of Okinawan descent, and Okinawa residents have been known for their longevity. This year, a centenarian -- Mrs. Nancy Zukemura was honored.

Among special guests in attendance were Hawaii Betsuin Rimban Yuika Hasebe, Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii President Dr. Warren Tamamoto, Honolulu District presidents Wayne Yoshioka from Hawaii Betsuin, Joanne Kealoha of Moiliili Hongwanji Mission and Dennis Tashiro from Windward Hongwanji. Members from Windward Hongwanji’s sangha also joined the service and celebration.

Friends including dancer Keith Oshiro from Hawaii Okinawa Creative Arts (HOCA) performed traditional and contemporary works including “Kajadifu,” Shishi Mai, the lion dance in costume.

In traditional Jikoek style, to close the celebration, guests took part in the “Kachashi,” a joyful dance to end the party.

**A variety of Dharma messages are available online in English, Japanese and on YouTube.**

Moiliili Hongwanji Mission’s “The White Way” broadcasts are available at [www.moiliilihongwanji.org/radio-broadcasts](http://www.moiliilihongwanji.org/radio-broadcasts).

Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin’s Japanese-language Dharma talks are archived on [hawaiibetsuin.org/multimedia-category/Japanese-language](http://hawaiibetsuin.org/multimedia-category/Japanese-language).

And video messages are on the HHMH YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/@HonpaHongwanjiMissionofHawaii](http://www.youtube.com/@HonpaHongwanjiMissionofHawaii)

# My Tokudo Experience From Dharma School to Kyoto

## A 35-Year Long Dream Comes True

BY LINDA NAGAI  
KONA HONGWANJI MISSION

*Editor's note: On Dec. 17, 2023, Kona Hongwanji President Linda Nagai completed her goal to earn her Tokudo. She recounts her unforgettable Shurai (training) experience here:*

**M**y Tokudo Experience has been a lifelong journey going back almost 35 years, from being active in Dharma school, attending Summer Sessions and Dharma talks. And it was after one of these Dharma sessions and conversations with fellow sangha members that led me to dream of Tokudo.

However, due to Karmic conditions, that dream was set aside until now. Due to the benevolence of the many people in the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's spiritual community, I was finally able to attain a 35-year dream.

As many of you know, I have many things on my plate, and at times my plate is at the brim of overflowing. Trying to add Tokudo to it was a very challenging task, but the end result was well worth it.

Memorizing sutras and various recitations, and then having those memorization requirements change at the last minute was very stressful. Then 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 on my Tokudo journey.

Traveling to Berkeley in June to take part in the pre-Tokudo training and qualification gave me an insight to what to expect in Japan and it was nice to meet and train with all the aspirants whom I would be going with from the U.S.

December 3 was the beginning of the final leg of my Tokudo journey. We arrived in Japan and for two 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 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), then classes and meals.

Our days normally ended at 9 p.m. and lights were out at 11 p.m. Yes, it was quite rigorous.

We were able to visit Shoren-in Temple where Shinran Shonin was ordained, and Mount 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 the



Ten members of the Buddhist Churches of America and Kona Hongwanji Buddhist Temple's President Linda Nagai, center, received their Tokudo training and ordination on Dec. 17, 2023 at the Hongwanji in Kyoto. Before the Nishiyama Betsuin, they are, from left: Michael Jones, San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin; Sterling Davenport, Vista Buddhist Temple; Igor Makasyuk, Palo Alto Buddhist Temple; Geoffrey Russell, Salt Lake Buddhist Temple; Stacy Reardon, San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple; Linda Nagai; Blake Honda, Buddhist Church Fowler/Berkeley Buddhist Temple; John Mullins, Berkeley Buddhist Temple/Las Vegas Buddhist Sangha; Devon Matsumoto, Mountain View Buddhist Temple; James Aoki, Salt Lake Buddhist Temple, and Jean Paul DeGuzman, San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple.

ordination itself. We were ordained in the evening in candlelight, depicting Shinran Shonin's ordination.

All 65 aspirants from Japan, Buddhist Churches of America, 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 of Shinran Shonin's image, we received our Tokudo ordination.

It was a beautiful ritual

very serene and peaceful, as Gomonshu came by and tapped each aspirant on the head, followed by all 65 aspirants reciting the New Ryogemon.

Reciting the words of the Gomonshu which echoed through the Goeido, taking the Jodo Shinshu teachings from Amida's compassion to how to live each moment of our lives, was 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."

# BWA Hawaii Federation Installs New Slate of Officers

Linda Nagai of Kona Hongwanji was re-elected President to serve her second two-year term of the Hawaii Federation of Buddhist Women's Associations.

The new lineup of officers for 2024-2025 was presented on Sept. 4 by Susan Morishige, chair of the nominations committee. They are:

Mrs. Yoshiko Umitani, Honorary President; Lois Toyama, Jikoen Hongwanji, Immediate Past President; Linda Nagai, President; Claire Tamamoto, Aiea Hongwanji, First Vice President; Carol Valentine, Lihue Hongwanji, Second Vice President; Sharon Nohara, Lahaina Hongwanji, Secretary; June Asato, Mililani Hongwanji, Assistant Secretary; Dorene Toma, Jikoen Hongwanji, Treasurer; Karen Kikukawa, Moiliili Hongwanji, Assistant Treasurer, and Eileen Usagawa, Puna Hongwanji and Jean

Heselden, Makawao Hongwanji, Auditors.

Officers and members are advised by Honorary President Mrs. Yoshiko Umitani, Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani, Rev. Blayne Higa of Kona Hongwanji and immediate past president Lois Toyama.

Bishop Umitani conducted an installation ceremony in the Betsuin hondo on Oct. 14.

The Federation's spring statewide meeting is set March 2 at Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin.

Among items on the agenda are discussion on the ministerial training fund, revisions to the bylaws and the education series.

For the current year, the Oahu United District will focus on planning for the 2026 State Conference, considered a prelude to the 18th World Buddhist Women's Convention set September 2027 at the Hawaii Convention Center.



Courtesy of Susan Morishige

Installation of officers by the BWA Hawaii Federation was held in October at the Hawai'i Betsuin. From left, Rev. Blayne Higa, Lois Toyama, Linda Nagai, Sharon Nohara, Dorene Toma, Jean Heselden, Eileen Usagawa, Karen Kikukawa, Claire Tamamoto, Mrs. Yoshiko Umitani and Bishop Umitani.

# BSC to Reopen With a Spring Festival on April 6

**B**uddhist Study Center's grand reopening is scheduled April 6 with its first Spring Festival focusing on "Nurturing Mind and Body." The event's goal is to showcase the Hongwanji and what BSC has to offer at its facility at 1436 University Ave. UH students, faculty, members of the community and members from Oahu temples, particularly children and youth are invited to take part

in workshops, watch cooking demonstrations, visit food booths, play games and take part in activities including "Build Your Own Personal Obutsudan."

The event kicks off at 9:30 a.m. with live entertainment in the parking lot.

Rev. Bert Sumikawa and Rev. Blayne Nakasone Sakata will host a matcha tea time "Talk Story," Irene Nakamoto will demonstrate ikebana and Dharma School leaders Deb-

bie Kubota and Susan Oshiro will set up children's games. Emi Hashi, Honpa Hongwanji's Youth Specialist, will lead a "Buddha in Your Pocket" craft project allowing members to create and take home their own mini obutsudan to set up their own space of reflection.

Upstairs in the BSC lecture hall, Rev. David Nakamoto will lead a workshop on coping skills at 10 a.m.; Lisa Yanagi, who teaches weekly

classes at BSC, will lead a yoga session, and a healthy cooking demonstration will be taught by Carolyn Uchiyama and Wahiawa Blue Zones starting at noon.

Finally at 1 p.m., Chikako Nago, Chief Operating Officer of EM (effective microorganisms) Hawaii, will host a "bokashi" healthy living workshop to promote the sustainable practice of composting from ordinary food scraps.

Honpa Hongwanji's traveling bookstore will also be on site.

Until supplies last, attendees will receive free eco bags and reusable cups.

Free parking will be available at the adjacent lot of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church and an overflow lot on the UH Manoa parking structure will allow visitors to park for \$5. For questions or more information, contact ehashi@honpahi.org.

ROSALYNN CARTER, 1927-2023

# Project Dana Mourns a Kind, Caring Friend

BY CYNDI OSAJIMA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
PROJECT DANA

When former First Lady Rosalynn Carter passed away on Nov. 19, 2023 in Plains, Georgia, Project Dana lost a longtime friend.

While it's well-known that Mrs. Carter was globally recognized as a humanitarian who advocated for those living with mental illness and for family caregivers, most Hawaii residents may not know of her close ties to the non-profit organization whose origins date back to a conversation between two retirement-age Japanese American women in the kitchen at Moiliili Hongwanji Mission.

As they prepared food for the bon dance festival one July summer, the late Shimeji Kanazawa and the late Rose Nakamura proposed starting an organization to serve Ha-

waii's frail elders and their caregivers.

