

“THE CALLING VOICE”

Ka Leo Kāhea



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII

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From Protection to Presence: BWA Conference on Nembutsu

Participants reflect on gratitude, leadership and their role in today's Hongwanji

BY CLAIRE TAMAMOTO
PRESIDENT, FEDERATION OF BWAS

Energy, excitement and gratitude are some of the words that describe the 15th Buddhist Women's Associations State Membership Conference of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i Federation. Held on March 28-29, it centered on the theme “Nurturing Nembutsu: Sharing Gratitude.”

Participants were welcomed to Ala Moana Hotel by friendly faces, received a souvenir convention bag with goodies and a hope that the two days would produce a meaningful experience.

The impressive altar, beautiful floral offerings and reflective services set a positive tone for the business part of the conference. For a few, this was their first experience of being a part of services and seeing how the BWA conducts business.

Keynote speaker Michiko Miyaji Inanaga challenged attendees to consider the important role we have in

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Courtesy of Alan Kubota

Keynote speaker Michiko Miyaji Inanaga reminded BWA members that the Nembutsu needs our presence, not our protection.



Photos Courtesy of Wayde Toyama

Kahului Hongwanji Mission's temple, left, sits above the Kitchen and Social Hall, center. Both sustained little to no damage. But at right, floodwaters seeped into the Preschool, where damages are likely to exceed \$30,000.

Record Rainstorms Damage Kahului Preschool

Volunteers, families and supporters quickly mobilize to restore, reopen and plan for the future

BY GAIL S. TAGASHIRA
MANAGING EDITOR
KA LEO KĀHEA

The rains that started in Central Maui on Friday, March 13, didn't seem serious to Carolyn Kaya, but they felt strange: All day long, buckets of water would pour down for a while, then lighten up, then repeat.

The next day, Kahului Hongwanji Mission's secretary expected a quiet, routine Saturday checking on rummage sale items she had boxed up and stacked near the judo classroom and it was her turn to feed Midnight, the temple's shy, gray cat.

As she drove the short distance from her Wailuku home along Pu'unēnē Avenue, water pooled in the streets, but it was passable and the winds were moderate.

She parked in her usual spot in front of the temple, walked around the corner and started to head down the sloping ramp toward the office when she got the surprise of her life.

“I was shocked to see that pond of water and decided to walk around the back to reach the office,” she said. “There was just so much water at the base of the ramp. I had never seen it flood this much.”

She called out to Midnight, but the feral cat, first adopted by former minister Rev. Richard Tennes, was nowhere. Usually, he would cautiously saunter up to sangha members, knowing he would be fed.

Shortly after 8 a.m., with the water levels rising in front of the school, Mrs. Kaya took photos and sent them to Kahului Hongwanji president Wayde



Doug Toyama works to clear a drain as floodwaters begin receding at Kahului Hongwanji Preschool.

Toyama, who quickly called his Dad, Douglas Toyama.

“We've had flooding in the past so I wasn't surprised,” Wayde said. “I figured we could just deal with it and after the water level subsided, we could open the doors on Sunday.”

The Toyamas texted resident minister Rev. Ai Hironaka, who was in his residence, asking if he would check on the ponding around the buildings.

Once Rev. Hironaka sent photos, the Toyamas were on their way from Makawao, expecting the worst.

As they drove, Douglas Toyama suggested setting up the extra sump pump they kept in storage in case of big floods. But even with the second pump, draining the volume of water was slow going once they got started.

They were both taken aback by the sight of the water levels, which had risen to about a foot along the preschool building.

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Passing the Torch at the 114th Giseikai

Delegates mark a change in leadership while addressing the challenges facing temples across Hawai'i today

BY DENNIS TASHIRO AND
PRUDENCE KUSANO
WINDWARD BUDDHIST
TEMPLE

More than 120 ministers, lay representatives and observers attended the 114th Legislative Assembly, or Giseikai, of Honpa Hongwanji Hawai'i Betsuin on Feb. 20-21 in person at Honpa Hongwanji Hawai'i Betsuin and online via Zoom.

The annual session was defined by a transition in leadership, as delegates elected Michael Munekiyo as Hawai'i Kyodan president, to succeed Dr. Warren Tamamoto after his six years of service.

The handover underscored continuity and change, with discussions and resolutions focusing on sustaining temple communities, addressing minister shortages and positioning the orga-



Courtesy of Dennis Tashiro

Officers, delegates and ministers at the 114th Legislative Assembly, on the morning of the first of two days, wait for proceedings to begin in the Social Hall of Honpa Hongwanji Hawai'i Betsuin.

nization for the future amid ongoing social and economic challenges.

The Assembly opened with a service officiated by Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani assisted by Kanji Ministers.

Offering of Incense was made by individuals representing 11 organizations including Buddhist Churches of

America, Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada, the Hawaii Ministers Association and councils from Honolulu, O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i Island and Kauai.

Rev. Kerry Kiyohara of Makawao Hongwanji Mission read a message from the Governor General of Jodo Shins-hu Hongwanji-ha, Bishop

Giko Sonoki, who expressed his appreciation to representatives from throughout Hawai'i for their efforts propagating the Jodo Shinshu temples in the State.

Bishop Sonoki cited ongoing worldwide chaos, military

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

Today, I write to you with a heavy heart.

Mourning the tragic events in Minnesota caused by state-sanctioned violence and fear, I grieve the lives lost and the pain families and communities are experiencing, and I send thoughts of loving kindness and healing to all who are suffering injustice and abuse from unchecked power.

When Japanese and Japanese-American families

Awakening to Compassion in Turbulent Times

were targeted because of race, national origin and religion, stripped of their dignity, imprisoned without due process guaranteed by our Constitution, many chose to be silent. Will we remain silent in the face of injustice today?

Our world feels more divided than ever, and many of us wonder: Where is compassion today? Relentless images of violence, exclusion and suffering leave us drained and hopeless. Walls — both seen and unseen — divide us from one another.

We tend to include only those who agree with us, benefit us, or fit within familiar boundaries, and ignore, dismiss and abuse or even harm others as if their lives do not matter. I am left wondering whose dignity truly matters.

During challenging times, Shinran Shonin's

BISHOP'S CORNER

teachings offer us a meaningful and grounding perspective on compassion. True compassion does not start with our own strength, goodness, or moral effort, but arises when we open ourselves to a compassion far greater than our own—the limitless compassion of Amida Buddha, the dynamic power of Awakening. Realizing we are recipients of Great Compassion, our perspective shifts.

Before experiencing this compassion, we may feel like we're walking alone on a dark, uncertain path. But upon awakening to Amida Buddha's compassion, we see that we are walking together with others, guided by a light that never abandons us.

Compassion is not some-

thing we are commanded to practice or compelled to produce — it naturally arises from gratitude. Saying Namo Amida Butsu is our way of showing appreciation — thank you for accepting me just as I am.

