NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
HONOLULU, HI
PERMIT NO. 9044

"THE CALLING VOICE"

Ka Leo Kāhea

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII

VOLUME 4 • ISSUE 2 • JUNE 2024

HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII'S TRIPLE CELEBRATION

Final Plans Set for Sept. 7-8 Event

Courtesy of Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai

Musicians of Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai play the double reed *hichiriki,* center. At right, the first of several *sho* performers.

From Day One to the Last Gatha, the Music Will Make Memories

Those attending Honpa Hongwanji's Triple Celebration will experience a wide span of music that promises to be memorable.

For more than a year, ministers and officials planning the Sept. 7-8 event have long sought to see that music be a major part of the program, one where memories of the notes will resonate long after they fade away.

From the first haunting sounds of the ryuteki from members of Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai to the harmonies of singers in the Hawaii Choir, music will span the centuries yet be as "new" as 2022's revised "Shoshinge" of "Shinsei Gohonden Saho."

At right, Rimban Kazunori Takahashi of Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin explains the "new" sutra and below, Rev. Mitsuharu Shimizu of Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai discusses their Betsuin roots, their deep dedication to gagaku and how important performing at Honpa Hongwanji's Triple Celebration means to them.

BY GAIL S. TAGASHIRA
TRANSLATION COURTESY OF
RIMBAN YUIKA HASEBE
HONPA HONGWANJI HAWAI'I BETSUIN

Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai was established in 1981 as "*Sogakuin Sandan Shu,*" or loosely, "A Group of Musicians Praising Buddha With Musical Instruments" for the services held at the Yamaguchi Betsuin.

Currently, about 60 ministers within Yamaguchi Prefecture who possess a special license on liturgy (called "Tokubetsu Homuin") belong to the group. They frequently meet to practice chanting and instruments to prepare themselves for the services within their district.

Gagaku groups routinely have no "conductor" in the sense that Western orchestras or ensembles have a musical leader, but rather, most have a "chair" who leads by example and coordinates activities.

Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai's chair, Rev. Mitsuharu Shimizu, joined the group because as a young student, his best friend's father was teaching the ancient art form.

Later, his mentors from the "*Gonshiki Shidosho*" (ritual training

SEE PAGE 9

Opening With a Ceremony of Joyful Music

BY REV. KAZUNORI TAKAHASHI
RIMBAN, HONPA HONGWANJI HILO BETSUIN

"Sensei, the sutra chanting during this morning's service was so beautiful! What kind of chanting was it?"

I had the privilege of traveling to Kyoto in May 2023 to attend the Joint Celebration, the 850th Anniversary of Shinran Shonin's Birth and the 800th Anniversary of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching, and the 17th World Buddhist Women's Convention.

The day after arriving in Kyoto, prior to those events, I walked with several people on the early morning streets from my hotel to

SEE PAGE 9

A Statewide Choir Will Come Together for the First Time

Two very different, beautiful choral preludes will open the Sunday, Sept. 8, 2024 Service, sung by vocalists from throughout the state who have never performed together before.

The Triple Celebration Statewide Choir, made up of volunteers from various temples, will perform at 9 a.m. at Ala Moana Hotel under the direction of Mari Murakami, music director of the Hawaii Betsuin Choir.

Prepared by the Hawaii Kyodan Music Translation Subcommittee, the selections will be sung in English, the renditions translated from the original Japanese.

SEE PAGE 8

AN UPDATE ON MAUI WILDFIRE RELIEF AND RECOVERY

Gifts and Donations From Honzan Deeply Appreciated

Lahaina Members Gratefully Accept Replacements for Items Destroyed on Aug. 8

Editor's Note: Members of Lahaina Hongwanji Mission (LHM) gathered at Kahului Hongwanji Mission on Jan. 17, 2024, to meet special guests from Honzan, the mother temple in Japan.

Governor Shoshin Kumona, one of three Governors at Honzan who oversees the Department of Social Affairs and Emergency Management, and Rev. Rie Fujisawa from the Hongwanji International Department, visited Maui as Honzan representatives for an official site inspection of the devastated LHM property and to meet with Lahaina members.

Governor Kumona presented a donation of ¥15 million from Honzan, which is about $100,000, toward the Maui Wildfire Relief, in addition to their initial contributions of approximately $140,000.

They also brought many religious items for the LHM members, including the family altar Obutsudan, Onenju, and Shikisho.

LHM members deeply appreciated these gifts from Honzan since many of them lost their religious items in the wildfire.

The following is the message from Rev. Ai Hironaka:

BY REV. AI HIRONAKA
LAHAINA AND KAHULUI HONGWANJI MISSION

Governor Kumona and Reverend Fujisawa of international center visited us and we received a lot of support supplies from Kyoto Japan. One of them was a small portable *Butsudan* (Buddhist altar), which was easy to carry.

On Jan. 17, the day of Governor Kumona's visit, we distributed it mainly to the people who had lost their homes, relocated home from the fire.

A few weeks later, I received a call from a female member who requested to speak with me in person. We scheduled an appointment and met at the office of Kahului Hongwanji.

This woman had lost her home in the fire in Lahaina on Aug. 8, 2023. I had visited her home many times before the fire.

She preferred to hold memorial services at home and set up the Buddhist altar on the patio. After the memorial service, we would all have a meal together.

Her house was particularly close to the source of the fire, and I was very worried about her safety. I had been to her house many times, and we had shared a beer together late into the night many times.

I recalled the beautiful family photos, ancestors' photos,

Courtesy of Rev. Rie Fujisawa

Lahaina and Kahului Hongwanji's Rev. Ai Hironaka, center, and Governor Shoshin Kumona from Honzan, right, brought *Obutsudan, Onenju* and *Shikisho* for members.

Japanese dolls and neatly arranged *Butsudan* inside her home. Although she didn't attend Sunday services, she al-

SEE PAGE 4

Nurtured by the Nembutsu

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

BISHOP'S CORNER

Growing up on the small island of Etajima in Hiroshima, Japan, the ocean has always been a part of my life. As a high school student, I rode on a ferry every morning and afternoon to commute from home to my high school in Hiroshima City.

From the ferry window, I could admire the beautiful scenery of the islands and the ocean of the Seto Inland Sea. The reflection of the sunlight and the glittering of the water always calmed my mind.

Pearls are precious dewdrops from the ocean that continue to fascinate people. They shine so beautifully. Have you ever wondered how these pearls are made?

Natural pearls grow in the wild without human intervention, and cultured pearls are grown in pearl farms. Either way, it takes some time for seashells to produce beautiful pearls.

Pearls are formed when a microscopic irritant, such as a particle of food, a piece of shell, bacteria, or even a sand granule, makes its way into seashells such as mussels or oysters and settles inside the shells.

Then, a seashell begins to secrete a smooth crystalline substance known as nacre, a composite material known as the "mother of pearl." With this nacre, a seashell covers its irritant. The nacre is continuously produced, which keeps forming layers over the irritant. These layers of nacre build up and create a smooth gem.

This process of an irritant becoming a pearl is similar to the way we encounter and are nurtured by the teachings of the Nembutsu. An irritant is us human beings, and the seashell is Amida Buddha.

A microscopic irritant that flows in the ocean accidentally enters inside a seashell.

In the same way, we encountered the teaching of Jodo Shinshu through countless causes and conditions. Some of us encountered it through our parents or grandparents. Some of us originally had no relation with Hongwanji but somehow encountered the teaching.

You may become interested in Jodo Shinshu by reading a book, meeting with a minister, or being influenced by your friends. Regardless, those wonderful and unique causes and conditions led us to encounter the teaching.

And, when a seashell detects an irritant inside, it does not spit out or reject an irritant but gently covers it, embraces it.

In the same way, Shinran Shonin taught us that Amida Buddha makes no distinction, but gently embraces us all. He taught us that Amida's boundless Wisdom and Compassion never discriminates against anyone.

Just as the great sky encompasses all things large or small, and the great earth carries all things heavy, light, clean and dirty indiscriminately, the great compassion of Amida Buddha embraces all beings.

This means that Amida Buddha recognizes each life as precious and irreplaceable.

Once a seashell embraces irritants inside, it starts producing nacre. And it begins to transform the irritant into a beautiful pearl. The irritant changes its form into a shining pearl through the power of the nacre. Covered by layers of nacre, an irritant is transformed into a beautiful pearl.

It is not an irritant's effort that turned itself into a pearl, but the power of a seashell turned it into a beautiful pearl. In the same way, what nurtures our hearts and minds is not our self-power or effort but the power of Amida Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion.

Buddhism is the path of "becoming."

An ancient Buddhist master once expressed that Buddhism turns bits of rubble into gold. Bits of rubble are compared to human existence filled with blind passions.

Shinran Shonin said that our blind passions never cease until the very moment of our death. Our blind passions of greed, anger and ignorance are not only the causes of our sufferings but also bring unhappiness, conflicts and sorrow to the people around us.

If our minds are consumed with thoughts and feelings of anger, rejection and hatred, it could lead us to take actions that will criticize, hurt, or injure others.

These blind passions, like irritants, always exist in our hearts and minds. Yes, we are all limited and imperfect human beings. And our senses of greed, anger and ignorance could have the potential to hurt others.

That is why we need a teaching that guides us in the right direction, in which we can affect causes and conditions in ways that will provide not fear and violence but peace and comfort. More than ever, we need to cultivate wisdom and compassion to transform our self-centeredness into empathy, greed into compassion, anger into love, and ignorance into gentle-heartedness.

Buddha's teaching provides comfort and guides us to the right thoughts, words and actions.

Shinran Shonin taught us that these blind passions or karmic evils are, just as they are, embraced by the Buddha's Compassion, just like a layer of nacre covers an irritant.

Seeing the sad human nature, Amida Buddha established the Vow to embrace us all.

The Name of the Buddha, *Namo Amida Butsu*, contains Amida Buddha's boundless Wisdom and Compassion that always works for all of us, committing his existence to our true happiness and trying to bring us into the full awakening.

Embraced by the Compassion of Amida Buddha, our minds of greed, anger and ignorance will be gradually nurtured and transformed into minds of generosity, love and wisdom.

Shinran Shonin taught us that we are enabled (nurtured) to become shining pearls amid our greed, anger and ignorance.

Gomonshu Kojun Ohtani said, "The sense of security of being embraced in the Buddha's compassion becomes the support in our daily life and empowers us to become actively engaged in society."

As Gomonshu mentioned, let us continue listening to the voice of the Nembutsu.

May our minds of blind passions be transformed into shining pearls and actively engage in society that can provide peace, comfort, and well-being to the people we care for.

Namo Amida Butsu.

Finding Ourselves in Sangha

BY REV. BLAYNE HIGA
KONA HONGWANJI MISSION

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

At some point in our lives, we all develop a spiritual yearning that needs to be explored. We begin to ask the big questions of meaning and purpose to life. Oftentimes, these questions arise from the everyday transitions that upend our routine and challenge our assumptions.

It is these moments which lead us on a journey of spiritual self-discovery.

In 1997, as a young 20-something college graduate, I moved home from the mainland and shared a two-bedroom apartment in Honolulu with a couple of friends. We were living the plot of a '90s movie struggling to make our way in the world yet enjoying the ride.

Besides applying for jobs I was overqualified for because I had a college degree and unqualified for because I didn't have any work experience, I began exploring my spiritual life in earnest.

However, my spiritual quest began a few years earlier as a first-year student when I was asked, "So what does it mean to be Buddhist?"

Struggling to stammer out an intelligent response made me realize I was spiritually unprepared to answer that question for myself. I was determined to learn so I would be better prepared to answer that question in the future.

I read everything I could find and slowly began to connect the Dharma with the values that I was raised.

Many of the books were about Shin Buddhism and I found comfort in the promise of Amida Buddha's universal embrace but had so many questions.

What is boundless compassion? How could I experience the working of the Vow? What does it mean to be a "fellow traveler?"

As we know, understanding something with your head is different from knowing it with your heart. One has to live the Dharma to truly know.

What I lacked was a community of practice, a Sangha. I would have to wait several years to find such a community.

Through the working of karmic causes and conditions, my apartment was only a few blocks from Mō'ili'ili Hongwanji.

One Sunday, I decided to attend a service and was immediately greeted by the members including the late Rose Nakamura.

The warm and sincere welcome I received was followed by an invitation to volunteer for Project Dana, helping a woman living in senior housing with her weekly groceries.

As I learned more about the Project and the spirit of Dana or selfless giving, I was impressed by this remarkable example of faith in action.

