



# Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

## HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

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December 2024

### MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP

*\*Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani delivered the following message at the Hawaii Kyodan Board of Directors Meeting on December 7, 2024.*

Good morning. As this is the final Board of Directors Meeting for the year, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation to the ministers and lay leaders of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii for your unwavering leadership and dedication. Your commitment is deeply valued, and I sincerely thank you for your continued efforts in achieving our shared mission.

I have submitted my written report, which also includes updates from my role as the Buddhist Study Center (BSC) Interim Director. If you have any questions or would like to know more details, please contact me.

As I shared in the most recent HQ Update, we hosted the Temple Presidents Retreat at the BSC on November 16. This retreat welcomed 26 temple presidents or their representatives and was designed to create a peaceful and engaging environment for networking, interaction, and mutual support.

The retreat was very well-received, and I would like to share some of the participants' comments:

- *"It was good to talk to others in the same position."*
- *"Now I know that I have a network of resources if I need any help."*
- *"We are not alone."*
- *"Very engaging and meaningful."*
- *"This was so helpful as a new president coming in."*
- *"It was wonderful to network with everyone."*

As the retreat concluded, presidents expressed a renewed sense of purpose and reassurance. They returned to their temples with fresh ideas and the confidence that they are supported by a strong network of fellow presidents and the Headquarters.

While there is no simple solution to the challenges facing our temples, districts, and state organization, retreats like this remind us that we can navigate these challenges together. Each of you plays an indispensable role in HHMH, and your participation is vital to our collective efforts.

In many ways, our work is like playing a soccer match. Imagine a soccer field where the goal represents our shared mission in the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii—to spread the Dharma and nurture our communities.

In soccer, no single player can control the entire game, no matter how skilled they are. Each player has a role, and success depends on everyone working together, understanding their responsibilities, and trusting their teammates.

Sometimes, the ball moves smoothly down the field, just as our projects and goals progress seamlessly. Other times, obstacles arise—like opposing players blocking our path. When the ball is intercepted, it's easy to feel frustrated. But in soccer, no single player is blamed. Instead, the team regroups, adjusts its strategy, and works together to recover and move forward.

There are moments of joy when we score a goal—celebrating a successful event, reaching a milestone, or welcoming more people to the temple. These achievements are the result of shared effort and determination. Every pass, every attempt, and every step forward contributes to the greater game.

Our journey in HHMH is a collaborative one. Ministers, Kyodan Board Members, Temple Presidents, Temple members ... each of us plays a vital role, and by working together, we will overcome challenges, celebrate successes, and continue toward our shared goal of spreading the Nembutsu teachings and serving our communities.

Thank you for your leadership, dedication, and commitment to the growth of HHMH. Let us continue to move forward together. Namo Amida Butsu.

Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani

## CHANGE OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF JODO SHINSHU HONGWANJI-HA

Honzan has announced the members of the new Governing Board of Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha effective on December 20, 2024, at the Special Session of Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha diet.

総長	池田行信	Governor General IKEDA Gyoshin
総務	荻野昭裕	Governor OGINO Shoyu
総務	藤山憲照	Governor FUJIYAMA Kensho - in charge of International Department
総務	仲尾史峰	Governor NAKAO Shiho
副総務	河原善雄	Vice Governor KAWAHARA Zenyu

## 2025 LIVING TREASURES OF HAWAII

After reviewing an abundance of highly impressive nominations, the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i and the Living Treasures Selection Committee are pleased to announce their selections for the 2025 Living Treasures of Hawai'i:

**Dennis Sueo Agena** has spent over five decades mentoring thousands of young athletes, teaching not only basketball fundamentals but also life lessons in respect, teamwork, and integrity as the founder of the Kalakaua Basketball Clinic in Kalihi. Revered for his humility and dedication, Coach Agena's influence extends far beyond the court, inspiring countless youth to pursue higher education and become impactful members of the community.

**William Wallace Char, Jr. (Bill Char)** is a master lei-maker and cultural steward who, over the past 50 years, has been revitalizing and innovating the traditional Hawaiian art of lei-making, blending ancestral wisdom with modern artistry. Renowned for his humility and dedication, Bill has mentored countless students, enriched iconic community events, and elevated the cultural significance of lei-making in Hawai'i and beyond.

**Neil Jacob Kaho'okele Hannahs** is a visionary leader in cultural and natural resource stewardship, renowned for his transformative approach to 'āina-based education and sustainable land management across Hawai'i. As founder of Ho'okele Strategies and the First Nations Futures Program, his work empowers communities, fosters indigenous leadership, and ensures the preservation of Hawaiian culture and environmental sustainability for generations to come.

**Victoria Holt Takamine** is a celebrated kumu hula, cultural advocate, teacher and mentor who is propelled by a deep love of the Hawaiian people and culture and by her desire to foster an inclusive, culturally-grounded society. A tireless leader, she champions cultural preservation, environmental stewardship, and social justice, with initiatives like the PA'I Foundation and groundbreaking projects such as Ola Ka 'Ilima, an affordable housing and workspace for artists in Kaka'ako.

