



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

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TEMPLE PRESIDENTS RETREAT: BUILDING CONNECTIONS AND STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP

On November 16, 2024, the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii held its first Temple Presidents Retreat at the Buddhist Study Center. Organized by Dr. Warren Tamamoto, Derrick Inouye, Nancy Shimamoto, Doris Oshiro, Prudence Kusano, and Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani, the retreat welcomed 26 temple presidents and representatives, providing them with time and opportunity, under very pleasant and peaceful surroundings, to NETWORK, INTERACT, and NURTURE ourselves and each other.

The retreat was inspired by Bishop Umitani's temple visits as a new Bishop, where he witnessed the incredible dedication temple presidents bring to their roles. In his welcome address, he expressed deep gratitude for their commitment to managing finances, maintaining temple properties, supporting ministers, nurturing their communities, and many more. He acknowledged the unique challenges each temple faces and emphasized the importance of collaboration and mutual support.

The program kicked off with a fun-filled ice-breaker facilitated by Nancy Shimamoto, fostering an atmosphere of open and engaging participation. Prudence Kusano presented each president with special leis adorned with colorful paper clips. These clips represent the different districts and headquarters, highlighting their interconnected nature. Doris Oshiro gifted each president with a cup of seeds to "Plant Your Garden of Daily Living."

Participants then broke into small groups to tackle key topics, such as attracting younger members, supporting small temples at risk of closure, encouraging member involvement, and cultivating future leaders. These groups, composed of presidents from various temple sizes and districts, shared diverse ideas and experiences, fostering a sense of camaraderie. Following the group discussions, representatives shared their insights with the larger group.

Derrick Inouye (Business Manager), David Atcheson (Communications Coordinator), and Emi Hashi (Youth Specialist) provided a brief overview of their roles and responsibilities to the presidents, emphasizing that the HQ offers essential support and resources to the temples. Additionally, Dennis Tashiro of Windward Buddhist Temple presented effective strategies that have helped strengthen his temple's activities and engagement.

As the retreat concluded, attendees left with a renewed sense of purpose and the reassurance that they are not alone in their journey. They returned to their temples with fresh ideas and the assurance that they have a network of fellow presidents and the support of Headquarters to help navigate the challenges ahead.

This inaugural retreat was a meaningful step in enhancing leadership throughout the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, fostering the ongoing vitality of our temples and communities.

(Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani)



PERSONNEL MATTER

Reverend Masanari Yamagishi, currently serving at Kamuela Hongwanji Mission as its Resident Minister as well as Honokaa Hongwanji Mission, Kohala Hongwanji Mission, and Paauilo Hongwanji Mission as their Overseer Minister, will resign from the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, effective February 28, 2025. Rev. Yamagishi has been serving Hawaii Kyodan as a Kaikyoshi Minister since February 2020. During the absence of the resident minister after March 1, 2025, Rev. Blayne Higa of Kona Hongwanji Mission, with help from the Hawaii District Ministers, will provide religious services and necessary support for the four temples.

CONDOLENCES

Rev. Eijun Kujo, a former Kaikyoshi minister of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, passed away on August 31, 2024, at the age of 87. Rev. Kujo became a Kaikyoshi minister in August 1960 and transferred to the BCA in August 1981. A private funeral service was held on September 14, 2024, at the San Mateo Buddhist Temple.

Rev. Mary David, a retired minister of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, passed away on August 1, 2024, at the age of 76. Rev. David became a Kaikyoshi Minister in April 2006 and retired in March 2014. Her memorial ceremony was held privately by her family.

2025 GISEIKAI LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The 2025 HHMH Legislative Assembly (Giseikai) will be held on February 7 & 8, 2025, in the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin Social Hall and via Zoom. The Legislative Assembly Aloha Luncheon & Living Treasures of Hawaii Recognition will be held on Saturday, February 8, 2025, at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Coral Ballrooms. The registration fee is \$125.00 for both Giseikai delegates and observers and \$100.00 for the luncheon only. The registration form was sent on November 1, 2024, to the Temples & Council Presidents. Please submit your temple's completed registration form by December 31, 2024.

NEW GATHA BOOK – PRAISES OF THE BUDDHA 5TH EDITION

The new Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii Triple Celebration Commemorative gatha book, Praises of the Buddha 5th edition, that your temple pre-ordered in June, should be available beginning December 1, 2024. A special presale price of \$15 per book will be in effect from December 1, 2024, until January 31, 2025. At the end of January 2025, books will be available at the HQ Bookstore at a higher regular price.

We believe that this 5th edition Praises of the Buddha deserves the widest circulation possible as a volume unique in its extensive presentation of wonderful original gathas by HHMH composers and appealing English renditions of familiar Japanese gathas by the Translation Subcommittee of the Hawaii Kyodan Music Committee. And, of course, it includes so many favorite gathas from the past. As this volume highlights our Hawaii-grown creative expressions, it could certainly be considered as a special gift item, for someone's personal use or as a treasured memento. Please see the flyer for more details.

2024 RING YOUR BELL FOR PEACE DAY

Our Honpa Hongwanji Ohana produced another successful interfaith and intergenerational activity PROMOTING PEACE! We take peace for granted freedom isn't free. We need to all work together to maintain peace.

