



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

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FEBRUARY 2026

HMMH 114TH GISEIKAI LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii
114th Legislative Assembly
February 21, 2026

Photo courtesy of Alan Kubota, Lenscapes Photography

BISHOP'S WELCOME MESSAGE

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the 114th Giseikai, the Legislative Assembly of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. I would like to thank all of you—our delegates, observers, and guests—for taking the time, despite your busy schedules, to participate in this Giseikai. I am deeply grateful for your dedication and for all that you do for the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.



Whether this is your first Giseikai or you have attended many over the years, I sincerely hope that this session will be a meaningful one for all of us—that we will enjoy our time together, meet new Dharma friends, engage in good conversations and thoughtful discussions, and cultivate a sense of oneness as

the Hongwanji Sangha. Your dedication and commitment truly form the foundation of the Hongwanji and enable us to move forward.

I would like to extend a warm welcome and aloha to our special guests: Mr. Glenn Inanaga and Mr. Jeffrey Matsuoka from the Buddhist Churches of America; Ms. Laura Sugimoto from the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada; and Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara from the Jodo Shinshu International Office. I am always encouraged and grateful to be connected with our sister organizations on the U.S. Mainland, in Canada, South America, and Japan. I am grateful to Shinran Shonin and the Nembutsu teaching that continue to bring us together beyond borders and distances. Welcome back to Hawaii, and thank you very much for being with us.

Last year, several temples observed important commemorative services: Papaikou Hongwanji's 115th Anniversary; Honohina Hongwanji's 125th Anniversary; Kona Hongwanji BWA's 125th Anniversary; Moiliili Hongwanji BWA's 100th Anniversary; Lihue Hongwanji's 125th Anniversary; and Lanai Hongwanji's Centennial. Our sister organization, the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada, also observed its 120th Anniversary. At the same time, we witnessed the closing of the Waianae Hongwanji Mission, which officially closed its doors at the end of last year.

I was fortunate to take part in many of these commemorative services. As I prepared messages for them, I spent time learning about each temple's history. Every temple has its own unique story. When I reflect on the ministers and members who laid the foundations of these temples, protected them through turbulent times, and ensured that this precious legacy would be passed on to future generations, I am deeply moved by their commitment, vision, and perseverance.

The history of our Hongwanji temples is truly a collection of living stories—stories of countless individuals who gathered, supported one another, and walked the Nembutsu path together.

More than one hundred years ago, ministers' responsibilities extended far beyond the temple walls. Records tell us that many ministers traveled 20 or 30 miles from their homes—sometimes on horseback, sometimes by slow-moving train, and often on foot. They endured sun, rain, and strong winds. They lost their way in mountains and fields, fell into ditches, and faced unwelcoming words and harsh criticism. And yet, they continued on. Guided by the Nembutsu and sustained by the support of devoted members, they dedicated their lives to sharing the Buddha-Dharma.

There is one story that especially touched my heart—the story of Rev. Hiseki Miyasaki, who served the Lihue Hongwanji Mission for 45 years from 1902 to 1948.

A man once invited Rev. Miyasaki to his home to hold a Dharma gathering. On the appointed day, Rev. Miyasaki walked sixteen miles to reach the home—only to be told that no such invitation had been made and that he was not welcome. Wearing his minister's robe, he did not argue. He quietly walked away and stopped at a nearby coffee shop for dinner. When he shared what had happened and his commitment to sharing the Dharma, the shop owner was deeply moved by his sincerity. The owner invited several local residents to gather, and right there, in that small coffee shop, Rev. Miyasaki held a Dharma service.

This story speaks to his unwavering commitment to sharing the Buddha-Dharma and to offering spiritual guidance to the Issei immigrants and their families on Kauai. I cannot help but feel deep respect and admiration for his burning devotion to the Dharma. I often wonder what motivated ministers such as Rev. Hiseki Miyasaki to continue sharing the Dharma despite the many hardships they faced. I believe it was their deep appreciation for Amida Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion.

Having realized that their lives were embraced by Amida Buddha's Compassion and having received comfort and joy through the Nembutsu, they could not help but move forward to share that joy, gratitude, and assurance with others. Their work was not simply a means of livelihood; it was an expression of their firm belief that Amida Buddha's Compassion would enrich the lives of immigrants and their families in this new land of Hawaii.

I, too, believe that Amida Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion can enrich people's lives today. Even as science and modern technologies—such as artificial intelligence—continue to advance at a remarkable pace, I believe the Dharma still offers meaning, guidance, and assurance in times of uncertainty and isolation.