Here was a community of people who struggled together and encouraged each other to practice the Way. They were living what Shakyamuni Buddha taught about how good friendship is the entirety of the spiritual life.

They were truly living the Dharma!

In describing the importance of good spiritual friendships, Buddhist scholar Bhikkhu Bodhi shares in "The Buddha's Teachings on Social and Communal Harmony."

"Good friendship is essential not only because it benefits us in times of trouble, satisfies our social instincts, and enlarges our sphere of concern from the self to others.

"It is critical because good friendship plants in us *the sense of discretion*, the ability to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong, and to choose the honorable over the expedient."

We often think of the Three Treasures as separate. However, they are really one because the "Buddha is manifested in his Dharma and is realized by the Sangha," as described in the BDK "The Teaching of Buddha." The Way is only complete when there is a unity of Buddha, Dharma, AND Sangha.

Think about the good spiritual friendships you have within your Sangha.

How do you encounter the living teachings in the lives of these fellow travelers? It is within Sangha where I found a community that saw me, that affirmed me, and which nurtured me.

Because our community is grounded in Dharma, we live and act, inspired by wisdom and compassion.

This is why Hawaii Kyodan has supported women's reproductive rights, encouraged the enactment of sensible gun control policies, lamented the war in Ukraine, and how we strive to cultivate inclusive and affirming temples for LGBTQIA+ individuals and all who seek refuge.

The Dharma offers wisdom for living in our troubled world.

Sangha is a refuge where we can encounter Amida's compassionate embrace and grow in the life-giving teachings together.

I am a minister today because of how Sangha embodied the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha. Living and learning within a community of fellow travelers continues to nurture and transform my life.

In as much as I have chosen a community to belong to, this community also continues to choose me. While I entrust in Amida, I have learned that Amida has always been entrusting in me.

Almost 30 years later, I still don't know if I can answer the question of what it means to be Buddhist other than to say that in looking for the Dharma, I found Sangha.

Maybe that's all we truly need to know.

Namo Amida Butsu.

For the Record

Incorrect Address — The correct address for Lahaina Hongwanji is 551 Wainee St. A caption in the March 1 issue incorrectly read "511 Wainee St."

Nembutsu Moments — Stories for the Commission on Buddhist Education and Buddhist Study Center Committee's "Sharing Your Nembutsu Moments" project may be submitted to https://forms.gle/6cVKBwqszqYg5XrHA

An incorrect link for submissions was listed in the March 1 issue.

Ka Leo Kāhea

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

Honpa Hongwanji
Mission of Hawaii
1727 Pali Hwy.
Honolulu, HI 96813
Tel: (808) 522-9200
www.hongwanjihawaii.com
Email: hqs@honpahi.org

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

‘Living Gratitude Program’ Builds for Future Generations

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Aloha kakou! I hope that you are well, spiritually and physically. This September 7 and 8, we will gather to celebrate our Triple Celebration — the 850th Anniversary of Shinran’s Birth, the 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching and the 135th Anniversary of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai‘i at the Ala Moana Hotel.

Although the early registration period has passed, we are still accepting applications. If you haven‘t already signed up, I hope that you will join us.

This year I hope that you will consider making a donation to our Living Gratitude Program which is a fundraising effort. Please bear with me and follow my thoughts to the end of this article.

If you are new to this newsletter or haven’t heard of this program, let me briefly review its history and its purpose.

We, the statewide HHMH have previously held successful fund-raising campaigns. The most visible one currently is the Capital Fund, which was started in 1962. One of the goals of the Capital Fund was to eliminate district assessments entirely.

The Capital Fund is invested in various mutual funds and is still growing. Every year we “harvest” a percentage of the Capital fund in order to fund our operations. This reduces but does not eliminate our assessments.

Another successful fund-raising effort was held at the time that the Buddhist Study Center was constructed in 1972. The Buddhist Study Center building was paid for and the money which was left over was wisely invested.

Every year a small percentage is “harvested” from the Buddhist Study Center Fund, which also helps to fund current operations.

This might suggest to you that we don’t need additional funds.

However, that is not the case. Since we can only take a small percentage of the Capital Fund and the Buddhist Study Center Fund in order to responsibly manage the fund and allow it to grow for future generations, we still need additional money to pay for current operations.

The important point to remember here is that the generation of members from the 1960s and 1970s who contributed to this fund are still supporting our Jodo Shinshu movement in Hawaii today!

Arigato gozaimasu to our previous generations for building our temples and creating these funds.

Recognizing that the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii needs to achieve financial stability in order to survive and thrive into the future, the 110th Legislative Assembly of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii passed a resolution in 2022 to establish an annual endowment campaign.

In May of 2022, Rev. Eric Matsumoto (Bishop at that time) and I convened a focus group to help to establish the groundwork for an annual endowment or fundraising campaign. The focus group named the program “The Living Gratitude Program” and established the goals of the Living Gratitude Program which are to:

• Educate members, youth and the public about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism;
• Innovate through the use of technology and targeted outreach, and
• Sustain Hawaii Kyodan and temple operations into the future.

The goals of the current campaign are not too different from the goals of the Capital Campaign in 1962.

For the Living Gratitude Program, we envision that a portion of the money will be used to fund new initiatives or enhance current programs. And a portion of the money will be placed into the Capital Fund where it will grow and a small percentage will be withdrawn every year to help our future generations.

Think of the funds raised by the Living Gratitude Program as a type of “structure” that will help to encourage and inspire our future generations. The Issei and Nisei built temples, the abodes of Wisdom and Compassion that we still enjoy today.

Think of the Living Gratitude Program as a different type of “building” that will have lasting benefit to our future generations.

What we Buddhists have to share is valuable for future generations — for individuals and for society. We live each day in joy and gratitude for the Buddha‘s Wisdom and Compassion.

Out of gratitude, we do what we can to share the Buddha’s Teaching in hope that all living beings find peace and happiness.

We must do our best to ensure that Jodo Shinshu teachings remain a part of American life. The Living Gratitude Program is one way that you can help Jodo Shinshu Buddhism survive and thrive in the future. Thank you.

In Gassho

A MESSAGE TO YOUTH IN DESPAIR

It’s OK to Share Your Feelings: You Are Not Alone

BY REV. DR. SEI NORO
RYUKOKU UNIVERSITY PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

When my students come to me for advice on various subjects such as school, jobs and overall human relations, they often ask, “What should I do?”

They talk and cry and some proclaim, “It’s just easier to die.”

I tell them, “Actually, I (feel) the same.”

My students are surprised when their teacher has the same feelings, but yes, this is true.

When I was younger, I had a hard time communicating and spent my middle school years alone. It was difficult to join in on class conversations. I often pretended to be busy in the hallways.

While being sad on the inside, I did not want others to know I was feeling this way.

One day in middle school while cleaning the toilet, someone suddenly poured a bucket of water on my head.

Everyone laughed. I shouted and joined in the laughter: It was not a big deal.

I hid my true feelings of hurt. While I expressed that it was all in good fun and games, I was really hurt on the inside.

Why couldn’t I make friends? Why did I get so nervous talking to people? Why do I care how others see me?

Even as an adult, I still feel this way. I spend my days tirelessly showing others that I am fine.

I see two roads: One is an empty one going forward and the other is a road that everyone is fumbling in.

For students who come to me for counseling, while there are various topics to discuss, I just nod my head and sympathize with them.

Finding a Companion

Why did I come to live this far? For me, finding company is important. But not just any friend.

I found safety in reading books, something I like to do.

In books, I realized that those who had similar feelings of struggle in life also existed in the same place; those who suffered in the past and those who are currently suffering in the world.

In the *Tannishō*, the text compiled by Shinran Shonin’s disciple Yuien, there is talk about disciples who don’t jump for joy when thinking about Amida Buddha saving them.

Shinran replied to them, saying, “Me too.”

This surprised me when I came across this passage.

It resonated when I read this, realizing that “He and I have the same feeling.”

Isn’t it a beautiful thing when you share the same feelings with another person?

You Don’t Need to Pretend

To those who think that it’s easier to just die, the first thing I want to say (is) . . . to choose to “want to die” is not strange.

It is a sincere feeling. It is sincerely facing the life you’ve lived.

I am sure there are those who are telling you, “Don’t make that sad face” or “Cheer up” or “Don’t say things like you ‘want to die.’ ”

Although you don’t need to pretend to be OK.

In Buddhism, there is a term, *Issai Kaiku* (一切皆苦), the teaching that we are all suffering in this world.

Those who say, “I really want to do this,” and “I want to be this” but really don’t, Buddha says that we are all incapable beings.

This tells us that it is only true that we are troubled.

When those hard feelings come up, what should we do?

I recommend you let out those feelings.

To say you are troubled to those who you can really trust.

For example, to say, “I’m in a rut” or “I haven’t been well recently.”

Lately there has been an increase in the number of groups that offer counseling support.

If you ever wonder, “Is this topic OK to talk about?,” there is always someone who is also facing these problems with you.

What if you are hesitant to talk to someone?

“Go to a temple when there is no one around, sit and talk to Amida Buddha.”

Go to a temple when there is no one around, sit and talk to Amida Buddha.

Find someone you can rely on and feel safe when you feel troubled.

I always thought that, “I want to live a life cloud-free and filled with blue skies,” but sadly, this is not possible.

I still don’t like myself when things easily get me down.

Yet, there are times after the winds blow, after those heavy clouds are gone and the light shines through, when the warmth of the sun slowly helps us, as those feelings of a hard to live life helps us continue to move forward one step at a time.

I would be happy if you came to realize that there is a way to live half-heartedly that is, surprisingly, not too bad.

Ministerial Training Covers Crisis Intervention

On March 7 and 8, the annual Ryukoku University-BSC Ministers Spring Seminar was held at the Buddhist Study Center.

This year’s session featured Dr. Darcy Ing, a licensed clinical psychologist who works at the Waimanalo Health Center and Samaritan Counseling Center of Hawaii, and Ryukoku University Associate Professor Sei Noro.

In addition to completing the Doctorate Program at Ryukoku University in the School of Literature majoring in Buddhist Studies, Rev. Professor Noro established the Kyoto Suicide Counseling Center, a certified nonprofit organization.

As the seminar’s featured guest speaker, Rev. Dr. Noro focused primarily on suicide with not only statistics and information about suicide, but also practical advice on how to engage with individuals who might be contemplating it.

He provided valuable insight and expertise on our ongoing efforts to improve our ministry in Hawaii.

This article, written by Rev. Professor Noro, appeared in the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Newsletter and was translated by Rev. Blayne Nakasone Sakata who was part of the subcommittee which planned the seminar under the Ministerial Training Committee chaired by Rev. Blayne Higa.

It is reprinted with permission from Rev. Dr. Noro.

— By Rev. Eric Matsumoto
Aiea Hongwanji Mission

HAWAI‘I CARES 988

Did you know the national suicide and crisis lifeline is free, and available wherever you are by calling or texting 988?

For those of us in Hawai‘i, when you call or text 988 you will be connected to the Hawai‘i CARES 988 crisis lifeline to get support for suicide, mental health, substance use, or abuse crisis.

If you or someone you care about is experiencing a crisis of any kind, call or text 988.

Hawai‘i CARES 988 is ready to connect callers with help 24/7. Go to www.hicares.hawaii.gov for more information and resources.

Want Out of Snail Mail?

Ka Leo Kāhea readers may choose to receive electronic copies and stop mail delivery effective June 1. To stop mail delivery and for all additions, change of addresses or deletions, simply email your request and the name of your temple affiliation to newsletter@honpahi.org

Please allow up to 30 days to process requests.

AN UPDATE ON MAUI WILDFIRE RELIEF AND RECOVERY

FEMA, State Officials Inspect Lahaina Hongwanji Complex

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

Lahaina Hongwanji members who met with FEMA and HI-EMA were, from left, Vice President Herbie Kent Nishijima, LHM member Thomas Fujita, Treasurer Dawn Fujiwara, President Aileen Cockett, Rev. Ai Hironaka in back, advisor Neal Fujiwara and Gary Murai from Wailuku Hongwanji, a member of the Recovery and Rebuilding Committee.

Courtesy of Rev. Ai Hironaka
Honpa Hongwanji Business Manager Derrick Inouye, left, and Lahaina Hongwanji Mission's Vice President Herbie Kent Nishijima, center, met with FEMA and HI-EMA officials, surveying what was the minister's residence.