Today Project Dana serves seniors on Oahu, Maui and Hawaii Island by providing transportation to medical appointments and grocery shopping, visiting those living alone and offering caregiver support, education and counseling.

It isn't known exactly how Mrs. Carter first learned about Project Dana, but in 1993, she honored Mrs. Nakamura by presenting her with the first Rosalynn Carter Caregiving Award in Americus, Georgia. The following year, Mrs. Carter was welcomed in Hawaii by some 200 volunteers and staff members who gathered in the Honpa Hongwanji Mission Headquarters Social Hall where she spent an afternoon with them.

In her remarks, she said she thought the best way to put one's faith into practice was to help those who were less fortunate, and that Project Dana was a program that needed to be replicated across



In 1993, the late former First Lady, right, honored the late Rose Nakamura, co-founder of Project Dana, at the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin.

the country. Over the years, she kept her bonds with Hawaii.

In her 1994 book, "Helping Yourself Help Others: A Book for Caregivers," she devoted a section to interfaith volunteer caregivers and cited Project

Dana, Mrs. Nakamura and Mrs. Kanazawa for their roles setting up and sustaining the program, acknowledging the hundreds of volunteers who practice *dana*, the act of selfless giving.

Caregivers help those in

need regardless of their faith and, "...do so without any attempt to proselytize," she wrote. "They receive training from professionals so that they are comfortable, confident and competent when called upon to provide assistance."

At Project Dana's 25th anniversary celebration on Sept. 20, 2014, Mrs. Carter's video recorded remarks were delivered and Dr. Leisa Easom, Executive Director of the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving at the Georgia Southwestern State University, delivered the keynote address.

Over the decades, the former First Lady's highly visible and vocal support of caregivers genuinely transformed and broke new ground as she took time to recognize and remember Project Dana's work.

For that, we are deeply grateful and will honor her memory by continuing the mission envisioned by Project Dana's founders. Visit [www.projectdana.org](http://www.projectdana.org) for more information.

## On a March for Peace Through Waikiki



Courtesy of David Atcheson  
With signs in hand and carrying origami cranes, parade marchers headed toward Kapiolani Park along Kalakaua Avenue.



Courtesy of David Atcheson  
Members of the Honpa Hongwanji family gathered at Ala Moana Beach Park on the morning of Jan. 15.



Courtesy of David Atcheson  
Women of the Hongwanji affixed colorful origami cranes representing peace to several bamboo poles.



Courtesy of Wendi Yumori  
Temple members and leaders were trailed by Pacific Buddhist Academy's yellow bus in the Martin Luther King Jr. March for Peace.

BY DAVID ATCHESON  
HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION  
OF HAWAII

On a sparkling morning in January, about 20 members of the Honpa Hongwanji ohana participated in the 2024 Martin Luther King Jr. Parade through Waikiki.

Carrying colorful signs and strings of origami peace cranes on bamboo poles, the

group clearly communicated its gratitude for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his teachings on nonviolence, equality and nondiscrimination.

Maintaining a tradition from years past, group members carried bags filled with origami peace cranes and presented them one by one to delighted onlookers lining Kalakaua Ave.

A yellow Pacific Buddhist Academy school bus, driven by Head of School Josh Her-

nandez Morse, followed behind the walkers. A sign affixed to the front of the bus proclaimed, "All Embracing Wisdom & Compassion" as colorful strings of peace cranes flew in the breeze outside the windows. Inside the bus were a few participants who chose to ride instead of walk.

The Hongwanji parade contingent was organized through the Social Concerns Committee of Honolulu Hon-

gwanji Council.

Each of the four temples in the Honolulu District — Hawaii Betsuin, Moiliili Hongwanji, Jikoen Hongwanji and Windward Buddhist Temple — was represented.

A number of Buddhist Women's Association members participated and the long BWA banner at the front helped clearly identify the group as Honpa Hongwanji.

Pacific Buddhist Academy

students held their annual Run/Walk for Peace before the weekend of Jan. 15 and did not attend this year but may swell the ranks in 2025.

In the same words from the 2021 video tribute to Dr. King concluded, "Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii treasures the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. May we continue to learn from — and be challenged by — his work and life's example. Namo Amida Butsu."



Courtesy of Maui News / Matthew Thayer

## Lahaina

Continued from Page 1

wanji Mission. For the past 13 years, he has served as resident minister of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist temple founded in 1904 and built in 1933. It is also the property where he and his family of six lived until they escaped the racing wildfire with little more than a car and the clothes on their backs.

Rev. Hironaka said his Nov. 27 return to the beloved temple stirred many emotions.

*"I was trying to, as I see other houses, I was trying to make myself ready to see the Hongwanji,"* he said. *"I didn't want to be too much emotional. Just trying to stay calm and strong."*

When he and his wife, Megumi, loaded their four children and family dog into the car to escape the smoke, he did not think the fire would reach this part of town. That quickly changed when his kids shouted that the neighbors' houses were on fire and he could see flames in his rear-view mirror. The realization that the temple was in grave danger gnawed at him until he cleared town and pulled over at Puamana Park.

*"I wanted to save the Buddha statue, our main object of worship,"* he said. *"If I lost only myself, I may have turned around, but I had to think of my family first. I thought Puamana was safe enough. I asked my wife, can I try once?"*

His wife begged him to stay and he begged for her forgiveness. If possible, he had to save the wooden Buddha. Leaving his car keys and cell phone behind, he set off through the dust and smoke on the 1.3-mile trek back to the Hongwanji. Reaching the intersection of Waiee and Shaw streets, he saw the Waiola Church Hall was already ablaze. There would be no reaching the Hongwanji, which was farther away and shrouded in dark smoke.

Turning back toward Puamana, Rev. Hironaka walked until he was able to hitchhike a ride most of the way to his family. Finally reaching the car, he was stunned to learn his son Hoken, 17, had set off after him.

*"He thought I needed help, so he chased me. I was hoping, don't jump into the fire. Do not jump into the smoke. Your papa is not there."*

Hoken made it to the same intersection where his father turned around.

*"He asked people at the corner of Shaw Street, 'Did you see my Dad? Did you see my Dad?'"*

Hoken said their neighbor, Tama Kaleleiki yelled, *"Hey, do not go there! Your papa is not there!"*

Rev. Hironaka credits Kaleleiki for saving his son's life. He says he knows Hoken would have rushed into the flames if he thought his father was in danger. The slim Buddhist priest thanked the Hawaiian church elder again Monday when their paths crossed on Waiee Street. Kaleleiki was part of a crew picking through the debris of Waiola Church's buildings. He was riding by in a truck and stopped when he spotted Rev. Hironaka chatting with neighbors.

Kaleleiki says he merely did what anyone would do. But Rev. Hironaka insists there is more to the story.

*"How important is it that the neighbor knows me and that he knows Hoken is my son?"* he asked. *"For Tama-san, it is a small thing, but for me, it is a lifetime happening. To me, he saved my son's life, and then he saved my whole family. Without my son, you cannot smile."*

Rev. Hironaka said he was rushing back from the Hongwanji when he glimpsed the wonderful sight of two familiar feet.

*"As I run, from the smoke, I notice his Crocs. Oh, that might be Hoken! As the smoke gradually cleared, I confirmed it was Hoken."*

Fast-forward seven weeks later to War Memorial Stadium. Hoken is dressed in the red and white of the Lahainaluna High School football team and taking a handoff to score a fourth-quarter touchdown against Baldwin High. It is the Lunas' first game of the season and his displaced family is in the stands cheering and slapping high-fives.

Nov. 27's visit included Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, Business Manager Derrick Inouye and two bureau staffers from Japan's Kyodo News. After a brief patrol of the grounds, Rev. Hironaka, Bishop Umitani and Inouye

climbed to the top of the temple's front stairs overlooking the debris-filled foundation to chant the "Sanbutsuge" sutra. Once completed, they donned hazmat gear from head-to-toe and climbed down into the rectangular hole that was once the Lahaina Hongwanji temple.

From the top of the stairs, they could be seen combing through white-gray ash, paying particular attention to the areas beneath where the altars were located. It was slim pickings. Off in the neighborhood, several people shouted for joy. Word spread down Waiee Street that somebody found their wedding ring.

The temple's ruins yielded a small pile of battered artifacts including a bent incense holder, a blackened ewer and cracked pieces of pottery. A highlight was a small metal statue of baby Buddha. Rev. Hironaka said he used it every April 8 in the ceremony marking Shakyamuni Buddha's birthday.

### SCOUTS HONOR

Makawao and Wailuku Scouts pitch in to help those affected by the Maui wildfires. Page 12

*"I thought it would be hard to find such a small statue,"* he said. *"When I found it, I was so happy. The fire was much stronger, enough to destroy everything."*

*"To me, it all seemed wrapped in white. All the colorful tea cups are white. The temple residence became ashes. That meant to me that the temple building was protecting Lahaina people's special home until he became ashes."*

Nearly all contents of the family residence, from notes and keepsakes to wardrobes and computers, were lost.