People today experience feelings of disconnection, being lost, or being overwhelmed by life's complexities. They are searching for messages that guide them through darkness and uncertainty. They are searching for people and communities that welcome them with empathy and care. They are searching for a place where their entire existence is affirmed as they are, and where they feel they are not alone. That is precisely what we, as the Hongwanji, can offer.

The word *Hongwanji* literally means “the temple of Amida Buddha's Vow.” Our temples are places where the *Hongwan*—Amida Buddha's Vow—prevails, and where people find comfort in its warm embrace. Our temples have been such places for generations, and it is our shared responsibility to ensure that they continue to be so.

Each of us gathered here today has a role and responsibility in embodying Amida Buddha's Vow. Through our words and actions, the all-inclusive Wisdom and Compassion of Amida Buddha are shared and made real in the lives of those who come to our temples. I sincerely thank each of you for what you do at your respective temples and districts.

I found the following statement in the 80th Giseikai booklet.

“Since its humble beginning, the Giseikai convened for 80 times over the past 84 years. Despite the many changes it underwent, the significance and value of the Giseikai can be understood as being the highest body that constantly defines the goals and aims of the Hawaii Kyodan. The Hawaii Kyodan observed its centennial in 1989 and has now entered into the 2nd century of existence. It behooves each and every one of us to plan a propagational program and temple administration conducive to the needs of our present generation. To transmit the Nembutsu dharma in a new era most effectively, the Hawaii Kyodan must revise the methods of reasoning and implement a strong and effective program of propagation. Standing at the threshold of our 2nd century, the Giseikai, as the legislative body of the Hawaii Kyodan, has a greater role to play in projecting the Hawaii Kyodan into the maelstrom of our ever-changing world.”

With these words, we are reminded that the Giseikai is an important gathering where we reflect on who we are, where we stand, and how we move forward together as the Hongwanji Sangha. As the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii faces many challenges ahead, it becomes all the more important that we carefully observe and remain mindful of the needs of our surrounding communities, and share the Dharma in ways that truly respond to our time. That is not easy. We all know. But I believe we are making a difference. We are contributing something unique and invaluable to the enrichment of our community. I humbly ask for your continued support and cooperation in making our Hongwanji truly *Hongwanji*—a place where Amida Buddha's profound aspiration and compassion prevail.

Once again, welcome to the 114th Giseikai. Thank you very much. Namo Amida Butsu.

Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani
February 20, 2026

GISEIKAI MESSAGE FROM THE JODO SHINSHU HONGWANJI-HA GOVERNOR GENERAL BISHOP GIKO SONOKI

On the occasion of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii 114th *Giseikai* at the Hawaii Betsuin, I humbly extend my appreciation to you, the ministers and sangha representatives from throughout the state of Hawaii. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing efforts in propagating the Jodo Shinshu tradition and maintaining the temples within your respective districts, and my deepest respect for your tireless efforts in sharing the Nembutsu teaching across generations in the religiously and culturally diverse American society, even in the midst of the present chaotic situation.



At present, the world is experiencing great division and uncertainty. In addition, international tensions are rising due to the conflict between Russia and NATO allies at the forefront, the situation in the Middle East, and the situation in Taiwan. Furthermore, as natural disasters globally prevail and society becomes increasingly complex as technology rapidly advances, the teaching of Amida Tathagata's Primal Vow is needed more than ever because of its universality that can guide all people regardless of nationality or language.

As one sangha in which the joy of the Nembutsu is shared beyond nation, culture, and language, let us join together and move forward under the organizational principle clearly stated in the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Constitution as, "The organization transmits the wisdom and compassion of Amida Tathagata to all people, and in doing so, contributes to the realization of a society in which everyone, both within and outside of the organization, is able to live a life of spiritual fulfillment."

In closing, it is my hope that the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii will continue to prosper and that many fruitful results will arise from this annual meeting.

February 20, 2026
Governor General Sonoki Giko
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

HMH WELCOMES NEW KYODAN PRESIDENT



During the 114th *Giseikai*, the slate of officers, Advisors, and Directors for the year 2026 was approved by unanimous consent, and the HHMH welcomed **Mr. Michael Munekiyo** as the new statewide Kyodan President.

Mr. Munekiyo has been active at Wailuku Hongwanji since returning to Maui in the late 1980s. He served as Temple President from 1992-1993, 1999-2000, and 2013-2025.

At the statewide level, he served as a past Director on the HHMH's Board of Directors and as a past Advisor to the HHMH's Board. He served as the past Chair of the HHMH's Research and Planning Central Committee and is currently a member of the Bylaws Committee. He previously worked with an Ad Hoc Committee to formulate a new governance and operating structure for the Hawaii State Lay Association (HSLA). In addition, he leads the HHMH's Ad Hoc Lahaina Hongwanji Recovery and Rebuilding Committee, which guides the planning process to rebuild Lahaina Hongwanji.