Courtesy of Aileen Cockett
Before the fires, the view from Lahaina Hongwanji's yagura prior to obon shows the parking lot, two-story school building fronted by trees and at right, the temple's office.

Eight months have passed since the Maui Wildfire devastated many houses and buildings and displaced thousands of people.

We would like to express our appreciation to the ministers, members and many people from within and outside the Hongwanji Community for your heartwarming words and compassionate actions for those affected by the Maui Wildfire.

We would like to provide some updated reports of our emergency responses and recovery actions as Hawaii Kyodan.

As of March 29, 2024, HHMH has received $872,292.86 in cash/check donations.

Through the Committee on Social Concerns, we have processed *omimai* for each member of Lahaina Hongwanji and other individuals of our Hawaii Kyodan Ohana who have been impacted by the wildfires.

We have also donated to various non-profit organizations to support their emergency relief efforts.

As the needs of the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, its members and the West Maui community arise, we will continue to provide support to facilitate the healing process.

We are also assessing the significant funding requirements to reestablish the Temple as an integral part of the Lahaina community.

Many temples and individuals in Japan have extended their support directly to HHMH or through Honzan's fundraising campaign. The Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha, our headquarters in Kyoto, and its affiliated organizations, have also contributed over $240,000.

I attended the Shukai (Legislative Assembly) at Honzan on Feb. 29, 2024, to make a presentation on the Maui Wildfires and officially express our appreciation for their ongoing support.

FEMA's site visit to Lahaina Hongwanji was held on March 11 and 12, 2024.

The purpose of the visit was to enable the Federal Emergency Management Agency to develop an estimate of reconstruction costs for lost structures.

During the inspection, our team also met with FEMA Hazard Mitigation, Historical Preservation and HI-EMA, the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency.

Rev. Ai Hironaka, Derrick Inouye, Gary Murai and several Lahaina Hongwanji Members represented the HHMH.

Maui County has approved the Right-of-Entry request but the date for the Army Corps of Engineers to handle debris cleanup and removal process has not yet been set.

As the scope of the Maui Wildfire Emergency Response Ad Hoc Committee has shifted from emergency response to recovery and rebuilding, the Committee was disbanded on April 1, 2024, and the Lahaina Hongwanji Recovery and Rebuilding Committee was organized, chaired by Michael Munekiyo.

The new Committee will focus on recovery-related coordination requirements with FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers and State and County agencies.

The Committee will also support the Lahaina Hongwanji sangha in the various planning processes associated with the Temple reestablishment goal.

As fellow travelers of the Nembutsu, may we continue to stand in solidarity with those experiencing suffering and sorrow caused by this unprecedented disaster.

In Gassho,
Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani
Derrick Inouye, Business Manager
Michael Munekiyo, Chair of Lahaina Hongwanji Recovery and Rebuilding Committee

'We Had a Sense of Belonging, Comfort, Security, Stability'

BY AILEEN COCKETT
PRESIDENT, LAHAINA HONGWANJI MISSION

Editor's Note: During the Presentation Ceremony held at the Kahului Hongwanji Mission on Jan.17, 2024, Mrs. Aileen Cockett, President of Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, delivered the following message of appreciation to Governor Shoshin Kumona, who represented the Honzan at a meeting with the Lahaina Hongwanji Sangha.

I want to thank Governor Kumona and representatives for taking the time from your busy schedules to visit Maui.

Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, along with the community of Lahaina, was devastated by the Wildfire on Aug. 8, 2023.

Many here were at temple that morning in preparation for our Obon that weekend.

We lost our temple, minister's residence, social hall/kitchen, patio area, office/garage and two-story school building. Only our *Nokotsudo* remains.

Of our 80 or so members, more than half were displaced by the fire, almost one-third lost their homes and we lost one member in the fire, Matsu Osato.

Many members were not able to visit their homes for four months after the fire.

Members are scattered all over Maui, on other islands in Hawaii and also on the mainland.

We have received overwhelming support, kind words and encouragement from our Hongwanji community and other friends and families from various communities here and abroad, everyone asking, what do you need and how we can help?

Many members are still trying to find more permanent housing, working to ensure clean up for their properties, how to rebuild their homes as well as their *lives*.

It was not just losing a house or being displaced.

We lost our *homes:* A place where we had a sense of belonging, comfort, security, stability and a place of refuge.

And for those gathered here today, that is what Lahaina Hongwanji was for them.

It's like going on a trip where you enjoy yourself and have a nice time, but in the end, you look forward to returning home.

I think we *all* want to go back *home*. It may take a while, but I know one day, we will be able to go back *home*.

Maui Update

Continued from Page 1

ways wore the garments when helping with bazaars or bon dances.

She came to the office with her husband. I could see the fatigue on her face. After the fire, they had moved several times, and they were now settled in a condominium.

We shared our relief at each other's safety, and in a calm tone, she said, "Sensei, after the fire, many difficult things happened. There were also family tragedies.

"On the anniversaries of my relatives' deaths, I would offer flowers at the altar and light incense, but I never thought of myself as a religious person. I don't even go Sunday Service, as you know.

"However, after the fire, I was living without the altar and started to feel empty. I couldn't do anything on the anniversaries because there was no altar. I couldn't calm my desire to do something. It was very painful.

"Losing the house in the fire made me realize that I had a religious heart and had been living a religious life without knowing it. I didn't think I was religious. I didn't know until I lost. Now, I think I need *Butsudan* back."

We shared a very sad time together. However, just realizing that among all she lost, the *Butsudan* was included, made me somewhat happy. And although it was a sad realization, I felt that her newfound awareness of having led a religious life was very precious.

I told her, "Among the support supplies from the Honzan Kyoto Japan, there is a portable *Butsudan*. It's not large, so it should fit in your small condominium. Please take home also the *Nenjyu*, incense and sutra booklet as well."

She responded with a soft smile, "Is there such a thing? I would love to have it."

I later called to check on how she was doing.

She said, "After the fire, I didn't know what I was going to do and felt depressed, unable to do anything. But since the *Butsudan* arrived, my life has changed.

"Although the house is different, the daily ritual of offering incense and flowers at the altar has returned. My mental state is stable now. I no longer feel guilty about those who passed away. I am sorry I don't go to Sunday Service, but I do properly at home!"

People in Lahaina are still on a long road to recovery. However, the presence of the *Butsudan*, Buddhist altar stabilizing mental states and supporting the difficult path of reconstruction is deeply appreciated.

To those reading this newspaper at home, please take a moment to focus on your *Butsudan* at home. It may seem like a common sight, but when you lose the ordinary scenes, you realize the power that the altar holds.

Through this woman's experience, I realized how crucial these religious daily practices can be in maintaining mental stability during crises. I was reminded of the importance of offering incense, flowers and chanting at the altar even in peaceful times.

This way, no matter what emergency arises, having an altar can bring stability to your mental state. I encourage everyone reading this at home to visit your *Butsudan* and recite Namo Amida Butsu which is the voice of Amida Buddha's compassionate caring heart solely towards to you.

Namo Amida Butsu

Courtesy of Rev. Rie Fujisawa
Governor Shoshin Kumona, left, presented Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani with a declaration from Honzan for a wildfire relief financial donation at Kahului Hongwanji Mission.

Hawaii Island's Gatha Fest Celebrates Its 50th Year

Sangha members from across all of Hawaii Island's 12 temples gathered to commemorate the 50th annual Gatha Fest at Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin in February, 2024.

What began as a Dharma School competition for Hawaii Island schools in 1974 has evolved into a program showcasing the musicianship and vocal talents of all ages, including ministers.

Some 200 people attended the program which opened with a service conducted by the five ministers: Rimban Kazunori Takahashi and Rev. Joshin Kamuro from Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin; Rev. Blayne Higa from Kona Hongwanji; Rev. Masanari Yamagishi from the Kamuela, Honoka'a, Kohala and Pauauilo Hongwanji Missions, and Rev. Satoishi Ka'imipono Tomioka from the Puna, Pahala and Naalehu Hongwanji Missions.

Affectionately called "the Big Five," after those who wielded considerable political power when Hawaii was still a territory and sugar cane was king, the ministers sang "Living Gratefully" and "Shinran Shonin."

Honoka'a Hongwanji Mission's band opened the program, followed by performances by Honomu Hongwanji Mission's violinist Tracy Tsuha, the Puna/Pahala and Naalehu Hongwanji Missions playing "A Wonderful Life" and the four Hamakua coast temples delighting the crowd with its rewritten lyrics to the "Up With People" theme.

Violinist Megan Pascal performed and coincidentally, two renditions of John Cruz's pop song "Island Style," were offered by both the Kona Hongwanji and the Hilo Betsuin with lyrics rewritten in "Buddhist Style."

Gatha Fest was started by Sadao Aoki who first imagined a Dharma School competition for Hawaii Island schools.

The first was held in Kona.

Prizes were donated by the Hawaii Island United Hongwanji BWA and skits to go along with musical arrangements of various gathas were performed as programs rotated around different venues.

In 2010, the competitive aspect was dropped and the Lay Association leaders of Hawaii Island voted to open the event to all sangha members.

Temples have taken turns hosting the event except in 2021 an 2022 during the Covid-19 shutdown.

Courtesy of BJ Soriano

Hawaii Island's five ministers, above, took to the stage in Hilo at the 50th Gatha Fest to sing "Living Gratefully" and "Shinran Shonin." From left, Rev. Joshin Kamuro, Rev. Blayne Higa, Rimban Kazunori Takahashi, Rev. Masanari Yamagishi and Rev. Satoshi Ka'imipono Tomioka.

Beginning Bon Dance and the 'Men of the Koi Dynasty'

BY ALTON MIYAMOTO
WEST KAUAI HONGWANJI MISSION

In the late 1990s, when the number of bon dancers attending festivals at Kauai temples steadily declined, the late Mrs. Aiko Nakaya realized that something different had to be done.

With her patient style of teaching, Mrs. Nakaya began a legacy that years later has grown from 11 beginners to 40 accomplished bon dancers who will be happily dancing at West Kauai Hongwanji's Obon Festival in Hanapepe on July 12-13.

From Day One, Mrs. Nakaya only allowed true beginners to take part and she kept her classes small, knowing that the smaller the class size, the better she could tend to each individual's needs.

Between 10 to 12 students worked best.

Then as the beginners gained more confidence, the weekly classes grew and dancers improved.

In 2008, when she was asked if she would be willing to teach bon dance to a group of men, she came up with special dances.

A diverse group of 11 men from various ethnic and religious backgrounds gathered to practice each week starting in October of 2008. They learned 17 dances. It took eight months before they felt they were ready.

They chose the name, "The Men of the Koi Dynasty," they dressed in black and white happi coats emblazoned with large red and white koi on their backs and they made their debut in June, 2009 at Koloa Jodo Mission.

The following year, encouraged by Mrs. Nakaya, the Men of the Koi Dynasty participated in the intermission portion of the evening, performing the special dances she taught them.

This year, on their 15th anniversary, while some original members may no longer dance, the group has slowly grown and now total 20 men and some women.

The common thread of Mrs. Nakaya's legacy is the original beginner class and the Men of the Koi Dynasty who, while they may come from different racial and religious backgrounds, they all understand that Obon is a time to show gratitude for our ancestors and dance with joy.

Each loves to dance and looks forward to Obon season.

Editor's Note: A native of Sapporo, Japan, Mrs. Nakaya retired as a tour guide for Kauai Island Tours. She passed away on June 29, 2017 in Waimea at the age of 88. She was survived by three sons, seven grandchildren, three sisters in Japan and numerous nieces and nephews.

Mrs. Aiko Nakaya, seated at center, was honored at West Kauai Hongwanji Mission Temple in Hanapepe by the Men of Koi Dynasty and members of the Kauai Shinbuyo Kai on June 6, 2017.

Obon on West Kauai: Practice, Practice, Practice

All throughout West Kauai, bon dancers' dedication to practice is only equalled by their enthusiasm.

From early March to late July, the three temples welcome as many as 50 joyful dancers every week as they to learn as many as 19 dances from "Tanko Bushi" to the "Pokémon Ondo" to the "Heisei Ondo."

At Kapaa Hongwanji Mission, practices every Monday at 6 p.m. are held on the expansive front lawn, lead by Pearl Shimizu and drummer Jonathan Cabot.

In case of rain, practice is cancelled; the social hall is leased by an outside organization.

Since Kapaa's Obon will be held July 26-27, the final practice will be held on Monday, July 22, when the group celebrates their having spent 30+ hours together.