*"Mostly, that day was important for me to recover, to set my mind for the next phase mentally in my personal life as Rev. Hironaka. Not a step going forward,*



Courtesy of the Maui News/Matthew Thayer

Junior running back Hoken Hironaka (17) cut through the line during the Lunas' fourth quarter touchdown run against Baldwin High at War Memorial Stadium on Sept. 30 while his parents and sisters cheered from the stands.



Above, Rev. Ai Hironaka retrieved a small metal statue of the Baby Buddha he had used every April 8 on Hanamatsuri, Buddha's Birthday. "I thought it would be hard to find such a small statue," he said. "When I found it, I was so happy." Left, he bowed in Gassho at what was the temple entrance before donning a PPE coverup to inspect the property.



Wearing masks and protective clothing, Rev. Hironaka, left, and Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani examine items near remains of the temple. "We discovered some altar ornaments, but they were all heavily damaged," Bishop Umitani said. "It was hard to identify what they were."

*but to move to a different phase,"* he said.

Several neighbors stopped by to say hello while Rev. Hironaka sifted through the temple building's remains.

*"Where are you staying? How is your family?"*

On the way out of Lahaina, he parked his car to get out and talk to folks he recognized. He admits the aftermath of the fires has been hard on him and his family. Their lives have been turned upside down. He said it was cathartic to converse with people who shared the same experiences.

*"I think in my life condition, when I see the people who survived, it makes me happy or excited or energetic,"* he said. *"To witness neighbors working hard, it helps. Oh, he is doing it already? If he can do it, I can too. As a father, a minister and husband, there is responsibility to be strong. With these neighbors, we can talk without pretending. Talk to heal each other."*

One friend was a distraught young man returning to the home he built for his family on rented land. The distant look in his eyes was familiar to Rev. Hironaka.

*"His eyes are like mine,"* he said. *"I see only a small light on inside his eyes. However, it wasn't dark. This small, tiny light, how can we make a brighter and stronger light? I*

*think, we need to encourage each other. He says to me, 'We need to keep our heads up.' I was helped by him.*

*"The fire on the town is contained, but the fire remains in the victims' hearts and minds. We are all spread out from Lahaina, but I think it is a time we are all together."*

After the fire, he says he found himself wondering if it was all a bad dream.

*"When I was informed that I could go into the site, I wondered if it was not real,"* he said. *"But it happened to everybody. Everybody lost everything. I now truly understand we should not take it for granted. The fire made me transform into more the reality of this impermanent world. Nothing is permanent. Everything is impermanent."*

When the Lahaina Hongwanji temple was built 90 years ago, it was financed by the congregation and community. Rev. Hironaka says he expects the same to happen as it rises from the ashes. Assistance, he says, will come not just from local congregants, but from "Japan, the Mainland, all over."

*"I think, regardless of any religion, the temple is built by the people's donations,"* he said. *"I think it is going to be a wonderful temple when it is finished. That will be, I think, a wonderful service. I cannot wait for that."*



Courtesy of the Maui News/Matthew Thayer

Rev. Hironaka, left, and Waiola Church elder Tama Kaleleiki shook hands when they reunited on Waiee Street. Rev. Ai credits Tama-san for saving his son Hoken's life on the day they both lost their churches.

# ‘We Bow in Gratitude’ — a Message From the Lahaina Hongwanji Sangha

Members at Lahaina Hongwanji Mission were preparing that week for the upcoming Obon Festival on August 11 and 12. It is ironic and poignant that we fretted a little about possible rain from Hurricane Dora. Then, on Tuesday the 8th the winds came. . . and the rest of the story is embedded in us forever through personal experience, sharing of tales, and from the media.

The fire in our beloved Lahaina town displaced about half of our 80 members. They are scattered over parts of Maui, the islands of Hawaii as well as the Mainland. We lost our Temple, Social Hall, Office, Minister’s Residence and School Building.

Weeks later we learned that one member, Matsu Osato, perished.

Even as we visibly or stoically weep over losses in lives, property, livelihood — one powerfully encouraging force is the overwhelming hope and depth of support we have received.

This support has come from the innermost circles of family and ohana, friends, neighbors, from Lahaina Hongwanji members and relations. The support widened to the sangha of Maui Hongwanji temples, Honpa Hongwanji and statewide temples. . . and finally from the larger communities and agencies, local to world-wide.

We bow in gratitude to the following:

- Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani, Honpa Hongwanji Headquarters staff, Social Concerns Committee and Maui Wildfire Emergency Response Ad Hoc



Above: A flyer for Lahaina Hongwanji’s Aug. 12 Obon is posted on the sign fronting 511 Waiee St.

Committee for setting up the Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief Fund.

- Kahului, Wailuku, Lanai and Makawao Hongwanji Temples for offering familiar and comfortable places for Lahaina members to gather, and for invitations to attend their services, as well as donations of gift cards.

- Rev. Kerry Kiyohara and Rev. Shinkai Murakami, who offered their presence at weekly gatherings on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Wailuku and Kahului Hongwanji Temples.

- Rev. Ai Hironaka, who has been a voice for Lahaina Hongwanji and its sangha. . .



In front of the largely undamaged Nokotsudo (Columbarium), Lahaina Hongwanji’s red yagura, repainted before the fires, sits on the lovingly watered and cared for green lawn. The tree planted by the Gomonsu in 2017, left, is sprouting new leaves.

and, by common experience, for others displaced by the disaster.

- Our temple members, for being LAHAINA HONGWANJI

STRONG and helping each other through group texting (cell phones rule!) and heart-to-heart hanashi.

- Island community groups,

foundations and many organizations from afar who graciously bestowed monetary donations for displaced persons — temple members and others.

- Last, but not least, gratitude for “ground zero” firemen, policemen, National Guardsmen, Red Cross, FEMA, and all others who served and are still serving.

To close on a “feel good” note — one post-fires photo online shows a portion of Lahaina Hongwanji that appears to have resisted the flames.

It is a scene with a still relatively green lawn, which was so diligently watered and cared for by our member. On the lawn stands the red yagura. . . dutifully repainted in late summer for Obon.

And the columbarium/nokotsudo still stands upright and seemingly intact. At the roadside is the temple “kiosk,” and visible inside the glass protection is the name, LAHAINA HONGWANJI, as well as a poster advertising “OBON on August 11 and 12, 2023.”

We are still awaiting the day we will be allowed back at Lahaina Hongwanji Mission to assess what our future will be. In the meantime, we have a new mailing address since our Post Office was damaged in the fire. Our new mailing address is:

Lahaina Hongwanji Mission  
PO Box 12911  
Lahaina, HI 96761

Our phone number remains as (808) 661-0640 but it is forwarded to Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

In Gratitude,  
Lahaina Hongwanji Sangha



In one corner of Lahaina Hongwanji’s long Social Hall, above, burnt metal chairs remained in rows alongside what was once tables. At right: The statue of Shinran Shonin faces the tree planted in 2017 by His Eminence Gomonsu Kojun Ohtani on his official visit. It has sprouted new green leaves.



## Hope Amid the Ashes

Continued from Page 1

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 a cloudy 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*, *Mejoku* 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 Gomonsu 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.

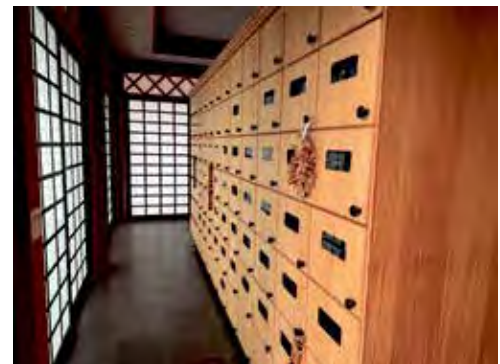
The road to recovery has just begun. We never know what the future holds. But we will move forward together.

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



Inside the Nokotsudo (Columbarium), rows of niches, above, and the altar, below, were undamaged even though the glass walls sustained minor damage.



## HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII'S TRIPLE CELEBRATION

## Jodo Shinshu Tradition and the 'Kyogyoshinsho'

The Series of Lectures Sponsored by Buddhist Education Division Continues

Buddhist Education Division's 10-part series of lectures which began in January, continues on March 16 with a session on "The Significance of the Establishment of Jodo Shinshu Tradition" by Dr. Eisho Nasu of Ryukoku University.

Divided into four main areas, the overall program focuses on four topics: the establishment of Jodo Shinshu tradition; the essence of Kyogyoshinsho, Jodo Shinshu teachings, both past and present, then moves to the future with how the "World is Waiting for Buddhism and Shinran Shonin."

Dr. Nasu's lecture will be followed by "Kyogyoshinshu: Teaching" on April 13 with Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Wondra from Orange County Buddhist Church and on May 18 with Rev. Yuki Sugahara from Buddhist Church of Sacramento.

Each of the next three speakers in the lineup discussed details on their seminars:

**Dr. Eisho Nasu, March 16:**

The year 1224 is marked as the establishment of the Jodo Shinshu tradition and for Shinran Shonin's family, it was also the year when they celebrated the birth of their youngest daughter, Kakushinni, who later was instrumental in supporting Shinran's propagation of the Shinshu teaching.