**Dr. George Joji Tanabe, Jr.** is a distinguished scholar and leader whose lifelong work in Buddhist studies and interfaith understanding has profoundly enriched Hawai'i and the global community. As a former Chair of the University of Hawai'i's Department of Religion and President of BDK Hawai'i, he champions the preservation and promotion of Buddhist teachings and cultural heritage, fostering harmony and mutual respect worldwide.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Living Treasures of Hawaii Recognition Program and Luncheon will be held on Saturday, February 8, 2025, 12:00 p.m. in the Coral Ballroom at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort. Online and mail-in registration options are available on the HHMH website at <https://hongwanjihawaii.com/living-treasures/>. You may also call (808) 522-9200. Early registration is by January 18, 2025. Reservations will not be accepted after January 25, 2025.

## **CHORALFEST 2025**

Choralfest 2025 of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii will take place at the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin on the weekend of September 20 and 21, 2025. This follows the long COVID interruption after the Choralfests of 2018. To bring alive the joy of the Buddha-Dharma in word and harmonized melody, the festival choir will be conducted once again by Nola Nahulu, who, in addition to directing many local choral groups—the Hawaii Opera Chorus and Hawaii Youth Opera Chorus among them—is also a Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii Living Treasure. The piano accompanist will be Francis Okano.

If you wish to participate in the festival choir, please register with your temple. Your temple will turn in completed registration forms by April 30, 2025.

You may reserve rooms at the special group rate at the Pagoda Hotel by accessing the link, <http://honpahi.link/pagoda>, and specifying the special group rate, under the group name "HHMH Choralfest." The last date to book is August 18, 2025. Extended stays may be booked at the group rate for 2 days before and after the event dates. You may also call Reservations at (808) 941-6611 for rooms and mention the group name "HHMH Choralfest."

Upon close of the Choralfest registration, singers will receive music booklets and access to MP3 files or CD recordings for required practice. We hope to have broad participation of singers who will make Choralfest 2025 part of the post-pandemic joyous resumption of Hawaii Hongwanji's musical and spiritual enrichment.

## PROPAGATION PROGRAM GRANT

Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's Propagation Program Grant Committee would like to announce to all of you that propagation program grants are available for "New and wonderful ideas for propagating Nembutsu teachings into our community." Would you like to share your wonderful and creative Dharma projects with our community? If so, take action right away! We all are looking forward to seeing your innovative ideas!

The committee reviews all grant applications which meet the following criteria:

1. New, innovative, creative ideas or activities focusing on Buddhist Education and the propagation of the Dharma.
2. Each project may be funded only once within 5 years.
3. The maximum amount of the grant must not exceed \$10,000.00
4. The project would have statewide implications/potential.

For more information regarding this program or to apply, please check with your resident minister or HQ.

## COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS UPDATE

The Committee on Social Concerns made the following donations from our Social Welfare Fund in the final quarter of 2024. We renewed our commitment to supporting worthy organizations and programs making a positive impact in our community addressing food insecurity, mental health, homelessness, community resiliency, and LGBTQIA+ support among other important community concerns. Mahalo for your continued support of our mission to share the living Dharma through compassionate action.

\$1,000	Hawaii Red Cross
\$2,000	A Cup of Cold Water (Maui)
\$2,000	Maui Farm
\$2,000	Hawaii Food Bank
\$2,000	Maui Food Bank
\$1,000	The Food Basket (Hawaii Island Food Bank)
\$500	Kauai Food Bank
\$500	Kauai Independent Food Bank
\$1,000	Honokaa Hongwanji Feed the Keiki and Kupuna Program
\$2,500	Family Promise of Hawaii
\$1,000	Lanakila Pacific
\$2,000	Ma'o Farms
\$2,500	The Interfaith Alliance Hawaii
\$2,500	Pacific Health Ministry
\$1,000	Kokua Mau
\$1,000	Hawaii People's Fund
\$1,000	Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center
\$1,000	Spill the Tea Café
\$2,000	Hawaii Community Foundation Maui Strong Fund
\$2,000	World Central Kitchen
<u>\$1,000</u>	<u>Salvation Army</u>
<b>\$31,500</b>	<b>Total</b>