They present Ms. Shimizu gifts of appreciation.

In addition to teaching dance, she holds a class on how to properly dress in kimono, assisting the newbies particularly with obi. Older members donate their kimono which are sold at low cost to the bon dancers; everyone receives free towels.

The president of the Kauai Japanese Cultural Society, Ms. Shimizu has been a student of Japanese dance for more than 43 years under Nihon Minyo Buyo Renmei and various other teachers.

For 46 years, she has been a fixture at bon dances, she has taught between 16 and 18 dances every year and currently teaches at the East Minyo Dance Club.

This year's 19 bon odori songs were chosen by the Kauai Buddhist Council, then recorded and distributed to dancers on CDs by Alton Miyamoto.

Both West Kauai and Lihue Hongwanji Missions also have large turnouts and they both have the privilege of being joined by the Kauai Ondo Drummers, ensuring that music, dancers and percussion are all in sync.

West Kauai holds its practices every Thursday at 6 p.m. in the Hanapepe Temple Social Hall, directed by Miyamoto and Fay Tateishi. Their Obon Festival is scheduled July 12-13.

Lihue Hongwanji Mission also holds practices in its Social Hall on Thursdays at 7 p.m., directed by Carol Valentine. Their Obon is set July 19-20.

Anyone new who is interested in attending a practice is always welcome.

Courtesy of Roberta Yanagawa

Pearl Shimizu, left, leads obon dancers at a Kapaa Hongwanji Mission practice on the expansive lawn.

How Communities Came Together to Send a Message

Hundreds of volunteers worked for more than a year to bring actor and activist George Takei to Honpa Hongwanji Hawai'i Betsuin for a service and to Pacific Buddhist Academy for a fundraiser. Jon Matsuoka recalls how it started and all came to fruition on Feb. 18, 2024:

BY JON K. MATSUOKA
HONPA HONGWANJI HAWAII BETSUIN

More than a year ago, I was having dinner with Nikos Leverenz from Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction, formerly known as the Life Foundation, to talk about how Honpa Hongwanji can reach out to the local community, especially to address LGBTQIA+ issues.

He suggested that we bring actor and social activist George Takei to Hawai'i.

I thought it was a long shot but I went back to the temple and asked Dennis Sekine if he knew how to contact George Takei.

A Hawai'i Betsuin board member and an actor who appeared in George Takei's "Allegiance" under his stage name Dann Seki, Dennis did a bit of digging and came up with the email of George's husband, Brad.

I wrote him and much to my surprise, Brad responded right away.

Honpa Hongwanji's support for LGBTQIA+ issues go back to Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani, who, for over 12 years at the helm of the Mission, was a strong advocate for the rights and inclusion of all people in Hawai'i.

Bishop Eric Matsumoto and Rev. Blayne Higa effectively advocated on behalf of marriage equality before the State Legislature in 2013.

Debbie Kubota, who chairs the Mission's Education Committee and worked diligently on "coming out" brochures as well as organizing panel discussions, is the latest line of social justice advocates as Honpa Hongwanji.

In their various role and capacities, these leaders were instrumental in applying cherished Jodo Shinshu values to opportunities of real social change.

Over the course of frequent correspondence and conversations with the Takeis over a year, I came to know them fairly well.

They were open to ideas and despite having busy schedules, they were incredibly generous with their time.

Photos Courtesy of Alan Kubota

Clockwise, from top left: Rev. Charlene Kihara greets Brad and George Takei; actor Dennis Sekine reconnects with George Takei; the Takeis meet flutist Hari Bayani; with the Hon. Sabrina Shizue McKenna; Brad Takei, Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani and Rev. Daido Baba; George Takei at the podium and in Gassho; accepting gifts of appreciation from Jon Matsuoka and in the Social Hall meeting fans including Lillian Inatsuka.

Photos Courtesy of Alan Kubota

Clockwise, from top left: Guests arrive at the Pacific Buddhist Academy to the rousing beat from Ryugen Taiko; Deanna Patacsil, right, of Pu'uwai Bakery; head of school Josh Hernandez Morse with George, left, and Brad Takei, right; dancers from Halau Hula o Lehua o Nana `ihale performed as they watched; members from Spill the Tea Cafe; Rev. Eric Matsumoto and Jr. YBA members with "Live Long and Prosper" signs; actress Amy Hill checks out Roots Cafe's local/organic spread; Bill Char, left, and Puakea Nogelmeier chat with the actor, and VIP guests fill the banquet tables.

As a lifelong Jodo Shinshu Buddhist, George agreed to give two talks: A special Sunday service talk on "What Buddhism Means to Me" and an evening talk at a fundraiser titled "Reflections on Day of Remembrance" which commemorates the incarceration of Japanese Americans.

It is important to note that the Takeis covered all their own expenses to come to Hawai'i and asked for no compensation.

They came purely to share their message as a way to counteract the tide of growing intolerance in sectors of society.

Planning for their visit was an exercise in community organizing and development.

Numerous Japanese American organizations, LGBTQIA+ groups, Hongwanji groups and financial sponsors made major contributions to the events.

The Takeis' visit involved a great deal of media promotion and coverage including radio, TV and print which brought a focus to Honpa Hongwanji and its social justice initiatives.

Some 250 attended the morning service, led by Rimban Yuika Hasebe, with an additional 90 people on Zoom.

The Honorable Sabrina Shizue McKenna, the first openly LGBTQIA+ State Supreme

Court Justice and Emme Tomimbang Burns shared emcee duties. Sadly, Emme passed away the next day. (See related story)

Musical and cultural presentations included *oli* from Puakea Nogelmeier and Lehua Matsuoka, shakuhachi and flute from Katsumi Takemoto and Hari Bayani, taiko from the Ryugen Taiko of Wahiawa, dancers from Halau Hula o Lehua o Nana'ihale and a slack key performance by Herb Lee and Hawai'i Loa.

And the evening fundraiser at Pacific Buddhist Academy drew some 150 attendees and also included music, hula, an array of food, all coordinated by the Kokua Council, the PBA and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Hawai'i.

Ultimately, the George Takei event was part of a larger initiative to promote and embrace a social justice agenda by reaching out to organizations serving the Japanese American, Native Hawaiian and LGBTQIA+ communities.

The Hongwanji groups that came together to design Buddhist-based services and programs to address the social and spiritual interests of marginalized groups at the very least sends a clear message that Honpa Hongwanji is a willing partner.

In Memoriam: Emme Tomimbang Burns

BY GAIL S. TAGASHIRA
HONPA HONGWANJI HAWAII BETSUIN

Emmeline Tomimbang Burns, 73, best known as Emme, died on Feb. 19, 2024, one day after serving as co-emcee for the two-part event featuring actor and activist George Takei at the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin and Pacific Buddhist Academy.

A proud graduate of Farrington High School and the University of Hawai'i, she was a trailblazer in the Filipino community and earned honors for her achievements in the broadcast field.

She founded her own production company, Emme Tomimbang Multi-Media Enterprises (EMME, Inc.) but despite many honors, she was proudest of her modest upbringing and education at public schools.

Raised by a single father, she grew up in the Kalihi-Palama area, attended elementary school in Kaka'ako before her father moved them to Hotel and River Streets where he ran a second-hand appliance store.

The neighborhood's "ladies of the night" looked after her, she told me, making sure she got home safely, she was well, she had an afternoon snack.

As we chat at the PBA fundraiser, she recalled how her Dad once apologized for not sending her to a fancy private school and she disagreed with him, saying she was happy to be in public schools where she felt most comfortable:

At Central Intermediate, she learned to how swim, she made friends and Palama shaped her teen years.

"Palama was where I learned to socialize. I went to my first dance there," she said. "Palama provided us a place of trust and continuity and offered important programs that helped to guide me later in life."

Photo Courtesy of Alan Kubota

"She was a force of nature," said Hawaii Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald about the late Emmeline Tomimbang Burns who passed away at the age of 73, a day after she served as co-emcee for a service at Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin.

In 2015, she was honored by Palama Settlement at its annual Malama Palama Gala Fundraiser for her support of vital programs for the community.

Emme received the UH Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni Award for her leadership and service to the community.

At the event, she was also presented with her associate in arts degree from Leeward Community College, an honor she was proud to receive because both schools "armed me for who I am and what I have done in my life, she said. "That was the real prize."

The widow of James S. Burns, former Chief Judge of the Intermediate Court of Appeals and son of former Governor of Hawai'i John A. Burns, Emme also became a part of the ICA 'ōhana, mentoring and befriending judges and attorneys.

"She was a force of nature," Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald said when he learned of her passing.

"Her love for the islands and people shone brightly in all her work and she made it her mission to support others including me, to achieve their goals.

"She will be greatly missed and we extend our deepest aloha and heartfelt sympathy to her family."

THE 112TH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Lively 2024 Budget Discussions Highlight Annual Meeting

Delegates to the 112th Legislative Assembly of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii passed seven resolutions and voted to approve the 2024 budget but with a proviso that the Hawaii Kyodan Board of Directors vote on a funding source to replace Lahaina Hongwanji's assessment at their board meeting in May.

Six resolutions were passed unanimously:

• An Emergency Resolution to close the Kapolei Buddhist Sangha;

• Establishment of a Development Associate Position to provide headquarters with additional support;

• Forgiving Lahaina Hongwanji Mission's Annual Assessment;

• Amending Bylaws Amendment Article XVII, Execution of Documents;

• Amending Bylaws Amendment Article XV, Committees, Section 2, and

• Condolence and Appreciation for Florence Tomoe Sakae of Makawao Hongwanji.

A lively discussion followed the decision to forgive Lahaina Hongwanji's annual assessments for the second half of 2023 through the calendar years 2024 to 2026. Opinions on the source of funding for the projected deficit—whether to spread out increases in assessments among other temples or whether to tap the Capital Fund to make up for the income spanned the two-day annual meeting on Feb. 10 and 11.

Among the points raised on the issue:

• Lahaina's assessment of $12,082 per annum represents 1/2 of 1% of the HHMH annual budget;

• Up until the day of the wildfire, Lahaina's 78 members were current with their assessments;

• Whether funding could be made up from an alternative source, and

• Concern that other temples would see an increase in assessment to make up for the shortfall.

The final motion, "To allow the HHMH Board of Directors to decide on the source of funding to make up for LHM's assessment for the next three years" passed with five opposing votes cast.

After further discussion, a motion was made to adopt the 2024 budget (HHMH Resolution 2024-01) that included a modification to incorporate the previous motion to allow the HHMH Board of Directors to decide on the source of funding of Lahaina's assessment for the next three years. The motion was carried unanimously.

Courtesy of Rev. Daido Baba

Delegates to the 112th Legislative Assembly met in February, 2024 at the Hawaii Betsuin Social Hall.

Preceding Friday's plenary session was the opening service which featured the Honpa Hongwanji Choir, chanting of the new *Shōshinge* (Hymn of True Entrusting) which will be sung at the HHMH Triple Celebration and honoring the Ingo recipients from 2023.

Ingo recipients of 2023 were Norman Mitsuyuki Sakata (Kona), Harry Masayoshi Akazawa (West Kauai), Jay Kunio Hamai (Moiliili), Steven Don Lee (Kahului), Mary Okada Fujitani (Hawaii Betsuin) and Alice Yamada (Kapaa).

After business meetings, five presentations were made:

• A new, statewide endowment called the "Living Gratitude Program" was reported by Dr. Warren Tamamoto, Irene Nakamoto, Carolyn Uchiyama and Terry Jean Arakaki.

• "Pursuing Your Vision: What Nonprofit Leaders Need to Know" featured a talk by Sanae Tokumura, assisted by Ivan Nakano of Hilo Betsuin discussing raising funds for Hilo Hongwanji's Preschool Building;

• Pacific Buddhist Academy's Head of School Josh Hernandez-Morse updated the assembly on accreditation, finances, peace activities, marketing and programs;

• Rev. Ai Hironaka shared photos and videos of the Lahaina fire and stories of what sangha members and the community have gone through and are still facing, and

• Junior YBA members presented an informative recount of 2023's activities.

Dr. Jeff Wilson of Waterloo, Ontario, author of "Living Nembutsu: Applying Shinran's Radically Engaged Buddhism in Life and Society" shared insights into what factors affect youth when it comes to getting involved in Buddhist activities, ie. "Will there be young people my own age attending?"

Dr. Wilson's presentation occurred on Thursday evening at a "Talk Story" session with Legislative Assembly attendees. The session is accessible on YouTube through the honpahi.link/youtube channel.