She looked after him in Kyoto until his death before she constructed Shinran's mausoleum, thus laying the foundation for the establishment of the Hongwanji tradition.

The year 1224 was also a year of political turbulence. Three years before, in 1221, the retired emperor Gotoba suffered a major defeat. In 1207, he prompted the persecution of the new Nembutsu movement, resulting in the exile of Honen Shonin and his disciples, including Shinran. In 1221, during the Jokyu Disturbance, Gotoba lost to the forces of the Kamakura shogunate and he himself was exiled to Oki Island.

In 1224, still calling himself a disciple of Honen, Shinran was composing the Kyogyoshinsho while living in Eastern Japan, at the time calling himself neither monk nor layperson.



Left: Dr. Eisho Nasu, professor of Shin Buddhist Studies at Ryukoku University, Kyoto. Middle: Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Wondra, Orange County Buddhist Church, Institute of Buddhist Studies Professor. Right: Rimban.Yuki Sugahara, Buddhist Church of Sacramento.



In this presentation, I would like to focus on the notion of "lineage" in the Pure Land Buddhist tradition and Jodo Shinshu.

The concept of monastic lineage simply means the continuous "line" of transmission of the teaching from master to disciple.

Shinran did not use the idea of lineage when he selected the patriarchs of the Jodo Shinshu tradition, but instead he disregarded the idea of monastic lineage. He chose the seven Pure Land masters based on his experience of awakening of Shinjin though the guidance of his master Honen.

In his later letters, Rennyon Shonin wrote, "What is taught in the tradition of Shinran Shonin is that the entrusting heart is essential."

**Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Wondra, April 13:**

I am honored to provide the class on "Essence of Kyogyoshinsho – Chapter of True Teaching of the Pure Land Way."

Shinran's principal text, "A Collection of Passages Revealing the True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way" describes a systematic discourse of the dynamic activity of Pure Land Buddhist Path.

This lecture reviews and explains the contents of the General Preface and the Chapter of the True Teaching, focusing on the "Three Pure Land Sutras" and the central purport of the Larger Sutra. In the opening passage of the Chapter of the True Teaching, Shinran presents the Amida's stereo logical structure of two aspects for our going forth to

the Pure Land and our return to his world.

He also states, "Sakyamuni appeared in this world and expounded the teachings of the way to enlightenment, seeking to save the multitudes of living beings by blessing them. Thus to teach the Tathagata's Primal Vow is the true intent of this sutra; the Name of the Buddha is its essence."

in Kyoto, she has lived in the United States since 1981 except when she received her first ordination (Tokudo) in 2006, her second (Kyoshi) in 2007 and her Ph.D. in Shin Buddhist Studies at Ryukoku University Graduate School in Kyoto. Her dissertation was "The Study of the History of Shin Buddhist Thought in America – In the Movement of Bud-

ter of the Florin Buddhist Church in California and the Oregon Buddhist Temple in Portland before being assigned to the Buddhist Church in Sacramento where he was named Rimban last summer.

The short title to his lecture is "Kyogyoshinsho: Practice" but the complete title is one he explained:

The masterwork of our founder, Shinran Shonin (1173-1263) and the most important text of Jodo Shinshu School, is "Ken Jodo Shinjitsu Kyo Gyo Sho Monrui," or "The Collection of Passages Revealing the True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way," hereafter KGSM.

It is said that the first draft of this six-volume text was completed on April 15, 1224. This is why we are celebrating the 800th anniversary of the establishment of Jodo Shinshu.

I am privileged to have this opportunity to share the appreciation of one of the chapters of KGSM, the chapter on "Practice" but since my lecture time is limited, I will focus on one passage, "Explications of Namu Amida Butsu" from the chapter on practice.

I am looking forward to "meeting" everyone on Zoom. Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto's two-hour, double session that defined and examined the origins of Mahayana Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism kicked off the series on Jan. 13.

A last-minute scheduling conflict made the scheduling change necessary by the director of the Institute of Buddhist Studies and yet, it drew more than 60 Zoom participants from around the state including those attending the Honpa Hongwanji Betsuin's "Watch Party."

The session's technical difficulties have been edited and the two-hour lecture is available as a video presentation including copies of Rev. Matsumoto's slides.

"We were pleased by the number of participants who were exposed to the essence of Mahayana and Pure Land Buddhism," Buddhist Education Series Chair Rev. Satoshi Ka'imipono Tomioka said.

The series continues through Aug. 24.

**HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII TRIPLE CELEBRATION**  
**ONLINE BUDDHIST EDUCATION SERIES 2024**

1. What is Mahayana Buddhism? (YouTube video is available)
2. What is Pure Land Buddhism? (YouTube video is available)
3. Development of Jodo Shinshu in Japan and Hawaii Part 1
4. Development of Jodo Shinshu in Japan and Hawaii Part 2
5. Significance of establishment of Jodo Shinshu Tradition (MARCH 16, 2 PM, PROF. EISHO NASU)
6. Kyogyoshinsho: Teaching (APRIL 13, 10 AM, REV. MUTSUMI WONDRA)
7. Kyogyoshinsho: Practice (MAY 18, 10 AM, REV. YUKI SUGAHARA)
8. Kyogyoshinsho: Entrusting Heart (JUNE 22, 10 AM, REV. KYONOBU KUWAHARA)
9. Kyogyoshinsho: Realization (JULY 20, 10 AM, REV. HENRY ADAMS)
10. The world is waiting for Buddhism and Shinran Shonin: Joy of the Nembutsu (AUGUST 24, 2 PM, REV. GENE SEKIYA)

Scan to register **September 7 & 8**  
 Email: triple.celebration@honpahi.org  
 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

By attending the Buddhist Education Series, we all rejoice in what we have heard and extol what we have attained.

(In addition to her duties at Orange County Buddhist Church, Rev. Dr. Wondra is an adjunct professor at the Institute of Buddhist Studies. Born

dhist Modernism.")

**Rev. Yuki Sugahara, May 18:**

Originally from the Shimane district north of Hiroshima, Rev. Sugahara traces his family of ministers on both parents' side for 15 generations. He served as minis-

## PBA's 18th Annual Taiko Festival, 'Go for It,' Set for March 17

Pacific Buddhist Academy will host its 18th annual Taiko Festival on March 17 at 4 p.m. at the Moanalua Performing Arts Center, 2825 Ala Ilima Street.

This year's theme, "Yaromaika," or "Go for It," reflects that, "The world's needs a new sense of urgency to tackle its biggest challenges," PBA taiko sensei Jay Toyofuku said. "Global conflicts, climate change, even our relationships with one another. We need to put new energy into the world and that is what the school's drummers are working hard to achieve."

PBA alumni will return to the stage this year with Rev. Blayne Nakasone Sakata (2014), Zach Agcaoili Sensei (2014), Chihiro Okawa and Tani Oshita (both 2023) play-

ing "Miyake" with current students.

Rev. Nakasone Sakata will also play the Odaiko on a song he composed and taught to PBA students called "Ukiyo," marking the first time he will join the students since returning from the School of Literature at Ryukoku University in Kyoto, Japan to be appointed Associate Minister at the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin.

Rev. Nakasone Sakata also teaches the Buddhist Basics elective class on campus at PBA.

In addition to Rev. Nakasone Sakata's original piece, Chihiro will accompany students on flute in various songs and play the Odaiko in his originally composed song, "Aspirations."

Taiko drumming is incorporated into PBA's school curriculum since all ninth graders take Beginning Taiko as freshmen. Ticket sales help support PBA and its taiko program.

The Academy is the country's first Shin Buddhist high school, one of only two Buddhist high schools in the country.

Through such activities as taiko, students nurture Japanese culture as well as spirit through listening and drumming together.

Tickets are \$40 for general admission, \$30 for students grades K-12 and seniors over 62.

For more information and to purchase tickets, call Pacific Buddhist Academy at (808) 532-2649 or email megan.lee@pbahi.org



Photo by Maya Kamamura

At last year's festival, Kaya Blum, left, currently a junior at Pacific Buddhist Academy, along with 2023 alumni Chihiro Okawa and Tani Oshita, performed "Aspirations," an original Okawa work. This year all three will return to the Moanalua Performing Arts Center stage to join Rev. Blayne Nakasone Sakata in "Ukiyo," a work he composed and taught students.



## Rev. Miyaji

Continued from Page 1

mal sense that we somehow make it so.

In fact, it is "Great" because it is "Life" itself.

Awakening to this reality then gives us the opportunity to live in an authentic way unique to ourselves. In other words, each individual can live a great life because we awaken to Great Life.

**Q:** You come from a long line of ministers who have held high-ranking positions dating back generations. Do their Dharma messages influence you today?

**A:** According to my grandfather's birth temple Ryujoji, their records list him as the 27th generation, making me the 29th generation.

I am the fourth generation on my mother's side of the family.