Through true gratitude, we are gently guided to live with care, humility and openness toward others. True gratitude forms the foundation for a more peaceful, humane and just world.

When we look at our society today, we may feel discouraged by the lack of compassion we see around us.

Yet Shinran Shonin's teaching invites us to transcend despair by awakening to the compassion that already sustains us. From that awakening, we are moved to see others' suffering as our own and to stand in solidarity with those in need.

Compassion is not a he-

roic act, but a way of being — rooted in gratitude, shaped by humility, and expressed through small, everyday encounters.

Kind eyes, gentle words, a listening ear, a willingness to remain present with another's pain are the natural expressions of gratitude in a life embraced by Great Compassion.

Especially in uncertain and turbulent times, may we continue to immerse ourselves in the compassion that flows within and through us. And may that compassion quietly, steadily, and sincerely manifest in our words, actions, and relationships.

Compassion is our beacon of hope as we navigate this dark and chaotic time. May we always find comfort and courage in Amida Buddha's unwavering embrace.

Namo Amida Butsu



REV. DAVID FUJIMOTO
MŌ'ILĪ'ILĪ AND 'EWA
HONGWANJI MISSION

Within our tradition of Jōdo Shinshū, the principle of taking responsibility is deeply interwoven with the process of healing, both for the individual and the community.

Our Founder, Shinran Shōnin, acknowledged the significance of wholehearted self-reflection and personal accountability as a path toward our liberation, humility and authentic compassion.

In his writings, he remarked, "I am incapable of any good, and my mind is

filled with evil."

Such a statement is not mere self-defeat, but rather an invitation to recognize our vulnerabilities, limitations and delusions.

By assuming responsibility for our actions and acknowledging the reality of our own shortcomings, we give ourselves permission to access the healing power of Amida Buddha's Infinite Compassion.

Many times, we are held hostage to our own shortcomings and vulnerabilities and live a life wearing a mask, as if to hide from the world.

Shinran, I believe understood this, as I am sure in many aspects of his life, felt vulnerable, as he was pretty much shut out of the relationship he had tried to nurture in the Nembutsu and with his teacher, Hōnen.

Shinran further stated, "The more we realize the depth of our ignorance, the more we appreciate the Boundless Wisdom and Compassion of Amida."

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Thus, healing starts when we accept responsibility for our thoughts and deeds and let go of the burden of pride and self-righteousness.

Through humility and gratitude, we are able to overcome guilt and shame, permitting ourselves to be enveloped by Amida's unconditional benevolence.

As Shinran taught, "Only with deep trust in Amida's Vow can we find true peace."

In the context of Jōdo Shinshū, taking responsibility is not an isolated act, but a step toward healing through connection with the Buddha and the wider community. By confronting ourselves honestly, we cultivate compassion, understanding, and ultimately, a sense of wholeness.

As interconnected beings, we understand too, that if we truly are to cultivate ourselves, the natural process is to cultivate our society as

well, and try to make it a better place, and that is the realization and overcoming of our own limited lives.

I recently read, "We hold onto wounds not because they define us, but because we're afraid of what might be left behind."

In pastoral care, our process of care is such that we search the wound to identify where our grief or suffering comes from, then we identify the wound, where we recognize where and try to understand the impact of the wound.

From there, like Buddhism, we go ahead and touch the wound, not poking and prodding, but with compassion. We connect with others and ourselves through compassion and empathy.

From there we clean the wound. Through hearing the call of Namo Amida Butsu, we are able to start the process of healing the wounds, acknowledging our shortcomings, our vulnerabilities, and ignorance.

Taking Responsibility Leads to Healing

Through the healing process, we work with the wound, continuing to live the life of the Nembutsu, we take responsibility and engage in our own healing process while nurturing the healing in others.

Finally, we see the naturalness of healing the wound. We continue to reconnect, rededicate, and renew our lives in the Nembutsu by living a life of appreciation and gratitude.

As we slowly approach the Ōbon, let us try to reflect and make every effort to be present for ourselves. What are we doing to heal our wounds, the wounds of those we are surrounded by?

Many wounds are needed to be tended in our world today. How will you help tend to them?

Let us together plant the seeds to allow the Nembutsu to be a solution, not just a suggestion of mere recitation.

Reflect . . . Rededicate . . . Renew.

Rethinking Buddhist Education at the 2026 BSC Summer Session

Rev. Dr. Aaron Proffitt will bring a family-centered perspective to this summer's revised program format

Buddhist Study Center's Summer Session will take a new approach this year, opening with a half-day, family-oriented session followed by nine seminars at all five Hawai'i districts.

Starting July 26 and continuing through Aug. 9, Rev. Dr. Aaron Proffitt of the University of Albany-SUNY faculty will lead sessions creatively delivering the Dharma.

The first session on July 26, "Buddhism and Family Culture" at Jikoen Hongwanji at 9 a.m., will draw from Rev. Dr. Proffitt's collegiate experiences, as a professor, parent and leader of the Albany Buddhist sangha.

An ordained Jodo Shinsu minister and associate



Rev. Dr. Aaron Proffitt from the University of Albany-SUNY faculty, will be this year's featured speaker for Buddhist Study Center's summer session.

professor of Japanese Studies at the East Asian Studies Department, Rev. Dr. Proffitt will focus on his role as a parent and how the Dharma provides him with resources to build a culture rooted in Buddhist compassion.

Activities for families will be offered at the Jikoen session.

From July 27-29, hybrid seminars at BSC will be held beginning at 6 p.m. at the Center, located at 1436 University Ave.

The sessions are "Entering the Mahayana Multiverse," "Shin Buddhism as Basic Buddhism" and "Buddhism is Simple, Buddhist Studies is Complicated."

An online session for Kauai will follow on July 30 at 6:30 p.m.; on Hawai'i Island on Aug 2; at an Oahu District temple to be determined later on Aug. 4, and closing on Maui on Aug. 8-9.

The Big Island session on Aug. 2 will be an Obon service at Hōluāloa, a temple affiliated with Kona Hongwanji that was closed years ago but recently reopened for services.

An informal Talk Story will follow that 10 a.m. service and at 3 p.m., Rev. Dr. Proffitt will conduct a seminar at Honoka'a.

Originally from Lynchburg, Tennessee, he holds a B.A. and M.A. in religious studies from the University of Colorado and a PhD. in

Buddhist studies from the University of Michigan.

From 2009-2010, he studied Japanese at the Inter-University Center in Yokohama and conducted research as a Fulbright Fellow at Otani University, Koyasan University and Ryukoku University from 2014 to 2015.

He serves as the Buddhist chaplain at the University of Albany Interfaith Center and the Buddhist Student Association.

In 2019, he co-founded the Albany Buddhist Sangha (albanybuddhist.org), a diverse, family-oriented temple serving the greater New York capital region.

Suggested tax-deductible donations for all three BSC sessions is \$30; \$10 for the single evening sessions.