The 49th Annual Living Treasures

2024's Diverse Group Has a Passion for Duty and Excellence

The following is reprinted with permission from MidWeek:

BY REV. TOSHIYUKI UMITANI
BISHOP, HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAI'I

For nearly five decades, the Living Treasures of Hawai'i program has been recognizing outstanding individuals whose contributions have shaped the cultural landscape of our island home and continues to contribute to the preservation and enrichment of Hawai'i's unique heritage.

Established in 1976, the Living Treasures of Hawai'i program was conceived by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i and inspired by the Living National Treasures of Japan.

The late Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani started the program at the suggestion of Paul Yamanaka, a local insurance executive who wanted to honor those unique in the islands who demonstrate excellence and high standards of achievement in their particular field and continue to make a significant contribution to enriching our society.

Today, more than 200 individuals have been designated as Living Treasures of Hawai'i.

This diverse group of honorees spans carious sectors and organizations, encompassing different races and religions.

What they all share is a passion and sense of duty to perpetuate their craft, expertise and wisdom by sharing their knowledge with others.

Some of the names are widely recognized. Others have never been in the spotlight, but only shone in the hearts of those who know them.

Courtesy of Alan Kubota

Honorees at the 49th annual Living Treasures Recognition Program were congratulated by Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani, left, and right, Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii President Dr. Warren Tamamoto. Recipients were Julian Keikilani Ako, Douglas D.L. Chong, Dr. Davianna Pōmaikaʻi McGregor, Dr. Ricardo D. Trimillos and Sarah ʻIlialoha Ayat Quick Keahi.

The honorees in this 49th year — Davianna Pōmaika'i McGregor, Douglas D.L. Chong, Sarah 'Ilialoha Ayat Quick Keahi, Julian Keikilani Ako and Dr. Ricardo D. Trimillos — are the multi-faceted luminaries whose contributions have made a difference in the cultural fabric of Hawai'i and they continue to add to the vibrancy of our island heritage.

Each of our honorees, past and present, serve as vital educational tools, offering living history lessons for us all.

We are reminded that the Living Treasures of Hawai'i is not merely an award, but a legacy that continues to strengthen the bonds that make our state truly exceptional.

We are looking to celebrate others who demonstrate excellence in their fields and continue to serve the community.

If you know of individuals who meet the requirements and should be recognized as a Living Treasure of Hawai'i, nominate them by visiting hongwanjihawaii.com/living-treasures or by calling headquarters at 808 522-9200.

BWA's Federation Begins Planning, Work on Two Major Events

The Hawaii Federation of Buddhist Women's Association, an affiliate of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, held its Spring Representative Assembly in March at the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin.

Two main highlights of the bi-annual meeting were reports on the 2026 State General Membership Conference and the 18th World Buddhist Women's Convention in 2027.

The Hawaii Federation of the BWA comprised of the five state districts — Honolulu, Oahu, Maui, Kauai and Hawaii Island — holds a State General Membership Conference every four years, prior to the World Convention.

In 2026, the United of Oahu will host the 14th in-person State Conference March 28-29 at the Ala Moana Hotel, co-chaired by Carolyn Uchiyama and Claire Tamamoto.

Simultaneously, plans for the 2027 World Convention have been ongoing.

More than 2,500 are expected to attend the gathering from Japan, Canada, Brazil, the mainland United States through Buddhist Churches of America and hundreds from throughout Hawaii, all convening at the Hawaii Convention Center.

The steering committee organizing the event has met several times since the fall of 2023 and they agreed that the convention should be one that encapsulates Aloha, the spirit of Hawaii, President Linda Nagai told federation representatives.

"It's crucial that we shift our focus toward the upcoming 18th World BWA Convention," she said. "Now it's time to accelerate our efforts."

With two major events in three years, every member's ideas, expertise and helping hands are needed.

"We're keen on infusing elements of Hawaiian culture with Shinshu ideas into our themes," she said.

"There's a synergy between Hawaiian and Japanese cultures, especially in terms of religious beliefs. We should explore and integrate this into the Convention."

Ministerial advisor Rev. Blayne Higa has been tasked with incorporating the steering committee's ideas into Shinshu concepts in workshops and activities that celebrate both cultures, reflecting Hawaii's rich heritage.

Among other main actions taken at the spring assembly were:

• A donation at the $2,500 Gold Sponsorship level to support Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's Triple Celebration;

• A donation of $1,000 to Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Church's Arson Restoration Fund, and

• Applications for the Japan Federation's Student Exchange Program which was on hold during the Covid pandemic, has been updated, distributed to temples and posted on the BWA website, hawaiibwa.org. Next year, the Hawaii Federation plans to sponsor two Hawaii students.

— Gail S. Tagashira with reporting by Sharon Nohara

HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII'S TRIPLE CELEBRATION

Buddhist Education's Speaker Series Looks to the Future

Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara: *Shinjin* goes beyond mere faith in a deity within one's heart but actively makes our lives more meaningful and profound.

Rev. Henry Adams: "Realization" is often used interchangeably with the terms "awakening" or "enlightenment."

Rev. Gene Sekiya: Today, people are searching for a religion or belief system that suits them and many . . . are showing an interest in Buddhism.

The final three speakers in the online Buddhist Education Series will be wrapping up the last two segments on "*Kyogyoshinsho*" and focus on the future, acknowledging the rich history of Jodo Shinshu teachings.

Closing the 10-part series will be presentations by Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara on June 22 at 10 a.m., Rev. Henry Adams on July 20 at 10 a.m. and Rev. Gene Sekiya on Aug. 2 at 2 p.m.

Each speaker offered a synopsis of their backgrounds and explanations of their upcoming presentations:

Rev. Kuwahara on "*Kyogyoshinsho*: Entrusting Heart"

The oldest son of a ministerial family from Kure City, Hiroshima, Rev. Kuwahara has been the supervising minister at Berkeley Buddhist Temple since 2018.

He holds a master's degree in Jodo Shinshu Studies from the Institute of Buddhist Studies, a master's and a doctorate in Jodo Shinshu Studies from Ryukoku University and a bachelor's degree in English from Hiroshima University.

Shinjin and it connection with the Nembutsu, will be his primary focus. He explains:

In Buddhism, while people's attention is generally directed to engagement or performance of practices, the Venerable Shinran focused on *shinjin* or one's entrustment of Amida Buddha's compassionate aspiration and salvific power.

This is because it is the decisive cause that surely and promptly liberates us from the life of suffering in *samasara* and enables us to attain Buddhahood once we conclude this life.

Shinjin, however, is not something that is limited to a mere faith in a religious deity within one's heart or a matter of afterlife, but it actively makes our whole life more meaningful and profound.

How does *shinjin* change our life?

What is the relationship between *shinjin* and Nembutsu recitation?

How to receive *shinjin*?

In this session, I would like to work on those questions so that we can have a better understanding of *shinjin* in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.

Of course, questions from participants will be welcome.

Rev. Henry Toryo Adams' presentation on July 20, "*Kyogyoshinsho*: Realization" will cover what it means to be born in the Pure Land and how do we attain it?

A native of Buffalo, Minn., Rev. Adams first became interested in Buddhism in Chennai, India where he spent time as a high school exchange student.

He began his study of Buddhist scriptures at St. Olaf College, earned his master's degree in Buddhist Studies from the University of Michigan, then moved to Miyazaki where he worked for the Prefectural Government as a coordinator for the Japan Exchange Teaching (JET) program, doing a variety of tasks including translation for English-speaking residents and teachers in local schools.

He moved to Kyoto to pursue ministerial studies at the Chuo Bukkyo Gakuin Buddhist Seminary, then began serving as a minister for Buddhist Churches of America in 2010.

Since 2013, he has served as Resident Minister of San Mateo Buddhist Temple.

Prior to that, he served at the Oxnard Buddhist Temple, the Buddhist Church of Santa Barbara, the San Luis Obispo Buddhist Temple and the Guadalupe Buddhist Church.

He was also Supervising Minister for the Buddhist Church of San Francisco from September 2020 to May 2023.

He refers to his Zoom appearance on July 20 as a "Realization Lecture." He explains:

In Buddhism, "realization" refers to the realization of ultimate truth and final liberation from suffering. As such, "realization" is often used interchangeably with the terms "awakening" or "enlightenment."

In this session, we will explore the realization attained through birth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha, as described in the "Chapter on Realization" from Shinran Shonin's "True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land's Way," the *Kyogyoshinsho*.

We will begin with a discussion of the meaning of "realization" or "enlightenment" in the Jodo Shinshu tradition, and whether it is the same or different from the realization that Buddhists in other traditions aspire to.

We will also address the relationship between death and realization in Shinran Shonin's teachings and how the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist understanding of realization through Birth in the Pure Land can help us navigate the end-of-life journey, both for ourselves and when grieving the loss of a loved one.

We will further consider how our Dharma journey continues beyond the moment of realization through Birth in the Pure Land.

Shinran Shonin makes it clear that those who attain realization immediately return to the world of birth-and-death to guide others to realization.

From this perspective, the goal of realization is not simply to benefit oneself, but rather to be able to truly help others without the limitations of self-centered thinking.

In conclusion, we will reflect upon how the wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha guides us through successive Dharma gates on our path to awakening, from our first encounter with the teachings, through the process of deepening study and insight and ultimately emerging back into the world to guide and help others along their journey.

Despite its title, the final lecture in the series by Rev. Gene Sekiya will not only look to the future but also look back at Buddhism and Jodo Shinshu teachings and traditions: how they evolved from Japan after being transplanted to new areas for Japanese immigrants.

In "The World Is Waiting for Buddhism and Shinran Shonin," Rev. Sekiya will discuss when the adaptations took place, how they were altered, why some were accepted, how the Buddha Dharma was transmitted and how traditions that were becoming "lost" are now being reintroduced and changing.

A California native, Rev. Sekiya graduated from California State University in Fresno before he moved to Japan in 1989 to work on the JET program.

He was an advisor at Hongwanji International Department and completed his Main Course (Honka) at Chuo Bukkyo Gakuin in Kyoto.

He was Fresno Betsuin's resident minister and currently is the Zennoji Temple's resident minister.

Rev. Sekiya recognizes how rapid changes in society affect how quickly the interests and attitudes of people worldwide are shaped, including in the lives of Jodo Shinshu *monto* (members).

But, "On the other hand, the fundamental wants, needs and anxieties of human beings have not changed since the beginning of humanity," he said.

In today's world, people from differing backgrounds, for whatever reason, are searching for a religion or belief system that suits them, and many times, they desire one that is different than the one they were raised under.

Many are showing an interest in Buddhism and in Jodo Shinshu. All people share similar questions and doubts regarding basic questions concerning all phases of life and living. And with this in mind, various approaches that were initiated and used in the past were effective *for that time*.

Currently, many of them have been and continue to be revised while others have been discontinued.

He will introduce recent revisions, such as the creation of more publications in English and other languages, offering *tokudo* training and ordination in English and reintroducing programs to foster interest and involvement in Jodo Shinshu such as the YBICSE.

Lastly, Rev. Sekiya will introduce topics and start discussions that he has used in informal gatherings with *tokudo* ordination candidates and YBICSE participants to give them "food for thought" as they begin a new journey on Jodo Shinshu's path.

Choir

Continued from Page 1

The two selections were chosen for their focus on Shinran Shonin and their contrasting moods — very happy and very introspective.

They are "When I Look Up at the Sky," (*Ano Sora Mireba*) and "Moments Like This," (*Sonna Toki Watashi wa Kuchizusamu*).

In the first gatha, the music opens with a flourish and soars. The lyrics resonate:

When I look up at the sky, I see the purity of heart in Shinran Shonin's eachings, making me brim with indescribable happiness.

When I gaze at a flower, I see Shinran's warm smile in the breeze and I am filled with promise.

When I behold the mountain high, I am reminded of Shinran's unbounded legacy and am grateful that, free, we are able to build our tomorrows.

The second gatha offers a moment of quiet reflection:

In "Moments Like This," an enchanting and introspective melody evokes scenes of those special times when we are unexpectedly moved to mouth the words from the "Shoshinge" — in particular the well-known opening lines,

"Kimyo muryoju nyorai" (I take refuge in the Tathagata of Eternal Life) *"Namo fukashigi ko"* (I entrust myself totally to the Buddha of Inconceivable Light) and the deeply moving *"Sesshu shinko jo shogo"* (The Buddha's light shines upon us and protects us always.)