I have had the privilege of being a part of a long line of Jodo Shinshu ministers that span back to the time of Shinran Shonin himself.

So there's a lot of pressure on my shoulders! But this occupation that has been in both of my family lines show me that this profound teaching is far beyond any one person.

The baton I received from them is the treasure that I seek to share with as many other people as possible.

I was fortunate that my father never forced me to become a minister, a freedom that was afforded to him as well.

I was taught that this teaching has to be something I had to come to on my own terms when the time was right for me. I appreciated this from my father and this teaching that does not force people to become followers of this tradition.

Your heart will open up to this teaching when your karmic condition is right.

One of the big takeaways I get from my father and grandfather is how to view everyday life from a Shinshu perspective. Everything from doing morning chanting to understanding why society has its many ills to how to always view the self as an egocentric individual with self-aggrandizing proclivities are all part of what it means to be on the Nembutsu path.

**Q:** You have spent entire semesters teaching the "Kyogyoshinsho." As part of Triple Celebration, the Buddhist Education Division will focus on the teaching, practice, trusting and enlightenment. What can laypersons expect to get out of learning about Kyogyoshinsho and about its significance?

**A:** The vital thing to get out of this text is to hear and come to know the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha.

The text is academic and highly doctrinal. It has numerous layers of themes that generally take years to uncover and keep track of when studying. But beneath all of this is the underlying message of transmitting the Promise of Amida Buddha.

It can be very easy to get stuck on the many doctrinal points such as what

point can be found in what sutra. Or this Pure Land Master talked about this specific point in the Nembutsu tradition.

There are so many details one must keep track of when studying this text.

But as Nembutsu practitioners, we must focus on the underlying message of Shinran Shonin's intention for compiling this profound text. And that is the message of Amida Buddha's Great Working.

It can be easy to get lost in the weeds of the doctrine which is very complicated.

However, we should never forget what Shinran Shonin wants to share with us: the message of Amida Buddha's Great Working.

**Q:** What do you hope those hearing you for the first time take away from such a brief but important gathering?

**A:** I have had the privilege of spending time with some of the sangha members from Hawaii and have had the opportunity to make new Dharma friends.

My hope for people hearing me for the first time is that they not listen to me per se but rather, to hear Amida Buddha's Calling Voice.

Because of my minimal abilities, I know I can neither capture everyone's imagination nor meet their expectations.

But my hope will be fulfilled if I can somehow make audible the voiceless voice of Absolute Truth, even for a moment, to a small number of people in the audience.

Actually, that's my greatest hope in life as well: To naturally express the timeless truth that embraces all beings which will ultimately enable them to find great joy in their lives, too.

### Facts About Rev. Takashi Miyaji:

**Born:** Ogden, Utah where his father was assigned, grew up in Monterey Park, Southern California

**Education:** B.A. in philosophy and Japanese, UC Berkeley; M.A. in Buddhist Studies, Institute of Buddhist Studies and in Shin Buddhist Studies at Ryukoku University in Kyoto; Ph.D. in Shin Buddhist Studies, Ryukoku

**Currently:** Minister at Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church in Union City, California and assistant professor at the IBS, Berkeley

**Family:** Wife Kaori Miyaji, one son, Keisai Andrew Miyaji, age 7

**Hobbies:** Cooking yakiudon (described as both "delicious" and "mediocre"); polishing his impersonations of Elmo, Grover and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Also enjoys "old school" hip-hop, soulful house music and DJ's under the name DJ Taka

## Workshops

Continued from Page 1

Buddhist masters. His teaching has spiritually enriched and empowered people's lives all over the world for more than 800 years and many have followed this teaching and dedicatedly supported the Hongwanji and temples. It could be said that the 800-year history is proof that they have found the truth or something important within this teaching regardless of nationalities, race, cultural backgrounds, gender identifies and so on.

In this workshop, I would like to develop our understanding of the history and deepen our appreciation of the teaching with those attending.

And to more actively engage participants, I plan to use some form of quiz during the session.

**Historical Highlights of Hongwanji in Hawaii + Intro to Archiving,** David Acheson, Chair for the HHMH Archives Committee, 2 and 3:30 p.m.

The hour-long sessions will open with a brief audio-visual presentation highlighting Hongwanji's history in Hawaii as well as some key finds from the archives, supplemented by a live show-and-tell of items. One such example on display will be a journal from 1907-1913, written in Japanese, from Hilo Betsuin courtesy of Rev. Joshin Kamuro in addition to an extensive collection from Rev. Yoshiaki Fujitani, deeds from Olelo and founding documents, either originals or reproductions.

To make sessions as practical as possible for those who wish to begin archiving projects at their respective temples, a takeaway "tool kit" of information will be provided along with tips and best practices on how to preserve and archive valuables. Temples with items of archival interest who wish to bring and display them are encouraged to contact David Acheson at archiveschair@honpahi.org.

**Compassion in Ac-**



Courtesy of Jon Matsuoka  
Honpa Hongwanji's Archives Committee Chair David Acheson will include archival items and key finds from the collection.



Courtesy of Ramah DeMello  
Rev. Blayne Higa from Kona Hongwanji and chair of the Social Concerns Committee will explore how the modern world and Shin Buddhism co-exist.



Steve Lohse, chair of the Green Hongwanji Initiative Committee, plans to have participants share inspiring stories on environmental awareness for effective Dharma-guided advocacy.



Courtesy of Alan Kubota  
Debbie Kubota's "The Giving Gratitude Tree" session will include haiku and origami besides the creation and display of original Bodhi tree leaves.

**Shin Buddhist Social Engagement,** Rev. Blayne Higa from Kona Hongwanji Temple, and the Committee on Social Concerns, 2 and 3:30 p.m.

Our workshop will explore how Jodo Shinshu Buddhism offers practical guidance while facing the problems of our contemporary world. Our thoughts, words and actions should be inspired by and grounded in the life-giving and life transforming Dharma that teaches us to see the mutuality of all life and how the welfare and happiness of others is intimately connected with our own.

We will offer a definition of "Compassion in Action" based on the concepts for an engaged Shin Buddhism as discussed in Dr. Jeff Wilson's book, "Living Nembutsu: Applying Shinran's Radically Engaged Buddhism in Life and Society" and give local examples of Shin Buddhist social engagement.

The goal of this workshop is to help participants realize that the Dharma does not necessarily offer easy clear-cut answers, but rather pushes us to go deeper into our human experience, guided by wisdom and compassion, answering the question of, "How do we engage in the modern world as Shin Buddhists?"

We welcome everyone to attend a thoughtful and thought-provoking session.

**Greening the Hongwanji: Awareness and Connection,** Steve Lohse, Chair of the Green Hongwanji Initiative Committee, 2 p.m.

If it's true that we protect what we connect with, then why don't we protect Earth's environment more effectively?

After all, we depend on the environment for everything including a livable climate, public health, clean air and water, energy, fertile soil, healthy food, mineral resources and the biodiversity that sustains living systems.

We are inescapably interdependent with environments we abuse as well as environments we protect.

As Thich Nhat Hanh said, "We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness."

We are never disconnected from Earth's environment, but our awareness tends to slip from time to time, causing us to behave as though we were.

In this workshop, we will celebrate awareness of our environmental connections through sharing personal stories.

No speakers or panels, just sharing inspiring stories among ourselves to lift our environmental awareness for more effective Dharma-guided advocacy and action.

**The Giving Gratitude Tree,** Debbie Kubota and the Honpa Hongwanji

State Dharma School, 3:30 p.m.

The State Dharma School Committee collaborated and planned the following for Triple Celebration's workshop:

Three stations will be setup around the meeting room's walls, each with murals depicting different scenes with activity tables fronting each mural.

At Station 1: Mount Hiei — Participants will learn to fold an origami, possibly a mountain, to take with them. At Station 2: Echigo — Participants will write a haiku poem

on a subject to be determined. At Station 3: Gratitude Tree — Participants will cut out two leaves, each shaped like Bodhi tree leaf and write something about gratitude on each one.

Then they will take one leaf home with them and the other will be fastened onto the branch of the Gratitude Tree.

The target audience for the session is Dharma School students, teachers and families.

Questions on the Workshops may be directed to triple.celebration@honpahi.org or by calling (808) 522-9200.

### How to Register for Triple Celebration

**Who:** Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

**What:** 'Sharing the Joy of Nembutsu Together: Our Living Heart of Gratitude'

**Where:** Ala Moana Hotel, 410 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu

**When:** September 7-8

**Online Info/Registration:** For complete information, visit <https://hongwanjihawaii.com/triple-celebration>  
To go directly to an online registration form that allows for online payments, visit: <http://honpahi.link/triplereg>

**Registration by Mail:**

PDF Forms available at <https://hongwanjihawaii.com/triple-celebration>

Make checks payable to HHMH and mailed to:  
Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii  
Attn: Triple Celebration Committee  
1727 Pali Highway  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**Cost:** \$250 for Early Registration, ends March 31  
\$300 for Late Registration until July 31  
\$150 Youth Registration for those 25 years old and under through July 31

(HHMH will provide a \$200 subsidy per person for neighbor island participants including youth rate registrants to help defray costs.)