Checks may be made out to HHMH and mailed to 1727 Pali Highway, Honolulu, HI 96813 with "Summer Session" in the memo line.

Updated information on the BSC Summer Session will be available at bschawaii.org



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

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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.

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BY MICHAEL MUNEKIYO
PRESIDENT, HONPA
HONGWANJI MISSION OF
HAWAII

Having started my term this past February, I am quickly finding my footing and adjusting my daily routine to include the tasks required of the Hawai'i Kyodan President.

It is definitely a work in progress, but I am getting the hang of it.

That said, I thank our Past President, Dr. Warren Tamamoto, for leading the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i over the past six years.

I imagine he ascended a similar learning curve. In my observation, his embrace of leadership and care of the Hawai'i Kyodan is a model to follow.

His calm and thoughtful management style deserves our deepest respect and heartfelt gratitude. I look forward to working with Dr. Tamamoto as the transition process continues.

For those of you who may not know me, a quick

bio might be in order.

I was born and raised on Maui, where my parents and grandparents were members of Wailuku Hongwanji.

I grew up at Wailuku Hongwanji — my Dharma roots are anchored there.

My wife Lori and I live in Wailuku with our elderly Lhasa Apso.

Our two daughters are out of the house living with their families on O'ahu and in San Jose, California.

I thought I retired a couple of years ago, but that was merely an illusion.

Where I can, I have been supporting Wailuku Hongwanji, the Lahaina Hongwanji Recovery and Rebuilding Committee, as well as other nonprofits here on Maui. Truth be told, I am an aging and proud Baby Boomer.

Through daily recitation of the Nembutsu, I express gratitude . . . grateful that my physical and cognitive capacities to be useful are still functional. Yet I realize that uncertainty looms with each tick of the clock.

In my previous working life, I was an urban planner and planning consultant. Being a planner for many years taught me a few good things: respect process, empathize with community,

A New Journey Begins

Honpa Hongwanji's new president reflects on leadership, community and humility

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

be humble.

After all, a planner's job does have potential to affect the places in which we live, work and play.

Lessons from my work as a planner will likely come in handy in my role as Hawai'i Kyodan President. Respecting process, empathizing with community, being humble; in my opinion, required ingredients for all leaders in a sound organization.

1. Respecting Process

We are often reminded that countless causes and conditions have brought us to our current life circumstance. As we think about it, some of these may be interpreted as random, others more thoughtful and organized.

Planners operate in systems intended to resolve issues and facilitate decision making through a series of carefully laid out process steps meant to consider direct and indirect consequences, both short-term and long-term.

Understandably, even the best-designed process may not yield outcomes satisfactory to all. Nonethe-

less, it is important that steps taken to address issues and concerns are fair, reasonable and logically sequenced.

2. Empathizing With Community

In day-to-day practical terms, this means taking time to talk story with stakeholders so that we can better understand how they feel about a particular area of concern or actions of an organization.

Feeling what they are feeling — not an easily achievable task, but one worth pursuing.

In the world of planning, encountering opposing points of view on a proposed policy or project is an expectation.

Taking time to talk story with those holding varying viewpoints may not get us to consensus. It will however, give us a sound appreciation of our individual human qualities and preferences.

Not an easy state-of-mind to achieve, but Talking Story with others will help us avoid categorizing positions as "us" or "them." Empathizing with community helps us better understand that each of our lives are unique and valued.

3. Being Humble

Not much to say here.

The concept and related behaviors are recognizable.

However, its practical application is much more difficult as we let our self-centeredness often get in the way.

In the planner's world that I lived in, we researched, analyzed and presented findings as objectively as possible. As process will allow, we also received comments that often challenged our findings.

Nonetheless, we responded as best we could with respect, without widening disharmony. Even if written comments, phone calls or public meeting testimonies received were often at the "less than friendly" end of the spectrum, we understood that humility was an essential ingredient to point us toward common ground.

Respect, empathy and humility; values that will help us negotiate the challenges and uncertainties of managing the Hawai'i Kyodan.

Perhaps equally important, values that convey to our entire sangha that within our Jodo Shinshu tradition, there lies a foundation of compassion and dignity that guides us in how we go about solving problems.

Understanding the Path Through Hōnen's Words and Deeds

Editor's Note: In 1975, Dr. Toshikazu Arai had his first decisive encounter with Shin Buddhism in Hawai'i. For more than 40 years, he devoted his career to the study of Shinran Shonin's writings and thoughts, delivering lectures and seminars throughout and outside Japan. An ordained minister, he is now professor emeritus of Soai University in Osaka. Translating Shin Buddhist texts, for him, comprises an important part of his ministry.

BY REV. DR. TOSHIKAZU
ARAI
PROFESSOR EMERITUS
SOAI UNIVERSITY, OSAKA

Since I have this opportunity to write an essay about the Dharma, I would like to introduce you to Shinran's most voluminous work, "Saihō-shinan-shō."

First, let me explain the meaning of the title. "Saihō" means the land in the west, which is Amida's Pure Land; "shinan" means to show the path to; and "shō" means a collection of short passages.

Therefore, "Saihō-shinan-shō" means "A Collection of Passages Showing the Path to the Land in the West."

I have entitled my English translation of this work "The Path to the Pure Land," published by the American Buddhist Study Center in 2021.

The original document, handwritten by Shinran, has been kept at Senjuji Temple, the mother temple of Shinshū Takada-ha.

Our Hongwanji-ha officially recognized it as an authentic Jōdo Shinshū scripture and included it in the Volume III of the Complete Collection of Jōdo Shinshū Scriptures (Hongwanji Press, 2017).

Recently, the number of scholars and graduate students who are studying this work is increasing.

While the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was first written when Shinran was in his fifties and is intended to present doctrinal discussions, the "Saihō-shinan-shō" was completed

when Shinran was 85 years old and is focused on the words and deeds of Shinran's teacher Hōnen. It consists of three volumes with 28 chapters. Shinran acts as its editor throughout. Now, I shall explain the main features of this work.

Volume I is almost entirely occupied with Hōnen's Dharma lectures. In these lectures, Hōnen assert the authenticity of his new Buddhist school Jōdo-shū. He emphasizes that Amida's virtues are represented by the Name, Namo Amida Butsu, and that people are unconditionally embraced by Amida when they recite the Name.

Hōnen teaches that in the Last-Dharma Age, in which we live, ordinary people are incapable of following the orthodox self-power practices. That is why the path of the Pure Land was laid so that we could be born in Amida's Pure Land by completely relying on Amida's power of the Primal Vow (tariki).

The second volume contains many accounts of Hōnen's extraordinary wisdom and Bodhisattva-like actions. It is here that we can feel Shinran's deep reverence for Hōnen. The following are some of the stories that show Hōnen's brightness.