The song suggests that special moments are to be found, first in the freshness of morning when sunshine melts into the garden as a fragrant breeze brushes by; second at the stillness of dusk when the evening bell tolls in the distance, and third, in the heart of the night when, by a moonlit murmuring stream, one becomes aware of their deepest wish in life.

At such moments, the lyrics cry, we find ourselves moved to utter Shinran's words of pure gratitude.

Mari Murakami, right, music director of the Hawaii Betsuin Choir, in a rehearsal, will lead the Hawaii Triple Celebration Statewide Choir.

Courtesy of Alan Kubota

Singers intrigued by the gathas who wish to join the group can still sign up until July 31 as they register for Triple Celebration.

Sheet music and tapes of the songs are being sent out to allow vocalists to practice on their own.

In the early morning hours of Sept. 8, the singers will gather at Ala Moana Hotel for two rehearsals before the performance.

More information may be obtained and questions may be directed to either Music Committee Chair Francis Okano at faokano@gmail.com or Brandi Yamamoto at brandiay@hawaii.edu.

—Francis Okano

Gagaku

Continued from Page 1

school) and the "Ga Ryo Kai" nurtured his interest and his desire to keep studying and improving as a musician.

"I was very fortunate to have such great mentors," he said, "being surrounded by hard-working friends, we influenced each other. "When one of the club members introduced me to Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai, I decided to join. I learned that Gagaku is part of the beautiful decoration of the Pure Land and I realized that this group nurtured me as a Jodo Shinshu minister. I am very grateful to them."

Many Gagaku groups exist throughout Japan today, including community ensembles, and the number of Shinto and other temple-associated groups has increased compared to the past.

"We are one of them," Rev. Shimizu said, "but we are a Jodo Shinshu organization and temple etiquette and the practice of sutra chanting is also our purpose. Through the tireless efforts of many organizations, the music of Gagaku will become more sophisticated and share its beautiful impression with all."

In the opening service, the musicians are set to play gagaku during the 850th/800th Commemorative Service on the first day. Their music will add a solemn atmosphere to the service that include special rituals called "Toraiban" and "Goraiban" when the officiating minister (the Bishop) will ascend to/descend from the Officiant Seat in the center of the altar area.

The group is also scheduled to perform during the luncheon, tentatively playing "Ondokusan," the traditional Bugaku "Manzairaku," and "Hawaii Aloha."

The latter selection seems fitting considering how the group came to its decision to be a part of Triple Celebration.

Prior to the Covid-19 shutdown, Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai practiced at their Betsuin twice a month, performing at temple celebrations including successions, weddings, annual services and at Yamaguchi District events.

They voluntarily appeared at elementary, high school, college concerts and at large concerts in Kudamatsu and Iwakuni in Yamaguchi Prefecture.

Since members are ministers, the group collaboratively discusses each request to perform and considers them individually. Honpa Hongwanji's Triple Celebration request was no exception. Their decision to make the trip came after a discussion of the strong ties between Yamaguchi Prefecture and Hawai'i.

"In 1885, close to half, 420 people, of the first government-sponsored contract workers who immigrated from Japan to Hawai'i were from Yamaguchi," Rev. Shimizu said.

"By 1894, a total of 10,424 people were actively involved in the Hawai'i community.

"What was ahead of them as they dreamed about this foreign country, what they left behind in their homeland, the hard lives they faced, the hard labor at the plantations, I believe what supported their spirit were memories of their home villages and the *Nembutsu* of Jodo Shinshu which they might have learned from their families at temple services.

"Many people immigrated from our areas: Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Kumamoto and Fukuoka where Jodo Shinshu flourished, and they continued this spiritual tradition in Hawai'i."

"No matter how painful, sad and difficult the immigrants' lives may have been, Amida Buddha's saying, "I will never abandon you. Rely on me" sustained the Japanese immigrants who must have felt great comfort and warmth within Namo Amida Butsu, Rev. Shimizu said.

And it's not overstating it, he said, to say that the history of Jodo Shinshu and the tradition of the Hawai'i Mission is also the history of building a new society in Hawai'i, gaining strength and courage to cultivate a new life in a strange place, while helping each other, sharing pain, sorrow, joy and rejoicing in the Nembutsu.

Photos Courtesy of Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai

Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai's Bugaku dancers will perform the traditional "Manzairaku," a stylized work depicting a peaceful world where a phoenix dances.

Behind Amida's Adornment From the Pure Land

Rev. Mitsuharu Shimizu, *kaicho* or chair of the ensemble: "Gagaku is part of the beautiful decoration of the Pure Land."

Music fans hearing gagaku for the first time often remark about the dissonance and what sounds atonal, but at its basic level, there is no discord but rather, a harmonious symmetry, what some call "ethereal" and "haunting."

Literally, "gagaku" translates to "elegant music," but the general term once referred to instrumental music and dance first introduced from China, Korea, Tenjiku or northern India and Rinyu, the Vietnam area peninsula during the 5th and 9th centuries.

Its detractors often remark that its heritage is "frozen" in time, dates back to the Heian period, its 250 compositions are codified and its repertoire lacks creativity.

But in reality, gagaku dates back 1,400 years to the Tang Dynasty. And rather than being frozen in time, today the music and instrumentation is continuously being analyzed and researched, what was once thought to be "lost" is either recovered or recreated and its influence keeps growing.

Besides groups in Japan, the United States and Canada, gagaku orchestras are also found in Europe, particularly in Germany.

Western composers such as Alan Hovhaness have called gagaku music "inspirational," choreographers including Merce Cunningham created works using gagaku scores and architect Frank Gehry not only designed Los Angeles' Disney Hall with gagaku in mind, but he also decided to start learning how to play *shoko*.

Since the year 701, the entire body of gagaku music has remained under the control of the Imperial Music Bureau of Gagaku Ryo where a staff of musicologists devoted to the study and authenticity of the music, instruments and performances enjoy the patronage of the Imperial Family.

Once only performed before the Imperial Family and patrons, it was once derided as "Imperial Court music" and in the course of Japanese history, few had even heard it performed.

"It is said that gagaku was first performed at the center stage on the occasion of the Great Buddha's completion ceremony at Todaiji Temple," Rev. Mitsuharu Shimizu of Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai said, "and it was played magnificently.

"According to the '*Shinzei Kogakuzu*,' which illustrates instruments and dances prior to the Heian era, the variety of instruments performed is more than the present day and that possibly may have influenced foreign music."

Gagaku's "Japanification" seemed to have started around 840, it took more than a century until the 10th century when a unification took place and remains in place to this day.

Often called the "world's oldest orchestra," gagaku is often said to have been changing rapidly and that the tempo today is much faster than in the years past. Rev. Shimizu cites the remaining influence of foreign music.

In 1955, UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization, designated gagaku an "Important Intangible Cultural Property" and declared the ancient art form a "crystallization of the culture created by society and the history of Japan."

Instrumentation can include as many as eight different musicians and at deadline, the ensemble's final lineup was unavailable, but will tentatively consist largely of wind and percussion instruments:

The *sho,* or mouth organ, with its 17 thin bamboo pipes representing heavenly rays of light, its harmonic sound produced both by inhaling and exhaling;

The *ryuteki* (dragon flute) a flute that accents high and low ornamental tones and is said to express the movement of dragons soaring between heaven and earth;

The *hichiriki,* or double-reed recorder which plays the main melody and represents mankind's voices on earth;

The *shoko* with its gong-like, high-pitched metallic sound that ornaments the work and maintains the tempo;

The *taiko* with its loud, low-pitched tone accentuating the change in the music, and

The *kakko* or barrel drum which is played by the ensemble's principal who controls the flow of the performance.

According to one of Honzan's official service statements, gagaku is considered an adornment of Amida Buddha's Pure Land which every Jodo Shinshu Buddhist ritual symbolizes.

—Gail S. Tagashira

—Translation by Rimban Yuika Hasebe

New *Shoshinge*

Continued from Page 1

Honzan and attended the morning service starting at 6 a.m.

After the service, some people asked me the question above.

It was the "*Shoshinge,*" starting with the familiar words "*kimyo muryo junyorai,*" but it was chanted in a different melody than usual.

It was the "*Shoshinge"* of "*Shinsei Gohonden Saho,*" or the newly established *gohonden* (lit. "Major Scripture") ritual, created for the Joint Celebration.

In this new ritual, all the verses were selected from Shinran Shonin's main work, "*Kyōgyōshinshō,*" or "The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way."

There are two ways to chant the "*Shoshinge"* in this ritual.

One is newly created, and this version was chanted during the morning service we attended.

The other version is chanted with the familiar "*Junirai*" melody, and in the commemorative service that the Hawaii group attended in Kyoto, this version was chanted beautifully.

After we attended the morning service in Honzan, several people expressed to me, "Sensei, let us chant the newly created version of '*Shoshinge*' in Hawaii," and now, I am pleased to announce that we will chant it together during the HHMH Triple Celebration in September 2024.

During the HHMH Triple Celebration, we will observe two commemorative services.

On Sept. 7, 2024, we will observe the service for the 850th Anniversary of Shinran Shonin's Birth and the 800th Anniversary of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching.

This service follows the "*Gohonden Saho*."

In addition, during the service, traditional Japanese Gagaku music will be performed by the Yamaguchi Gagaku Kai, a guest group of Gagaku performers from Japan.

On Sept. 8, 2024, we will observe the Hawaii Kyodan 135th Anniversary Service and the Dharma message will be delivered by Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani.

For this ceremony, we are looking for participants to join our Triple Celebration Choir. The selected gathas are "When I Look Up at the Sky" ("*Ano Sora Mireba*") and "Moments Like This" (*"Sonna Toki Watashi wa Kuchizusamu."*)

At the beginning of the "*Gohonden Saho,*" prior to "*Shoshinge,*" there is a ritual in which Shinran Shonin's words are recited. In this passage, Shinran Shonin expressed his joy upon encountering the teaching as follows:

Ah, hard to encounter, even in many lifetimes, is the decisive cause of birth, Amida's universal Vow!

Hard to realize, even in myriads of kalpas, is pure shinjin that is true and real!

If you should come to realize this practice and shinjin, rejoice at the conditions from the distant past that have brought it about.

"Kyōgyōshinshō Preface: Collected Works of Shinran," Page 4

If we reflect on various causes and conditions that enabled us to encounter the Jodo Shinshu teaching, we would be grateful that Shinran Shonin was born about 850 years ago, and for 800 years since he revealed the teaching, and for the past 135 years in Hawaii, his teachings have been continuously passed down to us.

The theme of the Triple Celebration is "Sharing the Joy of Nembutsu Together: Our Living Heart of Gratitude."

I have already envisioned that the services will be filled with joy, with the sound of the Dharma, including the chanting of sutras, the singing of gathas, and the resonating sound of the Nembutsu throughout the venue.

Let us meet at the Ala Moana Hotel in September.

Namo Amida Butsu.

HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII'S TRIPLE CELEBRATION

Let's Share Nembutsu Moments With Our Dharma Friends

Rev. Joshin Kamuro, a minister at Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin, is also a member of the Archives Committee.

On Sept. 7, as part of the five different workshops being offered at Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's Triple Celebration, Rev. Kamuro plans to share a journal from 1907-1913, written in Japanese by Rev. Tessho Kato and Rev. Chisho Abe.

He submitted the following which was published in the April, 2024 issue of Hilo Betsuin's newsletter, The Buddhist Wheel.

BY REV. JOSHIN KAMURO
HONPA HONGWANJI HILO BETSUIN

March 2 is recognized as Hongwanji Day, when Shin Buddhism in Hawai'i began with the arrival of Rev. Soryu Kagahi from Oita Prefecture in 1889.

He settled on Emerson Avenue where he rented a house and hung a sign board which read, "The Great Imperial Japan Hongwanji Denomination Hawai'i Branch."

On March 21, he traveled to Hawaii Island and on May 14, he established the Hilo Branch Propagation Office.

Rev. Kagahi left Hawai'i seven months later on Oct. 1, 1889 but in that short amount of time, he had traveled to other islands preaching to Japanese immigrants, he established two Buddhist communities — one in Honolulu, the other in Hilo — and is considered the pioneer of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i's beginnings.

Therefore, we celebrate March 2 as Hongwanji Day which this year will be part of a Triple Celebration along with the 850th anniversary of the birth of Shinran Shonin and the 800th anniversary of the establishment of the Jodo Shinshu teaching.