BOOK REVIEW

# Discovering My ‘Jewels’ as a PBA Student

BY ALEXANDRA KEATING  
JUNIOR, PACIFIC BUDDHIST  
ACADEMY

I was first introduced to the book “Jewels” by Dr. Kenneth Tanaka at a temple service at my school, Pacific Buddhist Academy (PBA). Dr. Tanaka gave a Dharma talk and spoke about the role of Buddhism in today’s society. He gifted all students a copy of his book and right away, it was different from any book about Buddhism that I had read before.

Dr. Tanaka talks about the issues that plague us today. Relatable topics range from understanding strict parents, heartbreak, inferiority complexes and even the fear of death.

This book helped me relate to the Buddhist values that we learn in school to the journey that we as teenagers are on today.

My favorite part of this book is that humor is added to each lesson. There are jokes

throughout the book drawn as comics that capture the essence of Buddhism through memorable characters and scenes. From time to time, I’ll remember one of the lessons displayed as a comic and these teachings have allowed me to become a more compassionate person.

This book explains how there are both inner and outer jewels. The outer jewel emphasizes that we are all connected which highlights the importance of interconnection and depending on one another to shine. The inner jewel talks about the potential that individuals have to become happier, wiser and better people.

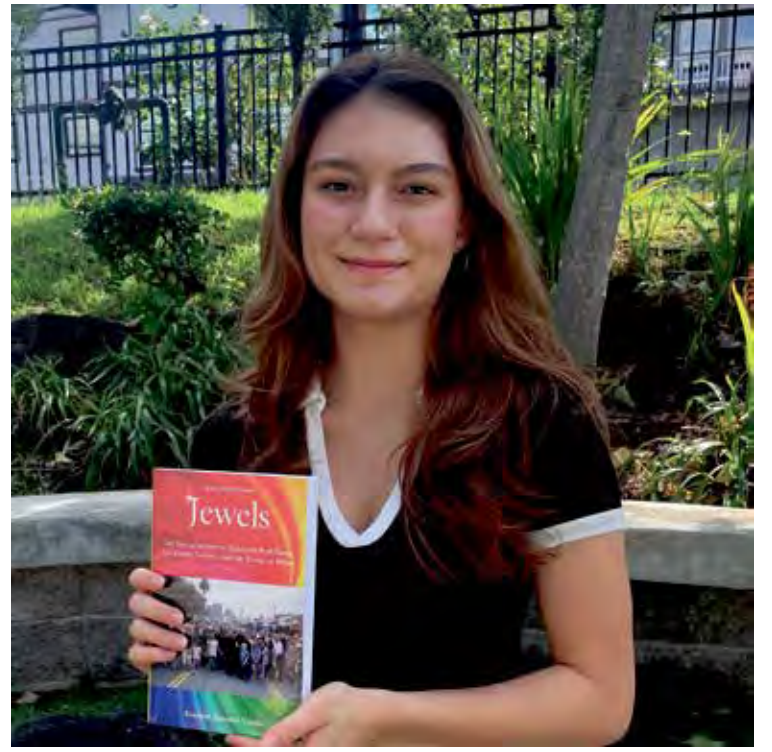
There are jewels inside each of us waiting to shine. These lessons have helped me on my path to becoming a senior at PBA.

Looking forward, I want to study aeronautics and become a pilot. I hope that in the future, my career can open the

door for others to safely visit new places and cultures. The values described in this book have encouraged me to believe in myself and have confidence in the jewels that I can bring to the world.

Throughout the book, Dr. Tanaka takes time to highlight pop culture and Buddhism. He mentions that the word “Karma” is often misunderstood and misused. This word has gained even more popularity with Taylor Swift’s popular 2022 song, “Karma.” While it is common to hear people to refer to Karma as “fate,” what Dr. Tanaka explains is that Karma has much more to do with one’s Awakening. This is one of many lessons confronting modern-day misconceptions about Buddhism.

“Jewels” has brought Buddhist teaching to life for me. It answers questions that can be embarrassing to ask in front of peers in class, is filled with jokes that help put context to the complexities of religion



Courtesy of Megan Lee

Alexandra Keating participates in cross country running and is a member of the speech and debate team. She speaks fluent Japanese, having learned from her mother, Kinue Keating who is from Tokyo, Japan.

and spirituality, and is a tool that helps me pursue peace within myself and in my community.

Dr. Tanaka pulls from scripture, history and his own

life experience to help young people (and those young at heart) navigate through life with Buddhist values. Thank you, Dr. Tanaka for this refreshing gift.

# ‘Jewels’ 24 Years Later: Still An Insightful, Humorous Resource

BY GAIL S. TAGASHIRA  
HONPA HONGWANJI HAWAII  
BETSUIN

When the Boy Scout Committee of Buddhist Churches of America asked Prof. Kenneth Tanaka if he would write a book for the scouts 25 years ago, he accepted the request, but it took another 10 years to get started.

His busy teaching and research schedule meant putting the project on hold until he retired in 2018. Up until then, his writing and focus leaned toward the academic and scholarly — “The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine,” subtitled Ching-ying Hui-yuan’s Commentary on the Visualization Sutra and “Approaching the Land of Bliss, Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitabha.”

But Dr. Tanaka’s belief in

the project near wavered. It was important to introduce scouts and young people to the basics of Buddhism, he thought, and while it took years to get started and years to complete, the result drew positive responses from ministers, leaders and, yes, even students.

“Jewels: An Introduction to American Buddhism for Youth, Scouts and the Young at Heart (With a Bit of Humor)” has been sold or donated to temples through BDK Hawaii and BDK America. Since May of 2020, more than 4,500 free copies have been distributed and another 850 copies downloaded.

“I always wanted to write a book for ‘young people’ because as youth and young adults, we go through a lot of difficulties but don’t have the ‘resources’ as we get older,” he said. “Many of the diffi-

culties discussed in Chapter 9 (‘Issues and Problems in Daily Life’) reflect my own difficulties. What I was going through at the age of 22, when I had begun studying Buddhism seriously.

“Even as I was going through a difficult time, I told myself that when I learn more about Buddhism, I want to offer something to others who will be going through the same experience.

“Looking back, it’s somewhat comical that I was thinking about that when I hadn’t even resolved my own hurt. Now that I think about it, I must have had some confidence that the Dharma could help.”

Born in Japan, Dr. Tanaka grew up in Mountain View, California, earned his B.A. in anthropology from Stanford, and his masters and doctor-

ate degrees in philosophy and Indian Studies at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley where he later taught.

An ordained Jodo Shinshu minister, he was appointed to the Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church, was president of the Buddhist Council of Northern California and editor of “Pacific World: The Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies.

In 2005, he produced and appeared in a TV series sponsored by Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism) which was established by the late Rev. Dr. Yehan Numata, founder of the Mitutoyo Corporation. While not promoting any particular denomination of Buddhism, BDK has focused on Shin Buddhism in the U.S. and Germany, publishing books on Buddhist history,



Courtesy of Jon J. Murakami

culture and teachings, most widely “The Teaching of Buddha.”

Print copies of “Jewels” are available for \$6 and can either be ordered through the website or Hawaii temples may place orders by calling BDK Hawaii (808) 942-1511 or emailing bdkshi@hotmail.com

PDF copies may be downloaded free from the BDK America website.

# An Interfaith Tribute With Music, Dance, Drama and Prayers

Hundreds Gather to Celebrate the Life of Queen Lili’uokalani

Honpa Hongwanji Betsuin Hawaii hosted this year’s Ho’okuikahi honoring the life of Queen Lili’uokalani with a tribute to Mary Mikahala Foster.

The interfaith event on Jan. 19 in the Hondo drew more than 220 people from a dozen different churches and organizations including the Pacific Justice and Reconciliation Center and the California-Pacific Conference of the United Church of Christ.

The twilight program opened with an oli by Lehua Matsuoka followed by an opening aspiration by Rev. Blayne Nakasone Sakata, a welcome and introduction to Mary Foster’s background and relationship with the Queen by Rimban Yuika Hasebe.

Dr. Kahu Kaleo Patterson emceed the program which included performances by



All Photos Courtesy of Irene Nohara

Dr. Kahu Kaleo Patterson, left, of the Pacific Justice and Reconciliation Center, with Jon Matsuoka and Rev. Yuika Hasebe, both from Hawai’i Betsuin, presented Hiromi Peterson’s “Unwavering Heart” calligraphy to Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank of the California-Pacific Conference.

the Project Dana Dancer, Harris Hoike Group, shakuhachi master Katsumi Takemoto, a reenactment of events surrounding the overthrow from the Hawai’i Pono Coalition and a rousing performance of “Raiden” by the Ryugen Taiko of Wahiawa.