When Hōnen was young, he studied with a total of four teachers, but in the end, they all became his disciples. When he was asked to give a lecture on the efficacy of the Nembutsu teaching at a grand gathering, his lecture



Rev. Dr. Toshikazu Arai completed the first translation of Shinran's "Saihō-shinan-shō," titling it "The Path to the Pure Land."

was so convincing that none of the scholar monks who were present dared to criticize his presentation. When Hōnen was about to take his last breath, he was able to see Amida Buddha, Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta standing in midair.

The third volume contains eight letters Hōnen wrote to his followers. Of them three were sent to women. These letters show Hōnen's down-to-earth assertion that the Nembutsu teaching is the only path by which the ordinary people of

the Last-Dharma Age could attain birth in the Pure Land.

The chapter that is the most revealing Hōnen's compassionate personality is Chapter 16, "Hōnen's Reply to the Nun Shōnyobō."

Shōnyobō has been identified as the imperial princess Shokushi-Naishinnō (1149-1201). Toward the end of her life, she became seriously ill and asked Hōnen to visit her one last time before she took her last breath.

After going through internal anguish, Hōnen tells her his decision not to visit her. The reason is that what is the most important for her now is to sever all ties with this transitory world and concentrate her mind on the attainment of birth in the Pure Land by reciting the Nembutsu during the remaining time left for her.

To meet Hōnen's "corpse-like figure" at this time would only increase

her attachment to this world. This story tells us the difference between true compassion and temporal, human kindness. This story also reminds us of the distinction between the compassion of the path of sages and that of the path of the Pure Land discussed in Tannishō, Ch. 4.

Thus, in the "Saihō-shinan-shō," Shinran conveys his understanding of the Pure Land way through Hōnen's words and deeds.

The second of three Zoom classes with Rev. Dr. Toshikazu Arai that draw from his book, "The Path to the Pure Land," will be held June 6 at 6:30 p.m.

Copies of his book are available from the Headquarters Bookstore.

Register at <https://forms.gle/i8Aot9xW5T2VzLq6A>

The final session is set on July 4.

For the Record

Ouye Family Reunion — In the March 1 issue of Ka Leo Kāhea, a story on the Waichi and Jane Ouye family reunion reported six children and 30 family members took part in the event. Only four children — Neal, Eva, Elin and Donn — survive and 45 family members took part in the summer event.

SAVE THE DATE

Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii
Hawaii State Lay Association (HSLA)
63rd Annual Convention

Convention Theme: "Embracing Change,
Developing Strategies for Stronger Sanghas"

Dates: September 18 – 19, 2026

Place: Hawaii Betsuin — in person and via Zoom

You are cordially invited to attend our Convention.
Future informational bulletins will be distributed to temple presidents.

HSLA is committed to assist Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii temples and their leadership teams to operate and maintain their temples and associated facilities in an efficient and economical manner and explore opportunities to provide leadership training for temple leaders.

Yesterday, ‘Something Incredible Happened’

The 51st Living Treasures of Hawai‘i program honors six for their enduring contributions

A milestone was marked at the 51st year of the Living Treasures of Hawai‘i™ program — beyond even the torrential rains.

Held again at the Hilton Hawai‘ian Village in February, the program recognized six honorees whose dedication and contributions to Hawai‘i profoundly inspire and impact society.

They were Dr. William Bergin, Dr. Bruce Ka‘imiloa Chrisman, Māpuana de Silva, James “Jim” and Victoria “Vickie” Kennedy and Sheree Tamura.

A doctor of veterinary medicine, Dr. Bergin devoted his life to caring for Hawai‘i’s animals and preserving the paniolo, or cowboy heritage since the 1970s.

The author of the four-volume “Loyal to the Land” series and nationally recognized for his management of cattle and equine practices, Dr. Bergin, also served on the University of Hawaii Board of Regents, the Hawai‘i County Police Commission, established the Hawai‘i High School Rodeo Association and founded the Paniolo Preservation Society.

Dr. Chrisman, a native of Dayton, Ohio, spent 31 years in Hawai‘i leading a “dual life” as a surgical dermatologist and a cultural practitioner.

Deeply involved with the history of Hawai‘ian ipu pauwehe or decorated gourds, he studied and lectured on the art form, spending 15 years researching and experimenting until he mastered the genre.

His expertise is recognized beyond Kamehameha Schools and the Bishop Mu-



Courtesy of Alan Kubota

Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani and outgoing President Dr. Warren Tamamoto (standing) honored the 51st Living Treasures of Hawai‘i honorees. Seated, from left, Dr. Bruce Ka‘imiloa Crisman, Māpuana de Silva, Vickie and Jim Kennedy, Sheree Tamura and Dr. William “Billy” Bergin.

seum. Curators from Tahiti, New Zealand, Rapa Nui and Australia often seek him to draw on his expertise. His main request of students is that they pass along whatever knowledge he shares with them.

Preserving and teaching traditional hula with authenticity, integrity and aloha has long defined Kumu Hula Māpuana de Silva who blended Hawai‘ian wisdom with modern health science.

Fifty years ago, she founded Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilima and developed the evidence-based hula health program, Ola Hou i ka Hula.

Today she serves as a consultant with the John A. Burns School of Medicine as well as engaging in cultural and civic programs.

An inductee into the Hawai‘ian Music Hall of Fame, she tirelessly works to preserve the culture through the Council for Pacific Arts and Culture, the Hawaiian Civic Club, FestPac and is a

leader at the Merrie Monarch Festival.

Jim and Vicky Kennedy, described as dedicated champions for Hawai‘i’s blind and low-vision residents, tried to keep their selection as Living Treasure honorees low key until word got out through local media.

“To say we were honored would be an understatement,” Jim said in a social media post. “But it was honestly quite humbling even to be categorized in the same league as our awesome fellow awardees.”

The Kennedys’ accomplishments and accolades, the Living Treasure selection committee noted, “embody the . . . values of integrity, humility, service and aloha” to the blind and low-vision community.

As leaders of the state’s Fi-Do Service Dogs, advocates of legislation, and work on behalf of Guide Dogs for the Blind, Guide Dogs of Hawai‘i and numerous other groups, the couple tirelessly,

over the years, worked on behalf of securing rights and access the sighted take for granted.

For more than six decades, Sheree Tamura devoted her life to preserving and teaching Japanese dance and culture in both Hawai‘i and Japan with seven accomplished Hanayagi masters including Iyemoto Kineya Sakichi V.

She founded the Hanayagi Mitsusumi Dance Studio in Pearl City, a cornerstone for Japanese cultural Education across the Pacific for students of all ages.

After many years as a former, organizer, cultural ambassador and innovator, Tamura Sensei continues to grow as a student, currently focused on learning min’yō and shamisen with Deputy Head Anju Madoka of Madoka no Kai.

Inspired by Japan’s Living National Treasures program, Living Treasures of Hawai‘i™

started as an idea by insurance executive Paul Yamana-ka who approached Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani in 1976.

Working quickly to establish the program, he gathered a committee of experts in Hawai‘iana, education, language and history who chose Charles W. Kenn as its first honoree.