During the Archives Committee's workshop on Sept. 7, I plan to share Rev. Tessho Kato's journal which was kept by one of the earliest ministers assigned to Hilo Hongwanji.

Assigned to the Hilo Hongwanji Fukyojo, Rev. Kato started the journal on the first day of his assignment on April 24 1907, 18 years after Rev. Kagahi opened the worship hall.

One highlight of the journal is about the "First Ringing of the Big Bell" service in 1909:

"On Aug. 15, 1909, Sunday, sunny, Bishop Imamura preached. The number of people who attended the service was about 4,000 people."

Courtesy of Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin
The first Hilo Hongwanji Temple was located at the corner of Front Street, now Kamehameha Avenue and Ponahawai Street where the Mooheau Park is today. The April 1889 completion date is considered erroneous by Rev. Seikaku Takesono who said the more accurate date was likely August, 1889.

Can you imagine 4,000 people coming to listen to Bishop Yemyo Imamura? Rev. Kato wrote that the thousands of people appeared like a cloud.

I thought Rev. Kato prepared well for the service, often traveling to town in Hilo to ask for donations to build the Big Bell.

Through his handwriting in that part of his journal, I could feel his joy and happiness.

In addition, our Archives Committee plans to display about 15 Hilo Betsuin members' records of interviews from Stanley and Judi Fujiyama who worked on the Oral History Project at Hilo Betsuin, conducted from 2005 to 2013.

In one enjoyable article by Ethel Yonemitsu published in June of 2019 on "Cleaning the Hondo," she said:

"I enjoyed working and cleaning the hondo (altar), you know . . . every church day after we clean and everything, we omairi first.

"We sit down and we all prayed together, then we all go downstairs because the nokotsudo (columbarium) was upstairs.

"Then we go in the kitchen. We call everybody come eat. Those days were the happiest days of my life."

Mrs. Yonemitsu shared her Nembutsu moments. She enjoyed spending time with other sangha members in the temple.

After I read this article, I realized that we can experience our Nembutsu moments in our daily lives through human interactions of togetherness such as expressions of "We all go" and "We call everybody come eat."

We are all part of the Hongwanji 'Ohana.

The 2024 Hawai'i Kyodan's theme and slogan is "Building Healthy Sanghas: Sharing Nembutsu Moments."

Let us work and enjoy ourselves by spending time with other members in the temple doing activities such as cleaning up, attending meetings or services, eating together, watching movies and other volunteer work.

These will be our Nembutsu moments and will be the happiest days of our lives, like Mrs. Yonemitsu said.

In the Shin Buddhist tradition, we call ourselves fellow practitioners or fellow travelers, ondōbō. We walk together on the path of Nembutsu as the Hongwanji 'Ohana.

Let us share Nembutsu moments with our Hongwanji Sangha members at the Triple Celebration.

Closing by `Sharing the Joy of Nembutsu Together'

Aligned with the theme, "Sharing the Joy of Nembutsu Together: Our Living Heart of Gratitude," the final event on the Triple Celebration schedule has a lofty goal but has all the earmarks to be an inspiring session.

It aims at infusing the day with joy and leaving attendees with a force to motivate them in their daily lives.

Rev. Satoshi Tomioka from Puna, Pahala and Naalehu will host the Sept. 8 session which starts at 10:15 a.m., moderated by Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji of Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church in Union City.

Featured speakers will be Edythe Vassall of Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin and Kahu Sherman Thompson of Hawaii Betsuin and Lahaina Hongwanji.

Both panelists shared thoughts of their journeys and

Edythe Vassall of Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin and Kahu Sherman Thompson of Hawaii Betsuin and Lahaina Hongwanji.

biographies:

Edythe Vassall

I was born and raised a Christian in Brooklyn, N.Y. and I didn't encounter the Dharma until 20 years ago while living in the Bay Area when

I went to the 2004 Berkeley Buddhist Temple annual bazaar out of interest in Japanese art and culture.

Later I attended a service, heard the Dharma and was instantly captivated.

A few years later, I applied for the position of administrative assistant for the Buddhist Churches of America Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) at the Jodo Shinshu Center, located right around the corner from the BBT.

In the 10 years I spent working at CBE, I helped organize many Buddhist conferences and cultural events.

It was my good fortune to meet Buddhist ministers from across the U.S., Hawaii, Canada and Brazil as well as Buddhist authors, lecturers and guest speakers from around the world.

I visited Japan twice on BBT and CBE tours once as a Buddhist Women's Association delegate.

When I retired in 2029, I joined the Hilo Betsuin where as a member of the Board of Spiritual Affairs, I write for our temple newsletter and manage our lending library.

I was emcee for our spring seminars for the past three years and served as managing editor of the Ka Leo Kāhea newsletter for a year and a half.

I also work for the American Buddhist Study Center in New York as a book editor and volunteer.

The Nembutsu teaching reaches beyond time and place, gender and race.

My favorite Nembutsu moments happen when our diverse sangha connects over the distances that separate us. Thanks to our temples, our ministers and Zoom technology, we join in the dharma wherever we may physically be.

I'll talk about memorable moments like my first time chanting "*Shoshinge*" with hundreds of people in the Hongwanji, receiving my *homyo* Buddhist name there and

taking part in the 50th anniversary pilgrimage to the peace community of Rev. Joen Ashikaga, who had given the Berkeley Buddhist Temple its gorgeous *gohonzon* Amida statue 50 years before.

Sharing Nembutsu joy as an exchange delegate with women of the Hoppa-Fukuoka *fujin kai;* being welcomed by them in Kyushu and welcoming them to San Francisco, tracing the footsteps of Shinran Shonin, Eshinni and Kakushinni on a Center for Buddhist Education tour to Japan.

These are just a few of my encounters with Nembutsu joy, for which I am grateful.

Kahu Sherman Thompson

As a Shin Buddhist and a member of Lahaina Hongwanji, I retired from Kamehameha Schools Kapālama after serving 47 years as a dormitory advisor, associate chaplain and most recently as chaplain.

My Nembutsu journey began because our families were Buddhists. My journey may seem a bit unusual. Here's my condensed version:

The small town of Lahaina where I was raised was mostly a community of sugar and pineapple plantation workers. Days were marked by the sound of the sugar mill's whistle that sounded to begin and end the workday.

We attended Japanese language school in the afternoon and we gathered before the *butsudan* to light *senko* and recite the *Namo Amida Butsu* before dinner which my grandmother prepared.

My grandparents were devout Shin Buddhists and made temple life at Lahaina Hongwanji their priority.

My mother was a *bon* dance instructor, so we often found ourselves at temple activities.

When we were old enough, we enrolled in judo and scouting activities.

In the mid-1960s, Lahaina Hongwanji welcomed its first bilingual speaking minister and the younger generation of temple members were immersed in the teachings of Jodo Shinshu.

In high school, I boarded at Kamehameha Schools on O`ahu where I was introduced to Christianity and was able to understand it through the teachings of the Buddha.

Though fundamentally vastly different, the values of each parallel in many ways.

Later, while employed at Kamehameha, I became a Christian minister and was retained as an associate chaplain at the school.

I was appointed as chaplain at the school in 2016 and retired in 2021 after serving 47 years. I firmly believe that the Buddhist roots planted early in my youth provide the foundation that allows me to fully appreciate the *O-Nembutsu*.

Through studies in Jodo Shinshu, my understanding and appreciation of the teachings deepened significantly.

While I am saddened by the Lahaina Wildfire which consumed Lahaina Hongwanji and our family residence that belonged to my brother, I am still able to place in hands in Gassho and hear Amida's calling voice as I recite the *O-Nembutsu*.

Echoes of Tradition: PBA's Taiko Festival

BY MEGAN LEE
DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT
PACIFIC BUDDHIST ACADEMY

Following the theme of "Yaramaika," or "Go for It," Pacific Buddhist Academy ventured into new territories at its 18th annual Taiko Festival. The event on March 17, 2024 at Moanalua Performing Arts Center featured a school-wide Soran Bushi performance and various pieces showcasing Hyaku Sen Ki Kai alumni.

Among the returnees were Zachary Agcaoili, (2014) and Tani Oshita, (2023) on taiko drums, Rev. Blayne Nakasone Sakata, (2014) on the odaiko and sanshin, and Chihiro Okawa, (2023) on the shime-daiko, odaiko, and the shinobue or transverse flute.

Zachary Sensei, a distinguished member of PBA's taiko faculty, called the chance to collaborate with a new generation of students and reconnect with former classmates a rewarding one.

"I'm so proud of the current students and their hard work upholding this tradition," he said.

The school's taiko group led by Jay Toyofuku and comprised of eight players included twins Leilani and Jenny Chang, both seniors whose older sister, Fern Chang, graduated from PBA's taiko group in 2022, along with Mari Miyasato who recently completed a six-week study abroad program at Heian High School in Kyoto.

To open the show, the PBA Rock Band performed hits from the '60s and '80s and a trio comprised of Rylan Villamor, Zachary Yoshida and Herb Lee offered Edith Kanakaole's "Ke Uluwehi O Ke Kai."

Other highlights of the program were performances of "Ashibina," or "Let's Play," a bon odori (dance) from Okinawa symbolizing a communal space for people of all ages to come together to revel in life's joys.

Courtesy of Megan Lee

Rev. Blayne Nakasone Sakata, left, a 2014 alumnus of Pacific Buddhist Academy, performed with Zachary Tanouye and Calvin Machado.

Mari performed the traditional dance as freshman Miyaka Nishihira and Rev. Nakasone Sakata accompanied on the three-stringed sanshin and vocals.

Senior Angelina Ka'ai and PBA head of school Josh Hernandez Morse co-emceed the program.

"Watching the contributions of PBA alumni really touched my heart," Morse said.

"For me, there were many highlights at this year's Taiko Festival but the performance of the Soran Bushi was clearly one of them. I had invested significant political capital in urging the administrators, teachers, choreographer and students to stay the course preparing for the dance by linking it with the lore of the school as a measuring stick for the school community."

As the school year draws to a close, the taiko program reminds PBA faculty, staff and students that commencement is approaching as they prepare their farewells and celebrate their years together.

"When I close my eyes," Morse said, "I can clearly see the final moments when the Senior Class of 2024 assembled in the center of the stage – Leilani Chang and Mari Miyasato doing cartwheels down center, Rintaro Kawai held aloft on the shoulders of Vance Maruya and James Robinson behind them, and the balance basking in the applause of the 575-strong audience and PBA Sangha."

BUDDHIST STUDY CENTER: A FESTIVE GATHERING

Welcoming Spring by Nurturing Mind and Body

BY CAROLYN UCHIYAMA
WAHIAWA HONGWANJI
MISSION

The adage, "The show must go on . . ." proved to be what the Buddhist Study Center committee did on a blustery and rainy April 6 morning.

After months of planning and negotiating, the Spring Festival's "Nurturing Mind and Body" unfolded with workshops and booths set up in the lecture hall and parking lot.

Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani, Rev. Daido Baba and Rev. Bert Sumikawa opened the event with the chanting of "Sambujō," followed by Pacific Buddhist Academy's Hyaku Sen Ki Kai taiko group performing several rousing numbers including "Miyake" and "Aspirations."

Workshops were presented on the hour in the lecture hall beginning with Rev. David Nakamoto and Mel Hayase dealing with "Coping Skills," BSC instructor Lisa Yanagi held a yoga session, the Blue Zone Cooking group from Wahiawa Hongwanji demonstrated preparation techniques for kimpira, nishime, kombu maki and root vegetables and Chikako Nago of EM Hawaii shared instruction on using "bokashi" the sustainable practice of composting vegetable scraps in home kitchens.

Entertainment continued on the half hour from members of the Shakuhachi Club, lead by Michael Usui and the koto group lead by Darin Miyashiro of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa's music department who teaches koto.

Photos Courtesy of David Atcheson, Rev. Daido Baba and Carolyn Uchiyama

Clockwise from top left: Members of the Ohara School of Ikebana, Rev. Shindo Nishiyama assembled a home-sized butsudan at the Jr. YBA booth, Samaritan Counseling Center's Rachelle Chang and Rev. Kimberley Houff discussed their services, the Ohara group helped visitors make their own works to take home, Lisa Yanagi led a yoga session, Debbie Kubota, right, demonstrated how to fold a heart-shaped origami, PBA students Dojun Baba, Zachary Yoshida and Riho Umitani waved signs outside, the koto/shakuhachi group performed, center, Rev. David Nakamoto and Mel Hayase lead a lecture on coping skills, Mrs. Yoshiko Umitani assembled selections from the headquarters bookstore, and the PBA's Hyaku Sen Ki Kai taiko group performed two rousing numbers.