Chants, songs and prayers for peace were lead by Pastor Cassandra Chee, Pastor Won-Seok Yuh accompanied by pianist Wendie Yumori followed by a message of “Mana’o Aloha” was delivered by Rev. Dr. Dottie Escobedo-Frank, Bishop of Cali-



Project Dana Dancers performed “Ashibi Kariyushi” before hundreds gathered to honor Queen Lili’uokalani.

fornia-Pacific Conference.

Prayers for Reconciliation were delivered by Kahu Heather Barfield from Kauhakapili Church, Hawai’i Conference UCC; Mary Carpenter representing the Reconciliation Committee at Episcopal Church of Hawai’i; Raj Kumar of the Gandhi International Institute for Peace, and Rev. Amy Wake from the UMC Acts of Repentance Task Force.

In gratitude for her work, Bishop Frank was presented a work by master calligrapher Hiromi Peterson which read “Yuro gi nai kokoro,” or “Unwavering Heart,” a symbol of Queen Lili’uokalani.



Members of Ryuden Taiko of Wahiawa including Rev. Blayne Nakasone Sakata, center, performed the rousing “Raiden.”

# Honoring a 19th Century Activist and Philanthropist

BY JON K. MATSUOKA  
HONPA HONGWANJI HAWAII  
BETSUIN

More than 300 people attended the inaugural concert honoring Mary Mikahala Foster at Foster Botanical Gardens on Sept. 8.

Sponsored by the Honolulu District Council of Hongwanji Temples and Friends of Foster Botanical Gardens, the twilight concert was first proposed by Rimban Yuika Hasebe of Honpa Hongwanji Hawai'i Betsuin and organized through an inter-temple committee to bring Mary Foster's legacy to light.

A conduit between the Hawaiian community and the Honpa Hongwanji, Mary Foster was the first Buddhist of Hawaiian descent who had a vision for the people of Hawai'i.

As early as 1899, she supported not only the communities with monetary donations and land but she also encouraged and escorted Queen Liliuokalani to attend Gotan-E or Shinran Shonin's Birthday Service at the Fort Lane Hongwanji Temple in 1901.

That event drew local and worldwide attention.

Music is the way she was honored beginning with Hawai'i

Betsuin and Soto Mission ministers chanting of the Sambujo followed by several speakers addressing the connection between Mary Foster and the development of Jodo Shinshu in Hawai'i.

Performers included Nola Nahulu and the Hawai'i Youth Opera Chorus, recording artists Herb Lee and Wayne Shishido on slack key guitar, Lehua Matsuoka and Keola Kauwenaole of Hala Hula o Lehua o Nana'ihale, shakuhachi master Katsumi Takemoto, cellist Udi Bar-David with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Hyaku Sen Ki Kai Taiko Drummers from the Pacific Buddhist Academy.

With so many hands and hearts coming together to contribute to the success of this event, the plan is to hold it annually along with visits to Mary Mikahala Foster's birthday on Sept. 20.

An in-depth account of her life's work by Patricia Lee Masters, titled "Searching for Mary Foster: 19th-Century Native Hawaiian Buddhist, Philanthropist and Social Activist" is available for \$15 at the HHMH Bookstore. Inquiries may be directed to [hq-books@honpahi.org](mailto:hq-books@honpahi.org) or through the website at [hongwanjihawaii.com](http://hongwanjihawaii.com).



Courtesy of Megan Lee

Among memorable scenes from the inaugural concert to honor Mary Mikahala Foster were, clockwise, from top left: Kumu Hula Lehua Matsuoka; Herb Lee on slack key guitar; taiko drummer Kaya Blum from Pacific Buddhist Academy; Hanae Gouveia of Hala Hula o Lehua o Nana'ihale; the audience and performers as they sang "Hawai'i Aloha," Rev. Hiro Yoshida of Soto Mission and Rimban Yuika Hasebe of Hawai'i Betsuin; Nola Nahulu and the Honolulu Youth Opera Chorus; cellist Udi Bar-David of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and shakuhachi master Katsumi Takemoto.

## Coming Soon: Sharing Some Nembutsu Moments

Commission on Buddhist Education & the Buddhist Study Center Committee

# Sharing Your NEMBUTSU MOMENTS

**2024 HONGWANJI SLOGAN**  
"Sharing Nembutsu Moments"

**WHAT IS A "NEMBUTSU MOMENT?"**

When you see or hear or experience something so beautiful, touching and profound that it leaves you speechless and all you can say is "Wow!" After that, as one continues to be in awe of that life changing encounter, you continue to say "Wow." This moment is explained in The Collected Works of Shinran, Volume Two as "...the moment of awakening of shinjin (True Entrusting) and saying the nembutsu is a moment both in and out of time."  
---Reverend Eric Matsumoto

**WE WILL SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE KA LEO KAHEA, TEMPLE NEWSLETTERS OR IN A COLLECTION FOR A BOOK.**

**SUBMIT YOUR EXPERIENCE HERE!**  
<https://forms.gle/6cVKBwqsqzYg5XrHA>

**DEADLINE TO SUBMIT: AUGUST 31, 2024**

**??? QUESTIONS ???**  
Please contact Debbie Kubota [dekub88@gmail.com](mailto:dekub88@gmail.com)

BY GAIL S. TAGASHIRA

Stories of "Sharing Nembutsu Moments" are being compiled and will soon be published in a project coordinated by the Commission on Buddhist Education and the Buddhist Study Center Committee.

What is a "Nembutsu Moment?"

"When you see or hear or experience something so beautiful, touching and profound that it leaves you speechless and all you can say is, 'Wow!'" said Rev. Eric Matsumoto.

"After that, as one continues to be in awe of that life-changing encounter, you continue to say, 'Wow!'"

"This moment is explained in 'The Collected Works of Shinran, Volume Two' as in, '... The moment of awakening of Shinjin (True Entrusting) and saying the Nembutsu is a mo-

ment both in and out of time."

Coordinated by Carolyn Uchiyama, chair of the Buddhist Study Center, and Debbie Kubota, Chair of the Commission on Buddhist Education and Commissioner of Buddhist Education for the Honolulu District, the project takes its name from the 2024 Hawaii Hongwanji theme.

For co-chair Debbie Kubota, one such moment took place in 1994 at Turtle Bay Resort at a company dinner attended by both Debbie and her husband, Alan Kubota.

"When we looked outside, we saw that the sun was setting, so we stopped what we were doing and went out to watch it as our day came to an end," Debbie Kubota said.

"The cloud formation and the way the sun lit up the clouds were absolutely perfect! My husband is never without his camera, so he fortunately captured the sunset.

We have an everlasting memory of that night.

"It was definitely a 'Wow!' experience, as we all stood there in awe of the amazing sunset with the wonderful cloud formations. In that moment, I was filled with gratitude and appreciation for life, nature, the awesome world and beautiful islands that we live in.

"We were treated to such an inspirational end to our day. After all these years, I still get a thrill when I look at the photo of the most spectacular sunset I have ever seen."

Alan Kubota's photo graces the flyer announcing the project.

Aug. 31 is the deadline to submit stories which will be published in newsletters, *Ka Leo Kāhea* and possibly in a book.

Stories may be submitted online at: [forms.gle/6cVKBwqsqzYg5XrHA](https://forms.gle/6cVKBwqsqzYg5XrHA)

## Cindy Alm

Continued from Page 2

wrote an article for our temple newsletter. When I showed our teacher the first draft of the article, she thanked me and gently asked me to include in the article her gratitude to the many people who helped her for many years – the man who donated the vegetables and the many BWA volunteers who helped her. She said it took many people working together to make the *tsukemono* and that she was grateful for all of the help. In this small encounter, she taught me about interdependence, gratitude, and kindness.

Being grateful seems simple. It is easy to be grateful for things that make us happy or give us comfort. We can appreciate acts of kindness, words of encouragement, and a friendly smile.

What I have learned, however, is that gratitude is most needed when it is most diffi-

cult to be grateful. When I feel afraid, sad, or confused, or when I feel intentionally harmed or treated unfairly, it is almost impossible to feel grateful. The negative thoughts are profoundly unsettling. However, when I look for something to be grateful for, as difficult as it might be, then a negative encounter becomes a positive one, a lesson learned and appreciated, and the once-in-a-lifetime moment treasured.

Three years ago, in March 2020, a statewide stay-at-home order was issued by the Governor of the State of Hawaii to try to stop the spread of the Coronavirus. Schools and businesses were closed. Churches, temples and synagogues were closed. Only essential activities such as obtaining healthcare and buying groceries were allowed. Our lives were severely disrupted. There was uncertainty and fear.

In June 2020, BWA members were invited to share reflections on their initial experience during the stay-at-home period.

Activities such as walking in their neighborhood, exercising at home, gardening, creating art, singing gathas, writing poetry and folding origami cranes, gave them joy and helped them during that challenging time. Pets were playful companions and brought comfort.

Saying the Nembutsu, reciting the Three Treasures and "The Golden Chain of Love" also sustained them. Upon learning that healthcare workers needed face masks, BWA volunteers sewed and donated more than 5,000 face masks.