Since then, more than 230 educators, artists, clergy, business leaders and community volunteers have been recognized for their contributions to the preservation and perpetuation of Hawai‘i’s distinctive cultural and artistic heritage.

In Memoriam

Shige Yamada, the prolific artist, educator and the author of “Ceramics in Hawaii,” passed away on March 12 in Kihei, Maui at the age of 97.

In recognition of his accomplished career as an artist and for his generosity sharing knowledge with students, Yamada was chosen a Living Treasure of Hawai‘i in 1993 by Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai‘i.

His works grace numerous public places throughout the state including “Gift of Water” at the Hawai‘i Convention Center, “Rainbows” at the Stan Sheriff Center on the University of Hawai‘i Mānoa campus and “Maui Releasing the Sun” at the Kahului Airport as well as permanent collections in Washington, D.C., the Honolulu Museum of Art and the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City.

Services were held in April at Maui Memorial Park in Wailuku.

Leading With Humility

As the first Shining Spirit Youth Award recipient, Jaimee Yokoyama reflects a quiet, service-driven model of leadership

BY DIANE SUEDA NAKO
MAKAWAO HONGWANJI
MISSION

When students think about awards, they often imagine finally being recognized after years of hard work.

For one remarkable student, however, the news came as a complete surprise.

Recently chosen to receive the first Shining Spirit Youth Award, Jaimee Yokoyama, 20, responded not with pride but with humility when honored during the Living Treasures program.

When asked how she felt after hearing the news, her reaction was simple and sincere.

She was “surprised and truly grateful for the nomination” and said she didn’t think she deserved the award.

I had the privilege of knowing Jaimee, the daughter of Paul and Tanya Yokoyama, as a Dharma school student at Makawao Hongwanji since 2010.

From a young age, her vibrant personality and eagerness radiated within the temple and among sangha members, which led her to being asked to help with nu-

merous temple activities.

She always participated in clean ups, manju and chow fun making, served as a mentor to Dharma school students and a coordinator for live streaming of temple services.

“Yes, I can help” was her unwavering response; her willingness to share her time and efforts without expecting anything in return.

As she grew older, I recalled thinking that Jaimee was a special person who embodied the teachings of Jodo Shinshu and her willingness to truly listen to the Dharma.

With this keen interest, she became a member of the Maui United Jr. YBA and took advantage of leadership roles of President, Treasurer and Councillor.

At the Federation level, she served as Treasurer and finally as President.

She also participated as a guest panel speaker for the Buddhist Study Center’s seminar, “Dharma Through the Eyes of Youth” and most recently, was involved in the BSC’s fellowship program as well as serving as a Y.E.S.S. camp counselor.

Although she’s busy as a full-time college student, at

It's a Family Affair

Helping others comes naturally to members of the Yokoyama family. When floodwaters soaked the floors at Kahului Hongwanji Preschool, members stepped up to help. See Page 6

the University of Hawaii at Mānoa, Jaimee continues to share her time and talents with sincerity, compassion and Dana, or selfless giving.

When asked what it meant to be the first Shining Spirit Youth Award recipient, she spoke of being “truly grateful for all the hard work in the nomination and selection committee” process.

“I hope this will provide more opportunities for youth and leadership programs within the community,” she said, “and this will provide an incentive for youth to be more active within their temples and actively volunteer when there’s a call for help.”

Her modest response reflects the qualities that led others to nominate her in the first place.



Courtesy of Rev. Kerry Kiyohara

Maui resident Jaimee Yokoyama, now a student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa: “I hope . . . this will provide an incentive for youth to be more active within their temples and volunteer when there’s a call for help.”

Temple leaders often describe Jaimee as someone who works hard, supports others and approaches challenges with a positive attitude. Rather than focusing on recognition, she remains focused on learning, growing and helping those around her succeed.

Her story is a reminder that true leadership often comes from quiet dedication.

By staying humble and committed to her goals, she continues to inspire those around her, making the title of Shining Spirit Youth Award recipient a perfect fit.

Nembutsu, the Natural Sound of Daily Life

A seminar at West Kaula'i Hongwanji explores Buddhist chants alongside Japanese min’yō and ohayashi

BY REV. TOMO HOJO
WEST KAUA‘I HONGWANJI

Since 2021, West Kaula‘i Hongwanji Mission Waimea Temple has hosted a seminar series titled “Buddhism in Daily Life,” inviting speakers from around the world to share their perspectives.

This year, during the Ohigan season, we held two special seminars.

On March 22, we welcomed Anju Madoka, Deputy Head of Madoka No Kai and the Hawai‘i branch representative, for a seminar titled “Buddhism and Music — Buddhist Chants and Min’yō and Ohayashi.”

Ms. Madoka is dedicated to sharing min’yō — Japanese folk music — as a “music of the people,” making it

SEE PAGE 5

Gathafest Joyfully Celebrates the Dharma Through Song

More than 140 participants from 10 temples gather in Kona for the 52nd event, bringing together generations

BY BART AOKI
KONA HONGWANJI MISSION

The temple and social hall of Kona Hongwanji Mission were alive with anticipation on the morning of Feb. 22, 2026, decorated in a blend of Lunar New Year and Valentine's themes reflecting both the season and the spirit of the gathering.

More than 140 attendees and volunteers came together, representing 10 temples and three organizations from across the Big Island.

Gathafest has deep roots in Kona.

First held here in 1974, it was conceived by Sadao Aoki of Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin as a friendly competition among temples. Over time, the competitive aspect faded, leaving something more enduring: a shared expression of joy in the Dharma through music. Today, the Big Island Hongwanji 'ohana — children, youth, adults and seniors — gathers each year, with temples rotating as host in that same spirit of connection and celebration.

The day began with a service officiated by Rev. Blayne Higa in the temple's main



Courtesy of Terence Terada

Kona Hongwanji Mission musicians and singers, more than 30 in all, gathered as host temple of the 52nd Gathafest.

hall, with Kona Hongwanji Dharma School student Keira Nishihara-Estrada serving as emcee. The service offered a moment of reflection before the gathering moved into the colorfully decorated social hall.

Everyone had a role to play. Volunteers welcomed guests, prepared and served food, and supported performers throughout the day. Local individuals and family businesses contributed fruits, vegetables, cookies, chips, Kona coffee and specialty dishes, while also helping prepare bento lunches — a generosity that quietly added to the warmth

of the gathering.

What stood out was how easily people joined in — with little hesitation, just a shared willingness to sing and enjoy the moment together. Co-emcees Alyssa Tagawa and Harrison Kaneko, both Kona Hongwanji Dharma School students, helped set a relaxed and welcoming tone with their energy and humor.

The program moved between popular songs and traditional gathas. Songs like "Ripple," "There Is a Mountain," and "You Are the Reason" felt reflective, while "Let It Begin with Me" pointed gently to shared re-

sponsibility. Gathas such as "Living Gratefully," "Six Paramitas" and "Asoka Garden" grounded the day in the Buddha's teachings — not just as ideas, but as something people could feel.