Our "5th Annual Ring Your Bell for Peace Day" is a Zoom program where participants ring their various types of bells, the symbol for Peace, for 5 minutes in support of promoting Peace. This year, 1,700 people rang their bells, 1,200 were students in school!

At 8:30 AM, the Pu Kani conch shell and Oli, traditional Hawaiian chant by Saint Louis School Senior, Sgt. Major Kalani Grace opened the program. At 9:00 AM, Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani called for a moment of silence to honor those who sacrificed for us to achieve peace, and then he gave the count down for all participants to ring their bells for peace for 5 minutes! The camera spotlighted everyone ringing their Kansho, their church bells, school bells, dinner bells, jingle bells, cow bells, and chimes; people of all ages, kupuna and keiki, experiencing the exhilaration, the joy, and the gratitude of striving for peace, caring for others, and having hope for a better world. The 5-minute bell ringing is the highlight because we made friends with participants from across the continent, from California, Pennsylvania, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, Washington, Arizona, Maui, Kauai, Big Island of Hawaii, and Oahu. We met school children, temple members, and various religions in addition to Buddhism, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Bahai, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, sharing their messages of peace. Our guest speaker, Ms. Ramona Okumura, sister of Honokaa Hongwanji leader, Mr. Miles Okumura, is a retired prosthetics clinician, restoring missing body parts, volunteering in Gaza, helping young people with new arms and legs. Thankfully, she was able to get out of the bombing in Gaza, to Egypt, and safely home in Seattle. We enjoyed our traditional closing song, "Let There Be Peace on Earth" by BJ Soriano, musical presentation by Hawaii's ukulele virtuoso, and Hawaii's Ambassador for Peace, Mr. Jake Shimabukuro! Awesome!



Hope to see you next year, Monday, Sept. 22, 2025, 8:30 AM!

(Rene Mansho, Peace Day Committee Chair)



2024 MINISTER'S LAY ASSISTANT RETREAT

On October 12-13, 2024, the annual Minister's Lay Assistant (MLA) Retreat convened at the Hawaii Betsuin Temple in Honolulu to train 12 selected lay members to serve their temples and ministers. These "fellow travelers" (followers who learn side-by-side with their ministers) showed resolve and dedication to spend two full demanding days in learning about Jodo Shinshu traditions. Pete Doktor, Alan Goto, Brandon Hee, Jennifer Kane, Rene Mansho, Rod Moriyama, Linda Nagai, Jaryd Oshiro, Raymond Takiue Jr., Dennis Tashiro, Evan Watarida, and Wayne Yoshioka participated for their temples.

The primary focus was on how and why Sunday services are performed with workshops on altar setup, Kansho ringing, chanting, elements of the service, and Dharma messages. A faculty of Reverends Umitani, Baba, Hashimoto, Higa, and Soga; along with guest Rev. Dr. Jeff Wilson also provided insight on the additional roles of the MLAs in their temples, such as new visitor greeting and tours, MC scripting, and leading discussions.

Participating is an excellent way to learn and understand Shin Buddhist teachings. Temple ministers select lay members who show interest and integrity to represent their temples. The 2025 MLA Retreat will be held on October 25-26 at Hawaii Betsuin in Honolulu. Financial subsidies are available to support this training program.

(Dexter Mar, MLA Retreat Coordinator)



HONORING SERVICE AND DEDICATION: ANNUAL APPRECIATION GATHERING FOR RETIRED MINISTERS AND SPOUSES

On Wednesday, November 6, 2024, the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii hosted its Annual Appreciation Gathering to honor retired ministers and their spouses for their invaluable contributions to sharing the Jodo Shinshu teachings throughout Hawaii. Organized by Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani and Hawaii Kyodan President Dr. Warren Tamamoto, the event brought together honored guests for a meaningful day of remembrance, gratitude, and fellowship.

This year's esteemed honorees included: Rev. and Mrs. Thomas Okano, Rev. and Mrs. Shigenori Makino, Rev. and Mrs. Tatsuo Muneto, Rev. Ryoso Toshima, Rev. and Mrs. Kevin Kuniyuki, Mrs. Chihoko Yosemite, Mrs. Hisako Igarashi, Rev. and Mrs. David Nakamoto, Rev. Alan Urasaki, and Mrs. Barbara Brennan.

The day began with a Memorial Service at the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin Hondo. The service included the chanting of Sanbutsuge, a moment of silence to honor the HHMH ministers and spouses who passed away during the past year, and an incense offering led by Rev. Thomas Okano. Bishop Umitani offered a heartfelt message of gratitude, reflecting on the dedication and legacy of the ministers and their families.

Following the service, the celebration continued with an appreciation luncheon at the Bishop's Residence. This intimate gathering provided an opportunity for retired ministers and their spouses to reconnect, share stories, and enjoy laughter and camaraderie. The atmosphere was filled with warmth and joy as participants reminisced about their years of service and celebrated their shared commitment to the Dharma.

Bishop Umitani concluded the day by expressing his profound gratitude to the retirees for their past contributions and ongoing support. He emphasized the important role they continue to play in enriching the mission of Hawaii Kyodan and the wider community.

The Annual Appreciation Gathering is a cherished tradition, serving as a reminder of the enduring impact of retired ministers and their spouses in spreading the teachings of Shinran Shonin and strengthening the Hawaii Kyodan sangha.

(Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani)