The HHMH and its members would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation and welcome to Mr. Michael Munekiyo for assuming this leadership role. We would also like to express our gratitude to Dr. Warren Tamamoto, who completed his six years of service as our President.

HHMH OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, ADVISORS, SANMU, AND KANJI FOR 2026

President:	Michael Munekiyo		
Immediate Past President:	Warren Tamamoto		
Vice Presidents:	Joanne Kealoha (H) Gary Murai (M)	Rene Mansho (O) Jill Atwal (HI)	Carol Valentine (K)
Secretary:	Boyd Marumoto	Assistant Secretary:	Carol Yamamura
Treasurer:	John Toguchi	Assistant Treasurer:	Wayne Y. Yoshioka
Advisors:	Joel Determan Evan Watarida Ivan Nakano	Dexter Mar Rodney Moriyama Frederick S. Nonaka	Alan Goto Wayne Fujioka
Honorary Advisors:	Roy Miyamoto	Keiji Kukino	Pieper Toyama
Directors:			
- Honolulu (6):	Cynthia Alm Wayne Y. Yoshioka	Jackie Furuta Joanne Kealoha	John Toguchi Prudence Kusano
- Oahu (5):	Russell Nonaka Carolyn Uchiyama	Rene Mansho Boyd Marumoto	Clifford Togo
- Kauai (2):	Lynne Matsumura	Carol Valentine	
- Maui (4):	Wayde Toyama Gary Murai	Aileen Cockett	Carol Yamamura
- Hawaii (7):	Jill Atwal Margie Kaiser Jennifer Kurohara	Edwin Hara Linda Nagai	Delbert Nishimoto Jason Hashimoto
Sanmu (4):	Rev. Kazunori Takahashi Rev. Blayne Higa	Rev. Shinkai Murakami	Rev. Yuika Hasebe
Kanji (5):	Rev. David Fujimoto (H) Rev. Kerry Kiyohara (M)	Rev. Joshin Kamuro (O) Rev. Satoshi Tomioka (HI)	Rev. Tomo Hojo (K)



Photo courtesy of Alan Kubota, Lenses Photography

CONDOLENCES

Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani conferred the following posthumous titles (Ingo) on those who recently passed away and made exceptional contributions to the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii and its efforts to share the Nembutsu teaching.

Mr. Gordon Watanabe (Mililani Hongwanji Mission):

JO-RAKU-IN 常樂院, meaning "The one who attained the eternal bliss"

Mr. Rowan Matsumoto (Paauilo Hongwanji Mission):

HEN-JO-IN 遍照院, meaning "The one who is embraced by the light that shines over the worlds of the ten quarters."

JINJI - MINISTERIAL ASSIGNMENT

Rev. Shingo Furusawa, an Associate Minister of the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin, will be assigned to the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin as its **Fuku Rimban (Vice Chief Minister)** effective April 1, 2026. Rev. Furusawa will continue serving as the Liaison Minister for the Windward Buddhist Temple.

BUDDHIST STUDY CENTER SPRING FESTIVAL

The Buddhist Study Center will be holding a Spring Festival on **April 18, 2026**, at 1436 University Ave. The goal of this event is for temple and community members to enjoy an intergenerational event for the whole family, including gratitude chain, body & brain yoga, reading together, and intergenerational conversations workshops where you can have quick conversations between older and younger generations. There will also be food, andagi, matcha with a minister, "old time games", ask a Jr. YBA your tech questions, and more. Bring your whole family to the BSC on April 18!



Please share [the attached flyer](#) and above description with your temple members. For the Oahu and Honolulu District temple presidents and ministers, we ask that you kindly promote the Spring Festival in your temple newsletters if possible.

YESS CAMP

YESS Camp 42 will be held on **April 3-5, 2026**, at Kona Hongwanji with Rev. Blayne Higa as the guest speaker. The theme is "The Dharma Awakens" based on the Star Wars franchise. There are many fun activities planned for the weekend including a campfire, skits, Star Wars movie night, community service project at Greenwell Gardens, Easter Egg Hunt, and attending Hanamatsuri service. The main value of YESS Camp is the mixers, games, and bonding that happens between the campers and counselors over the weekend and allows them to get away from the hustle and bustle of high school and college life to reflect on the Dharma.