Island creativity was also on display. Tracy Tsuha offered Jodo Shinshu-inspired lyrics set to familiar Beatles tunes — playful yet thoughtful. Kona Hongwanji's Darren Katayama wrote new lyrics for "Bright, Pure Land of Amida," sung by the Kona sangha to the melody of "White Sandy Beach" by Israel "IZ" Kamakawiwo'ole — a performance deeply root-

ed in place. Each offering was met with genuine appreciation.

A memorable moment came when both the ministers and the United Jr. YBA coincidentally chose "Don't Give Up on Me." Sung together, it felt less like a performance and more like a shared expression of encouragement and care — especially meaningful in a tumultuous time.

As the morning unfolded, it was a reminder that the island's temples are not separate, but part of an interconnected community shaped through years of shared practice, service and friendship. That spirit was evident when musicians from Hilo Betsuin stepped in to play in the absence of Kona's regular accompanist.

For many, the 52nd Gathafest felt both familiar and renewed. It offered a chance to appreciate that sense of connection and give voice to something not always easy to express — an audible feeling of joy and gratitude. For a little more than an hour, the singing opened a shared space of peace, appreciation and steadiness that resonated across generations.

Storm Can't Quiet PBA's Beloved Taiko Festival

Despite days of rain and school closures, Pacific Buddhist Academy students celebrate the festival's 20th year

BY MEGAN LEE
DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT
PACIFIC BUDDHIST ACADEMY

While the annual Taiko Festival takes place each March, every performance represents the culmination of a year — often years — of dedication.

Many students begin their journey with Sensei Jay Toyofuku even before entering high school, often at Hongwanji Mission School. By the time they arrive at Pacific Buddhist Academy, Executive Assistant Zachary Agcaoili meets them as freshmen and recognizes potential they may not yet see in themselves, guiding them

toward becoming future members of Hyaku Sen Ki Kai (A Hundred Opportunities for Battle).

This year's March 15 performance came under uncertain circumstances. As news of school closures spread two days before the festival, nervous parents, ticket holders, students and faculty all wondered what would happen if the historic rainstorm continued.

Despite the conditions, students came to campus after one final dress rehearsal. They packed the U-Haul in the pouring rain — a stressful task, as the drums could not get wet.

Thankfully, the storm at Moanalua High School Performing Arts Center subsided by Sunday afternoon. The 20th annual festival, "Okagesamade," went on as planned, celebrating a milestone year and featuring several alumni who returned to perform.

The PBA Rock Band led by



Courtesy of Pacific Buddhist Academy

Dark clouds, gray skies and a light rain outside Moanalua High School's Performing Arts Center couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of the PBA student body in the traditional, all-school "Soran Bushi" at the 20th annual taiko festival.

Jake Lui, Miyaka Nishihira on sanshin and alumnus Chad Okawa (Class of '23) on *fue* and *atarigane*, performed tributes to the Hyaku Sen Ki Kai seniors Maya Galvez, Emmalie Hernandez, Lyla Onishi and Kent Sekine.

"Getting the opportunity to play taiko for Jay Sensei again was truly an amazing experience," said Lia Sutton (Class of '21). "It was fun re-

connecting with fellow alumni — practicing together, catching up and reminiscing about our time at PBA.

"This year's seniors are incredibly talented, and after attending their practices, it's clear they've dedicated a great deal of time and effort to their performances."

Weekly training for the traditional and demanding all-school "Soran Bushi" be-

gins after winter break. According to school founder Pieper Toyama, students once physically pulled on ropes during practice to develop proper form and embody the spirit of the choreography, which depicts Japanese fishermen's hard work, camaraderie and the joy of a successful Hokkaido catch.

"I am proud of all the students involved in the festival, both past and present," Sensei Jay said. "I am grateful for the team of staff who helped make this possible, as well as Dojun Baba for flying in from the Big Island to perform with us, and his family for letting us borrow him for the weekend."

"Okagesamade — I am who I am because of you."

Fundraising for the show takes place year-round. This year, new happi coats from Japan were made possible through a grant from the Japanese Women's Society Foundation.

Madoka

Continued from Page 4

accessible to and enjoyable for everyone.

Originally from Osaka, she made her stage debut at a very young age and later established the Hawai'i branch of Madoka No Kai. This year marks its fifth anniversary.

During the seminar, Ms. Madoka invited us to listen more deeply to the sounds of our everyday lives. When we hear the waves and the wind here in Hawai'i, we do not "try" to hear them — they simply reach us.

In the same way, the Nembutsu — Namu Amida Butsu — can be understood as a "sound of daily life."

Whether in moments of

joy or sadness, the Nembutsu naturally flows from our lips. It is not something extraordinary, but a resonance already woven into our lives.

She shared that in old Japan, Ohayashi functioned in a similar way. It was not merely performance, but a natural "sound of living" alongside the Nembutsu.

Reflecting on this, she explained:

Nembutsu is the calling voice of Amida Buddha, constantly reaching out to us and promising, "I always embrace you with great compassion. You are never alone."

That calling voice reaches us. It is through this working of Amida Buddha that our lips are moved to say "Namu Amida Butsu." Our voice is a natural response of gratitude to Amida



Courtesy of Rev. Tomo Hojo Anju Madoka, left, and her student Melia Okura, perform at West Kauai's "Buddhism and Music — Buddhist Chants and Min'yō Ohayashi" program at West Kauai Hongwanji.

Buddha's call.

This dynamic of "call and response" is also found in min'yō.

Ms. Madoka introduced "Sōran Bushi," a traditional

fishermen's work song, in which a leader calls out and workers respond together. Through this rhythm, they unite their movements and share their labor, becoming connected through voice and timing.

In that resonance — whether through the Nembutsu or the ohayashi of min'yō — we find a sense of connection and reassurance that we are not alone.

After the seminar, Ms. Madoka and Melia Okura, a former Jr. YBA member who studies shamisen under her, gave a mini concert. Including three visitors from Japan, there were about 40 attending in total, both in person and via Zoom.

As Ms. Madoka concluded, both Nembutsu and min'yō can be understood as "sounds of life." In Japa-

nese, min'yō is written as "the songs of the people," reminding us that it is not limited to professional performers, but belongs to everyone.

It is our hope that the Nembutsu will continue to be heard as a "sound of daily life" here in Hawai'i, and that min'yō may also become a meaningful "sound of life" within our community.

— — —

Madoka No Kai's 5th anniversary concert is set for Nov. 15 in Honolulu. Further details will be shared on the group's website and Instagram.

The "Buddhism in Daily Life" series continues Sept. 6 at 9:30 a.m., with Rev. Kohtoku Hirao at West Kaua'i Hongwanji Mission's Hanapēpē Temple.