Informational booths spanned a wide range of subjects and services from Dexter Mar's "A Quiet Place" for those curious about Buddhism; "Matcha With a Minister" where one could spend a moment speaking with either Rev. Sumikawa or Rev. Blayne Nakasone Sakata while sipping tea and the Samaritan Counseling Center's Rachelle Chang who explained what services are offered at the Betsuin offices.

Popular with children, teens and adults were the "make it and/or take it" activities.

Irene Nakamoto and women from the Ohara School of Ikebana helped participants make their own flower arrangements; Dharma School and Buddhist Education Commissioner Debbie Kubota demonstrated how to fold origami paper into hearts, then inscribe them with an inspirational saying then, leave them but walk away with someone else's heart, and Youth Specialist Emi Hashi helped people make mini altars to take home to create their own quiet space for contemplation.

Mrs. Yoshiko Umitani coordinated a variety of materials from Honpa Hongwanji's Bookstore from books on Buddhism for adults and children to magnets from Tanimoto Dharma Designs, jewelry made by PBA students and 2024 Peace Day T-shirts.

Of course, no festival would be complete without a wide range of foods from Jikoen Hongwanji's mini-bento, brownies and cookies to Mo'ilii'li Hongwanji's Spam musubi, Chinese pretzels and peanut butter mochi.

Oahu District's BWA collected goodies from its member temples, offering mochi cake, Pizzzelles, tsukemono and the Pearl City Hongwanji's cookbook.

By day's end, all attendees left with a BSC reusable bag, a cup and a wide variety of lessons, information and experiences to guide them through their daily lives.

50TH ANNUAL BUDDHIST STUDY CENTER SUMMER SESSION AUG. 5-9

Rev. Dr. Kenji Akahoshi: How to Bring Joy Into Ordinary Lives

BY DEXTER MAR
HONPA HONGWANJI HAWAI'I
BETSUIN

In ancient times, the unknown world was explained in mythical form with deities and the afterlife being prominent. But relating traditional myths to our modern life has its limits.

We will reverse this method of going from the past to the present. By using our current knowledge from science and psychology, we will reveal the practical and spiritual benefits of Shin.

For those seeking solutions to common concerns, Shin has provided a path for ordinary people for 800 years.

From Aug. 5-9, the Buddhist Study Center will hold its 50th annual summer session conducted by Rev. Dr. Kenji Akahoshi, the renowned author, teacher, retreat leader and retired former head minister of the Buddhist Temple of San Diego.

All five classes will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. at the BSC offices at 1436 University Ave.

Rev. Dr. Kenji Akahoshi's retreats and workshops use innovative methods that he learned from leading philosophers, psychologists and Buddhist teachers.

Using these interactive methods, he will share an effective, simple practice of gratitude.

A dentist by profession, Rev. Dr. Akahoshi earned a degree from the University of California at San Francisco Dental School before finishing his master's from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, then the Institute of Buddhist Studies.

He was a captain in the U.S. Air Force in Misawa, Japan for three years.

During his 30 years in private practice in San Jose, California, Rev. Dr. Akahoshi was board president at San Jose Betsuin and chaplain at the Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall.

He retired as head minister at the Buddhist Temple of San Diego in 2021 but remains active and in demand as a guest speaker both in person and on Zoom.

Each of his BSC sessions will include an interactive workshop that leads to an experience of the benefits of Shin Buddhism. As a whole, the five-part series is a practical guide of how being a Shin Buddhist in the 21st Century can resolve many issues.

The programs, focused on how to bring joy into the flow of ordinary life are:

Aug. 5: "The Why and How of Gratitude" — Practicing the non-practice of gratitude

Aug. 6: "Truth: Now and Then" — Our understanding of truth has expanded from the Buddha's time to now

Aug. 7: "Who Am I in the World?" — Finding my authentic self

Aug. 8: "Benefits of Shin Buddhism" — Current interpretations of ancient rituals

Aug. 9: "Being Sacred in the Profane" — Being whole, not holy

Deadline for registration through the BSC website is July 31.

Tax-deductible donations are suggested for the program: $10 for single sessions, $50 for all five. Checks may be made out to HHMH.

More information is available at https://bschawaii.org/summer-session/

NEWS FROM THE SANGHAS

Shinran Shonin's Statue, AEDs and 4-H Girls

Here's a brief compilation of news and various activities from around Hawaii temples.

Updates of interest may be sent to newsletter@honpahi.org

OAHU

At **Moiliili Hongwanji Mission,** interim minister Rev. Bert Sumikawa was the first to notice it: The statue of Shinran Shonin near the entrance didn't look right, he said.

Board members checked, double checked and couldn't see it. Look under his hat, Rev. Sumikawa urged, and inspect it during daylight hours.

Sure enough, years of exposure in the hot sun was obvious: Peeling, fading and sun damage took its toll.

Enter Linda Yamamoto, a former professor of Fine Arts at the University of Hawai'i, now retired. After inspection, her detailed analysis and expertise of the "unpatinated outdoor bronze sculpture" resulted in her proposal involving removing the old paint, cleaning with a special mild detergent, applying a paste wax and buffing.

The verdigris (green) under the hat? Minimized with tinted wax. Completed within a day, the whole procedure was done for under $250.

A sculpture conservationist, Ms. Yamamoto urged an annual inspection and follow-up. "It's basically like washing and waxing a car," she said. "You have to keep it up."

The Moiliili Hongwanji Mission's statue of Shinran Shonin before. . .

. . . and after, restored by sculpture conservationist Linda Yamamoto.

Tak Ueda, left, Alice Tashiro and young Moiva Lopes helped assemble period products for the Ma'i Movement of Hawaii at Windward Hongwanji.

☐

Windward Buddhist Temple members packaged and donated more than 100 kits to the Ma'i Movement of Hawaii, the statewide organization that supports women and girls who need period products and are unable to afford them.

Studies show 60% of Hawai'i families are struggling to make ends meet and 42% of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders need period products.

Until recently, public schools did not have them readily available and girls were just not attending classes during their periods.

The Ma'i Movement provides kits to all islands including Niihau and Moloka'i.

☐

Toward the end of last year's Obon celebration at **Waipahu Hongwanji**, two medical emergencies required professionals and first responders to spring into action.

Fortunately, both people were stabilized and transported to area hospitals and this year, thanks to the family of the late Setsuko Uyeno, the temple is prepared.

The Uyeno/Sumida family donated $2,700 to purchase AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators) to be housed in the *hondo* and in the Adult Day Care Area.

The donation included AED certifications and first aid/CPR training for members which has been completed.

☐

Ewa Hongwanji Mission's historic book, "Cane Tassels, Work Whistles and Labor Day Carnivals," compiled by Dennis Irie, is in its second printing.

Subtitled "Memories of Ewa Plantation Town in the Mid-1990s," the modest publication is the result of more than 60 interviews over 11 years of work and includes 175 photos and maps.

A highly successful Honolulu-based architect prior to his retirement, Irie grew up in Ewa and designed the front of Ewa temple.

The contractors who worked on the building donated their labor and largely charged only for materials used.

Copies of the book may be purchased for a $20 donation which includes shipping.

Proceeds benefit Ewa Hongwanji Mission. Information: ewahm1901@gmail.com

MAUI

Wailuku Hongwanji Buddhist Temple's 4-H program has moved into high gear since it started in October of 2023.

The Aloha Girls (Grades 1-3), Lokahi Girls (Grades 3-4) and the Malama Dolphins (Grade 5) have all taken part in a wide range of activities including preparing sandwiches for the homeless to learning how to make sushi with Chef Carl Yeh of Restaurant Matsu to practicing public speaking and supporting the Maui Fire Department.

Chef Carl gifted the Lokahi girls with *makisu* (sushi mats) to allow them to continue making maki sushi and California rolls for their families

Collectively called the Sakura 4-H Clubs, the three groups enjoy wide support not only from the temple but also from a core of involved parents at each level.

A nationally recognized program, 4-H stands for Head, Heart, Hands and Health. It aims to promote leadership skills, lifelong learning, community involvement and friendship among youth.

☐

Makawao Hongwanji is the first Jodo Shinshu temple in Hawaii to open its doors to the state Partners in Development Foundation's "Tutu and Me" traveling program.

While members are not directly involved with running the program itself, the move represents a shift in its focus to serve young keiki and their caregivers in economically vulnerable families from the Hawaiian community.

A number of other churches, gyms and community centers on Oahu, Kauai, Hawai'i Island and Molokai host "Tutu and Me" programs and Maui has opened centers in Kahului, Lahaina and Kihei, but Makawao's is the first program to be held at a Buddhist temple.

More than 40 keiki from newborns to age 5 participate in cognitive, social and linguistic sessions while their kupuna receive parenting tips integrating Hawaiian values and culture.

Chef Carl Yeh from Restaurant Matsu, center, taught Wailuku Hongwanji's 4-H Lokahi Girls how to make California rolls and maki sushi. Each received a makisu (sushi mat) to take home.

LĀNA'I

Leaders at **Lāna'i Hongwanji Mission** continue to meet monthly with members of Maui Hospice's board of directors to convert the minister's residence portion of the temple into a long-term care facility.

"For about 50 years, we've been trying to establish this facility on Lāna`i and this is the closest we've been yet," said John Schaumburg, retired Director of the Lāna`i Hospital.

Architectural plans are complete, more details and a land survey is underway according to temple president Christopher Richardson.

It may take up to two years to complete.

Meanwhile, the temple's Centennial Celebration is tentatively set for Nov. 9.

KAUAI

Through Kauai's Island Utility Cooperative's energy services division, **Lihue Hongwanji i**s continuing its efforts to move toward a greener Kauai.

Hundreds of 9-watt LED bulbs have already been handed out free to members with even more on the way. (A 9-watt bulb is equivalent to an approximately 60-watt bulb.)

At the distributions, temple members collect bags of HI-5 cans and plastic bottles for the Koloa Lions Club to recycle, with proceeds going toward community service projects.

☐

Kapaa Hongwanji Mission is joining forces with the Hanalei Nihonjin Kai Association to restore the cemetery washed away in the 2018 landslides and floods in Hanalei.

Many Hongwanji members' family gravesites were lost.

The association plans to build a monument with the names of individuals whose ashes were interred.

Donations may be mailed to the temple.

HAWAII ISLAND

Kona Hongwanji's Preschoolers took part in the Great Kindness Challenge Week, the only temple in Hawaii to participate in the nationwide grassroots movement that promotes kindness to friends, family and the community.

Sponsored by Kids for Peace, a global 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the GKC event aims to make the world a kinder, more compassionate place for all.

In late January, some 30 Kona preschoolers took part by making friendship rocks and bracelets, creating and delivering floral arrangements to businesses, sign waving and taking turns in a photo booth.

Other elementary, middle and high schools on Oahu and Hawaii Island took part, but Kona Hongwanji's Preschool was the only temple in the country to participate in the project whose goal is to create a culture of kindness.

☐

Shodo, calligraphy classes for adults at **Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin,** will finally return on June 7 on Fridays at 9:30 a.m. for four weeks, then resume after another break in August.

Children's classes are currently on summer break.

Taught by Mrs. Minako Kamuro, who earned her certificate of calligraphy mastery/師範資格: Shingeisha 心芸社 as a college student, the classes take place in the YBA Hall and require a minimum of four students.

A student of *shodo* since the age of 6, Mrs. Kamuro resumed her calligraphy studies in Kyoto after her marriage to Rev. Joshin Kamuro, resident minister at HHHB.

The calligraphy classes allow Mrs. Kamuro to take a short break since three babysitters eagerly care for five-month-old Nanami. "She has been wanting to be held and she's crying loudly," Mrs. Kamuro said. "But she's growing well, she can sleep for 5-6 hours straight and is energetic."

Calligraphy master Minako Kamuro, seated at center, with students and Nanami.

Representing in Sacramento

Courtesy of Catherine Fujimori

At Buddhist Churches of America's National Council Meeting in February, delegates from Hawai'i and Canada were recognized at the Buddhist Church of Sacramento. Allan Yamashiro, left, 2024 National Council Meeting Committee Chair, and BCA President Terri Omori, right, presented welcome gifts to Derrick Inouye, business manager of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i, HHMH President Dr. Warren Tamamoto and Buddhist Temples of Canada's Treasurer Gregory Chor. It was the first in-person National Council meeting since 2020.