Any youth aged 13-23 with an interest in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism (no experience necessary), is encouraged to attend. They should sign up at tinyurl.com/yesscamp42 and follow yess_camp on Instagram for more information about camp. We're also having a special rate for first time campers at \$60; regular registration is \$90 until March 10, and final registration is \$120 until March 25. Registration includes all lodging, food, activities, and transportation for the weekend but does not include flights to Kona. Flight subsidies will be available for neighbor island campers. [Flyer available.](#)

YBICSE

The Young Buddhist International Cultural Exchange (YBICSE) will be held from June 30 to July 9, 2026, in Osaka, Kyoto, and Hiroshima, Japan. The program is open to high school graduates under the age of 24. Five participants will be selected to attend along with Rev. Blayne Nakasone Sakata as the minister advisor. The program includes a visit to our main temple Honzan, historical founder sites around Kyoto, Peace Tour in Hiroshima, and fellowship opportunities with other youth from the US mainland, Canada, South America, and Japan. The estimated cost is \$2000, and the application deadline is April 25. Please share [the attached flyer](#) and [tentative program schedule](#), and encourage your youth, especially those who have graduated and are back for the summer, to apply to this special Japan trip.



TEMPLE LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT

Workshop for Hawaii State Lay Association via Zoom
Saturday, March 14, 2026, from 9:30 am to 11:00 am
Presenter: Pieper Toyama



Learn how Jikoen Hongwanji recruited new leaders for the temple's board of directors. After a few years of work, Jikoen now has a 17-member voting board made up of only one person who is over 70 years old, and four who are under 40 years old. The Strategies used by Jikoen can be used at your temple to encourage others to take leadership roles, rebuild leadership, or add to current efforts. The presentation will include interactive activities and takeaways that can be used right away. Please register by March 11 to receive the Zoom link. [The flyer is attached.](#)

HONPA HONGWANJI HILO BETSUIN SPRING SEMINAR

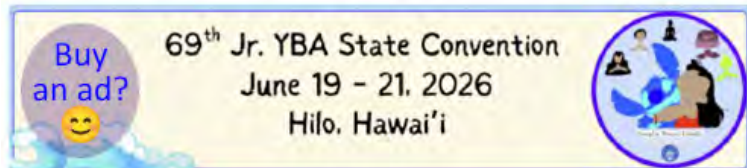
Sunday, March 15, 2026, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
To be held in person and on Zoom at the Sangha Hall Conference Room, 424 Kilauea Avenue, Hilo

Lecturer: Dr. Kenneth Kenshin Tanaka, Professor Emeritus at Musashino University, Tokyo
Topic: "Everyday Shin Buddhist Path Toward a Life of Happiness, Gratitude, and Inner Peace"

Advance registration is requested but not required. Please call (808) 961-6677 or visit the temple office at 398 Kilauea Avenue, Hilo. The [flyer with the Zoom link](#) is attached.



JR. YBA STATE CONVENTION



The United of Hawaii Jr. YBA will host the 69th Jr. YBA State Convention on **June 19-21, 2026, in Hilo**. The convention theme is “Sangha Means Family” which is a spin off the Disney movie, Lilo and Stitch. Temples, organizations, and businesses are invited to support this fun weekend event by purchasing an ad in the convention booklet which will be printed and distributed to all the convention attendees. The deadline to submit an ad is April 1st. An [ad/donation form](#) with contact information is attached. 🙏

GREEN HONGWANJI COMMITTEE

As a fun way to engage and celebrate Earth Day 2026, the Green Hongwanji Committee (GHC) invites you to share your video clips and images of Green activities from your temple, Sangha members, or organization. We can help turn what you share into finished videos of up to 3 minutes to share within our Sanghas, post to HHMH social media and the HHMH website, and/or screen at Earth Day Services. Vertical (portrait-orientation) video clips are preferred and may be emailed to green.committee@honpahi.org. See the attached memo for more complete information!



P.S. This project dovetails nicely with the Short Video Project initiative of the Commission on Buddhist Education. Green Hongwanji can be one source of videos for this effort. #UniqueHongwanji videos are another category. For an example, visit honpahi.link/exreel.

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

Access Japanese-Language Hawaii Newspaper Archives Online

The HHMH Archives Committee recently learned that *Nippu Jiji / Hawaii Times* Photo Archive is available online through the Hoover Institution Library and Archives, the same organization that houses our digitized *Kyodan Jiho* pre-war Hongwanji newspaper. The *Nippu Jiji* was a Japanese-language newspaper in Hawaii with archived issues beginning in 1906. It became the *Hawaii Times* in 1942 and continued through 1985.

Here is [a link to search the photo archive for "Hongwanji."](#) Take a look — you may find items for temples you are particularly interested in.

Archives for issues of the [Nippu Jiji newspaper](#) and the [Hawaii Hochi](#) are also available on the Hoover site. These may turn out to be invaluable resources for our research into Hongwanji history in Hawaii.