All Shining Equally With Light

An LGBTQ+ themed service at Hawai'i Betsuin affirms acceptance, inclusion and the wisdom of the Amida Sutra

BY DEBBIE KUBOTA
COMMISSION ON BUDDHIST
EDUCATION

In support of Honolulu Pride Month and as an expression of its commitment to welcome all, Hawai'i Betsuin held its third annual LGBTQ+ Themed Service on Oct. 5, with the pride flag prominently displayed in front of the temple.

Reverend Shingo Furusawa presented a meaningful and inspirational LGBTQ+ themed Dharma message emphasizing one of the most important scriptures in the Hongwanji tradition, the Amida Sutra, with this important excerpt:

"In the Pure Land, lotus flowers of many colors are in full bloom.

The Buddha sees each of them as marvelous, beautiful, and shining with light. Just

like those lotus flowers, we all have different appearances, personalities, and ways of life.

Yet, Amida Buddha sees all of us as equally shining with light. This means the Buddha always regards our lives as precious and valuable, no matter what happens, and embraces us just as we are. The Buddha's teaching accepts everyone without discrimination."

He encouraged us to "create a community where people with diverse values can live together in peace and harmony."

Rev. Furusawa's message provided the perfect introduction to guest speaker Aiden Takeo Aizumi, a Japanese American trans man, adoptee, storyteller, and LGBTQ+ activist.

As a school counselor at Options for Youth Public Charter Schools, he is passionate about creating safe,

supportive spaces where every student feels seen and empowered. Aiden serves as President of PFLAG (Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays) in Pasadena and facilitates its youth group.

With his mother, the late Marsha Aizumi, Aiden co-authored the book "Two Spirits, One Heart: A Mother, Her Transgender Son, and Their Journey to Love and Acceptance."

He has shared his journey across the country at schools, colleges, churches and corporations to build understanding and connection.

During his message, Aiden shared personal photos and described his journey about being born in Japan as a female, being adopted and raised in Southern California and feeling uncomfortable in his own body, to his transition to becoming a transgen-



Courtesy of Alan Kubota

Aiden Aizumi, co-author of "Two Spirits, One Heart," was Honpa Honganji Betsuin's guest speaker at the third annual LGBTQ+ service.

der man.

After the service, there was a Talk Story session in which Aiden was able to interact with and answer questions from attendees.

Sadly, after a battle with cancer, Marsha Ogino Aizumi passed away on Dec. 18 in Duarte, California at the age of 77.

The founder of Okaeri, a program of Little Tokyo Ser-

vice Center in Los Angeles, Mrs. Aizumi was a native of Cleveland, Ohio and the wife of Robert (Ted) Aizumi.

Okaeri is a program that supports LGBTQ+ Japanese and Japanese American parents and friends of all backgrounds to explore resources to help build a community for LGBTQ+ Japanese Americans are allowed to be their full, authentic selves.

As Floodwaters Came, So Did the Volunteers

An outpouring of compassion, unity and generosity saves a beloved school

When floodwaters damaged their schoolrooms in March, the Kahului Hongwanji Preschool's staff knew they needed help.

In their soaked classrooms, their thoughts went first to the diverse, multiethnic group of 27 children — not only Maui locals but also those who came from Puerto Rican, Cambodian, Argentinian other racial backgrounds — all grounded in the Aloha Spirit.

Little did the staff realize that even before the floors dried, an army of parents, former students, parents of former students, neighbors, strangers and friends were on their way.

Boy Scouts from Troop 40 and Troop 18 arrived from Wailuku and Makawao Hongwanji, respectively, to remove debris and move furniture, thanks to Glen Kitagawa, chair of the Scouting America Aloha Council's Maui Nui District.

"Glen worked for a moving company so he knew exactly how to handle heavy furniture," temple secretary Carolyn Kaya said.

Parents and neighbors loaded their cars with toys to be disinfected, brought wet vacuums and huge fans, along with food and drinks

for volunteers. Throw rugs were washed while others offered expertise on how to repair the damage.

One judo instructor told Acting Director Diane Lee that the new floors had to be waxed and sealed. But who knew about flooring?

Ms. Lee called the local big-box hardware store and asked if she could rent the equipment to handle the job and could they also show her how to use the machine?

"The guy said, 'I'll have my wife call you' and when she called, she said, 'My brother does this kind of work. I'll send him over. Are you going to buy the wax?'"

Director Lee thought, "Wax? What kind of wax? How much will we need?"

"Then she said, 'Never mind, I'll have him bring the wax.' I asked if she could send me the bill and she said, 'No. There won't be a bill.'"

"I started to cry."

The family that pitched in to finish the flooring at no cost to the Preschool was the Nishida-Yokoyama clan.

Jean Nishida, matriarch of the family, once taught sewing classes at Makawao Hongwanji and her granddaughter, Jaimee Yokoyama, is this year's first Shining Spirit Award winner. (See her story on Page 4)



Courtesy of Rev. Ai Hironaka

Kahului Hongwanji staffers organize items in a classroom. From left, acting director Diane Lee, secretary Carolyn Kaya (back to camera), Janet Shimada and Brian Kaya.

Jaimee's sister, Cindy, was the force behind sending their brother Kevin to handle the repair work.

And they weren't the only financial supporters of the restoration.

Before the deluge, a golf tournament was planned, largely by the women's group, organized by Jami Fiore Ullrich.

"The woman who won the tournament turned over her prize money to the Preschool," Ms. Lee said, "and they donated all the funds they raised to us."

Employees from Enterprise Rent-A-Car brought cleaning supplies and boxes full of preschool items.

A GoFundMe account was created by Dr. Nanna Lindberg and her husband Justin Hughey, with a \$25,000 goal. Within two days, donations exceeded that amount.

The parents of a three-year-old currently attending

Kahului Preschool and a six-year-old "graduate," closed the account, not wanting to seem "greedy."

Later, when repairs could easily double that amount, donations started to arrive at the temple office.

Other parents thought if they could just get the word out about their dire situation, more help might arrive.

"One woman said, 'Chelsea Davis is my cousin. I'll get my husband to call her,'" Director Lee said. "Then by the time her story aired on local television, people were arriving with boxes of books, folders, donations of money and offers to help."

As with most Hawai'i temples, Kahului did not carry flood insurance, but they may qualify for some compensation if it's determined the damage was caused by poor maintenance of a drain behind the property.

While donations arrive by

mail, repair work continues.

In May, the playground sand that washed away by the floods was replaced through donations and delivered by the Red Lightning Mennonite disaster relief group, which travels from place to place helping communities recover.

Not having a jungle gym for weeks had sadly affected the preschoolers. "So the workers made quite an impression on our children," Ms. Lee said.

The outpouring of generosity and support has overwhelmed President Wayne Toyama.

"This experience reminds us in a powerful way that our Hongwanji temple is more than just a place — it's a community built on compassion, selflessness and mutual support," he said. "From the bottom of our hearts, I thank everyone who stood with us during this difficult time."