Appreciating the pandemic as an extraordinary and unrepeatably experience, focusing on gratitude, helping others and sharing understandings such as "We can make the most of each precious moment," "Strive to live each day well" and "Ichigo Ichie" – these are BWA examples of daily living.

*Ichigo Ichie* – treasure each unrepeatably moment. I first

heard the words, "*ichigo, ichie*" several years ago. A beautiful song, with the title "*Ichigo, Ichie*" was composed and performed by a Hawaii ukulele virtuoso. The words have greater meaning now that I am older and have been a caregiver for elderly family members. Life is impermanent – each moment is to be treasured.

A few months ago, in the early evening, I sat quietly next to my aunt, one of my mother's two surviving younger sisters. We watched from my aunt's window as children and parents in the playground next door enjoyed the end of the day. My aunt has dementia and could not remember how many children I have, or my name, but we could still sing the gatha "Ondokusan" and recite the Nembutsu. Each person is appreciated, every moment is joyful.

Women have had a significant role in supporting and carrying forward Shinran Shonin's teachings, starting with his wife, Eshinni, and

daughter, Kakushinni. 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.

In Hawaii, "Mahalo" means thank you. And "Aloha" means hello, goodbye and love. It is an expression of deep personal connection. Mahalo, BWA members and Aloha.

On a final note, my grandmother's home altar is still in use. It has been moved several times – from an old plantation home to a newly built family home, to a condominium apartment and to a senior citizen home where my mother's sisters now live.

My parents are now deceased and the home altar that was in their home is now in my home.

Namo Amida Butsu, the Nembutsu has always been guiding and nurturing all of us. My sincere appreciation on this unrepeatably day of the 17th World Buddhist Women's Convention.

NEWS FROM THE SANGHAS

# Help for Lahaina, Organic Eggs, Saving a Bodhi Tree

Here is a brief compilation of news and various activities from around Hawaii temples. Items of interest may be sent to newsletter@honpahi.org

## Maui

Dozens of **Makawao** and **Wailuku Hongwanji** temple members united in a variety of ways to help Lahaina residents affected by the Aug. 8 wildfires.

In partnership with “No Child Hungry,” Boy Scout Troop 18 from **Makawao Hongwanji** transported dozens of boxes of food and hygiene bags assembled at Hamai Appliances which was only one of many efforts:

- Owner Bryant Hamai also donated refrigerators to the War Memorial Evacuation site;
- Sean Higuchi converted Anytime Fitness Center into a collection site and where fire fighters and fire victims could shower;
- Megan Nakashima set up Pukalani Superette into an Upcountry Strong collection site and distribution center;
- Katie Higuchi from Momentum Dance Maui collected and delivered goods to victims and volunteers, and
- Carlys Higuchi of Maui Optic provided optometric care and eyeglasses at the Family Relief Center in Hyatt Kaanapali for those who lost eyewear in the fires.

Also helping, **Makawao’s** Cub Scout Pack 18 assembled more than 80 wooden sifter boxes for Lahaina families to use when they were allowed to return to their homes.

The boxes, used to sift through ashes to find small items such as jewelry, were put to good use in November.

Then at **Wailuku Hongwanji**, Troop 40 postponed its Court of Honor ceremonies, donated their bento box meals to the Maui Police Department, focused their energies on helping their Lahaina ohana by organizing donations dropped off at the scout office.

The troops set up their own Venmo account and as funds arrived, they purchased much-needed supplies including extension cords for those displaced and staying at Camp



Lihue Hongwanji’s Preschool students collected more than \$1,000, most in pennies, for both Lahaina Hongwanji Mission and the Maui Humane Society for wildfire relief efforts.



Wailuku Hongwanji Boy Scouts Troop 40 assembled household goods, food and personal items for evacuees at Camp Maluhia.

Maluhia.

Their help allowed families to charge their cell phones and laptops as well as power up their cabins. Then the scouts packed up and delivered boxes of food, household and personal hygiene products to Camp Maluhia.

## Kauai

When **Lihue Hongwanji’s** Preschool children and teachers first got word about the Lahaina wildfires, they all wanted to do something to help both Lahaina Hongwanji Mission and the Maui Humane Society.

Donation jars were created for a Penny Drive Fundraiser and placed around the school.

Piggy banks and wallets were emptied of coins and as word spread among parents, aunties, uncles, grandparents and temple members, the jars filled up.

The 48 preschoolers between 3- and 5-years-old learned the values of each coin, how to count and add them up and what compassion and caring for others can mean.

They raised \$505.18 for Lahaina Hongwanji Mission and \$500 for the Maui Humane Society.

□ Veteran’s Day marked the 25th anniversary of the Lonesome Grave Project, coordinated by Kauai United Hongwanji Buddhist Women’s Association which represents three temples: **Kauai- Lihue, West Kauai and Kapaa Hongwanji Missions.**

More than 40 members and friends took part in the project by placing flowers and greenery at Kauai Veterans Cemetery.

Rev. Tomo Hojo of **West Kauai Hongwanji** conducted a short service; Dan Funamura, husband of the late Barbara Funamura who started the project, performed the song “Where Have All the Flowers Gone,” and Eddie Kawamura Sr., Commander of the Kauai Unit of Disabled American Veterans, presented United BWA with a special certificate to honor its 25 years.

The Grand Hyatt Kauai also added lei to each grave and the columbarium.

## Hawaii Island

**Honokaa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple** is continuing its Feeding Our Keiki and Kupuna program, celebrating its fifth anniversary last month.



Troop 18 from Makawao Hongwanji Buddhist Temple transported boxes of food and personal hygiene items assembled at Hamai Appliances.

Every Friday, more than 40 volunteers assist members to prepare some 400 meals, handing them out at the temple and delivering them to needy families. To date they have served more than 75,000 meals.

Joe Clarkson, a.k.a. “The Egg Man,” also hit a milestone. Since 2020, he figures he has donated more than 3,000 dozen organic eggs.

Food costs for HHBT’s program are covered entirely from private and community donors including Catholic, Methodist and Mormon churches.

□ More than 50 members, families and friends of **Hilo Hongwanji’s** Hoyukai Friendship Society held its Gratitude Dinner celebration in November that opened with a craft fair that raised more than \$600 for its scholarship fund.

Rev. Joshin Kamuro led a brief Dharma service that included the history of Hoyukai which was established in 1943.

Yuma Kamuro, 16, accompanied the singing of the “Vandana ti Sarana” and the Nembutsu on violin followed by music from members of the Kamana Senior Center Karaoke Club including Diane Hakoda, Billy Medeiros and the “singing salesman” Hiroshi Suga.

Dozens of Hoyukai volunteers prepared a feast that included a turkey dinner with all the trimmings and baked goods.

The Hoyukai plans to meet regularly after Covid restrictions had curtailed their past gatherings.

## Lanai

As **Lanai Hongwanji Mission** looks to celebrate its centennial in 2024, president Christopher Richardson announced plans to convert the three-bedroom minister’s residence on the grounds into a long-term elder care facility, to be managed by a Molokai-based company and a hospice facility on Maui.

The residence has not been used since 1988.

While the conversion will take time, it will eventually give the temple a stable income while Lanai Hongwanji continues to host Saturday morning services as well as both mixed-martial arts classes and a yoga program five days a week.

## Oahu

Former **Mililani Hongwanji** minister Rev. David Fujimoto can claim credit for saving the temple’s Bodhi tree.

Shortly before Obon festivities, members noticed how the tree’s leaves were prematurely falling and litter-



Tori Higuchi, left, and Eva Wehner, from Makawao Pack 18 assembled screens for wooden boxes.



Scoutmaster Lorin Kosaka, left, and Scout Dad Karsten Lee put the finishing touches on wooden screens.

ing the parking lot.

Rev. Fujimoto, now the resident minister at Moiliili Hongwanji, had noticed some large beetles, he collected them, took photos and before long, the state Department of Land and Natural Resources confirmed it: an infestation of the destructive coconut rhinoceros beetle that is spreading through central Oahu and neighbor islands.

DNLR responded by sending its plan to eradicate the invasive species and within months, no new infestations were seen, new leaves began sprouting and Rev. Fujimoto turned the episode into a teaching lesson on perseverance and embracing nurturing actions through the Six Paramitas.

□ It looks as if **Jikoan Hongwanji’s** “Cha Cha Cha” program will be switching from tea to . . . olive oil?

After December’s third session on mamaki teas from Kilani Brew Company’s fields thriving in Wahiawa’s Kunia plains, the sessions will now switch to healthy oils, according to Joanne Yosemite, director of the temple’s community outreach program.

To receive advance information on upcoming programs, email jikoanprograms@gmail.com.

# Pride Day Parade



Courtesy of Joanne Yosemite

Honolulu Hongwanji members joined hundreds of Pride Day Parade celebrants on Oct. 21, 2023 marching from Ala Moana Beach Park to Kapiolani Park. “Rooted in Pride: Homecoming” capped three days of festivities including concerts, films, art and hikes. Donations benefit the Maui AIDS Foundation, particularly those affected by the wildfires.