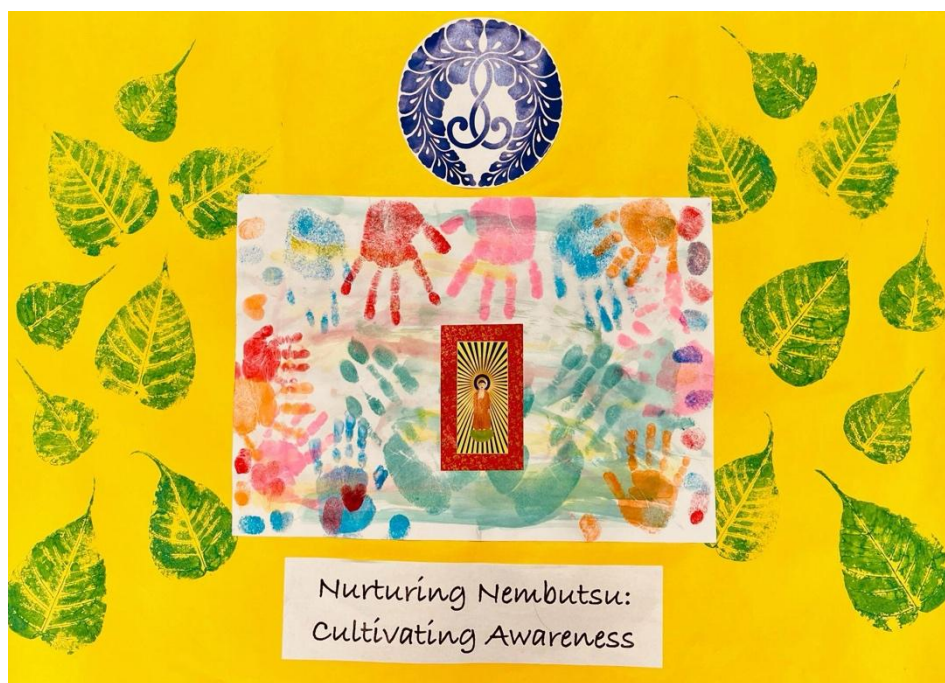
Please consider your own contribution to any of these or other worthy organizations making a difference in our community. Non-profits are a vital part of our social safety net that helps keep our community strong.

A friendly reminder about the **Dana Matching Grant Program** which was created to encourage the practice of Dana and to amplify the power of giving. The grant enables temples and organizations affiliated with Hawaii Kyodan with the ability to double the impact of their charitable giving to non-profit organizations. The Dana Matching Grant will match your temple or affiliated organization's donation amount—dollar-for-dollar up to \$1,500 per grant—to double the impact your Dana in the community. For more information contact Committee Chair, Rev. Blayne Higa at [bhiga@honpahi.org](mailto:bhiga@honpahi.org).

### HMMH 2025 THEME/SLOGAN POSTER CONTEST

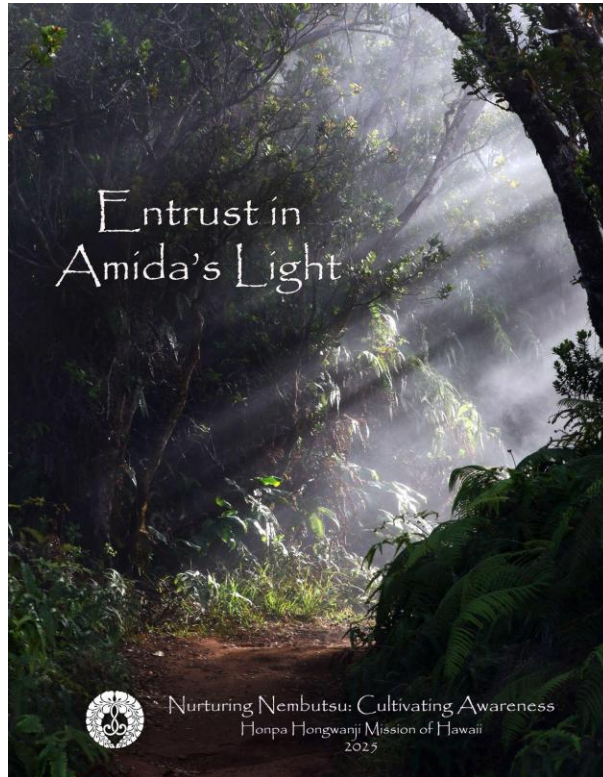
Our first annual HMMH Theme/Slogan Poster Contest has concluded. The chairpersons were Reverend Shawn Yagi and Debbie Kubota. The judges were Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani, Rimban Yuika Hasebe, and Ms. Yumi Suzuki (HMMH Calendar Committee Chair). Every submission was outstanding. We are thrilled to announce the winners who stood out for their exceptional creativity and connection to our theme:

- **1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Aiea Hongwanji Mission Sangha and Dharma School – *"Global Awareness of Interdependence Brings Peace"* Note: "Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii" and the year "2025" will be added to the artwork before poster printing.





- **2<sup>nd</sup> Place:** Alan Kubota, Hawaii Betsuin – *"Revealing the Truth"*



- **3<sup>rd</sup> Place:** Masako Sakata, Na'alehu Hongwanji – *"Nurturing Nembutsu: Cultivating Awareness"*
- **4<sup>th</sup> Place:** Dave Atcheson, Hawaii Betsuin – *"Going Deep"*
- **5<sup>th</sup> Place:** Masako Sakata, Na'alehu Hongwanji – *"In Gratitude We Call Out Namo Amida Butsu"*

The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place winning artworks will be turned into posters and distributed to all temples across the state. Please be on the lookout for the posters at your temples in early 2025 and all submissions online on the HHMH website.