Kahului

Continued from Page 1

"When we arrived at the temple, I was shocked at how extensive it was," Wayne said. "I had never seen our property so full of water before. My Dad said it happened once — maybe 30 or 40 years ago — but I don't remember it happening."

And yet, just glancing at the lawns and walkways underwater didn't prepare them for what was inside Kahului Hongwanji Preschool which sustained the most extensive damage of all

30 Honpa Hongwanji temples.

Because Kahului Hongwanji's property slopes downward — from the temple at the highest point to the preschool at the lowest — floodwaters inundated the classrooms and playground.

Nearly everything in the schoolroom sustained damage — each little chair, the desks, toys, bookshelves and the thick foam carpets where children played, sat and listened to stories. All of it was wet, soiled or broken.

Each mat used by the 27 preschoolers had to be tossed; pressed wood furniture pieces wobbled or col-

lapsed. Some benches outside broke apart. Doors warped and wouldn't close.

Temple leaders were advised by one restoration company that an environmental specialist should check for mold; one wooden storage room wall appeared weak and needed to be torn down and rebuilt because of mold.

Thankfully, none of the children was around. Two days before the rains, parents were informed that if the weather was stormy, if the Department of Education ordered schools to be closed, then Friday's classes would be cancelled and

spring break would start a day early for the three- to five-year-olds.

Between March 13 until past the Kuhio Day holiday weekend, all students remained at home, much to the chagrin of their parents.

What happened next in the midst of the extensive flooding brought together dozens of people throughout Maui and once again, the indomitable spirit of the island was on display.

Restoration work progressed rapidly and a week later, a semblance of normalcy returned. The Department of Human Services inspected and approved the

facility for reopening despite the need for more furniture.

Flooring had been removed, items sanitized and new floors installed, thanks to the tireless efforts of supporters.

Parents breathed a collective sigh of relief. Most children were unaware their classrooms had been flooded, noticing only that they were back together again — except for one little girl who said she missed her friends during the long break.

And even Midnight reappeared, looking no worse than before. He even began befriending more humans.

IN MEMORIAM

When Kona's Ellison Onizuka Saw the Earth as One

REV. TATSUO MUNETO

RETIRED MINISTER
HONPA HONGWANJI HAWAII
BETSUIN

Human memory is inconsistent; it fades with time.

But certain memories remain vivid despite the passage of time and add meaning to life.

My memory of meeting with Hawai'i's own Ellison Onizuka is one such memory that has not faded with time, rather it has only enriched my life.

Jan. 28 of this year marked 40 years since the tragedy of the Challenger, NASA's space shuttle that broke apart in the sky over Cape Canaveral, Florida.

Those of you who read the front page article of the recent Jan. 28 Star-Advertiser must have recalled this sad event.

We were all devastated when television reported that the space shuttle exploded 73 seconds after lift-off on the morning of Jan. 28, 1986. The major accident took the lives of seven astronauts, including that of Ellison Onizuka. And our grief lasted for weeks.

When the Onizuka family's return to Kona from Florida, the community lead-

ers and the county officials organized a big memorial service at Kona Surf Hotel in honor of Ellison.

Those who gathered expressed their deep sympathies and condolences to the bereaved family; his wife, Lorna, his mother, Mitsue, his brother, Claude, his sisters, Shirley and Norma.

All who were gathered warmly remembered Ellison's success in his first flight on the shuttle Columbia in 1985, and they regarded him a homegrown hero.

The press widely publicized his background and his stories of success as the first Asian-born astronaut of Buddhist faith.

Ellison Onizuka was born in 1946 into a Buddhist family in Keopu, North Kona. He was raised as a Buddhist faithfully attending Buddhist services at the Keopu branch of Kona Hongwanji.

While at Konawaena High School, Ellison became active in Boy Scout and the 4-H program, becoming aware of his community. At the University of Colorado, Ellison majored in aviation engineering and became a test pilot in the U.S. Air Force.

He married Lorna Yoshida who was from Nā'ālehu at the Tri-State Buddhist Church in Denver. Thus, El-



Courtesy of the Matsuoka Family

In 1985, astronaut Ellison Onizuka returned to Kona after the successful Columbia mission and attended a service at Kona Hongwanji Mission. From left, Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani, Onizuka, his mother Mitsue Onizuka and Kona minister Rev. Tatsuno Muneto.

lison affirmed his identity as a Buddhist.

He was a Buddhist not only in religious identity, but also in his way of thinking.

Let me explain: After the shuttle Columbia's successful mission, when Ellison and his family briefly came back to Hawai'i, the people of Kona were excited about his homecoming.

A big welcome reception was held in the hotel in Keauhou that was attended by about 500 people, which I attended as the minister of Kona Hongwanji.

Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani also attended and gave a congratulatory message on behalf of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i.

What was most impressive at the reception was Ellison's remarks. After relating his experience as a flight specialist, he told the audience how the Earth looked to him. He said, and I paraphrase:

"The Earth we saw from space was beautiful and one.

"There were no lines or borders separating countries.

"Earth looked fragile and precious, something to be protected."

What a beautiful observation! There are definitely political borders on Earth that separate countries. The world itself is divided into continents and subdivided into countries that have their own races, histories and laws. Most surely, the world is divided by lines and borders.

The world is not one. But to Ellison, from the space shuttle, he saw the Earth as one, in a very special way. It was through the eyes of wisdom that Ellison saw Earth as one.

The Buddha's eyes of wisdom see all beings, animate or inanimate as one.

Although people on Earth are different in ethnicity, country and way of life, and borders are needed for us to survive, the Buddha's eyes of wisdom allow people to love and respect each other as precious neighbors and friends.

People constantly fight one another to gain territory and political and economic power. Due to our weaknesses of blind passions — anger, greed and ignorance

SEE PAGE 8

Giseikai

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conflicts, natural disasters and complex, rapid advances in technology, Amida Buddha's Primal Vow is needed more than ever because its universality can guide all people regardless of nationality or language.

In her Welcome Address, Lynne Matsumura, President of Lihu'e Hongwanji Mission, cited her reason for attending Giseikai is the same reason as everyone in attendance — to sustain Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in Hawai'i.

A moment of silence was held for Ingo Recipients for 2025 and all deceased Hawai'i Kyodan ministers and members followed by a memorial Dharma message from Rev. Tomo Hojo of West Kaua'i Hongwanji Mission.

Following the opening service, the Plenary session began with outgoing president Dr. Warren Tamamoto introducing guests including Glenn Inanaga and Jeffrey Matsuoka representing Buddhist Churches of America; Laura Sugimoto



Outgoing president Dr. Warren Tamamoto, left, pledged his support for incoming president Michael Munekiyo, right.

from Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada, and Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara from the Jodo Shinshu International Office.

An election of the 2026 Board of Directors and Officers was held with Michael Munekiyo of Wailuku Hongwanji Mission elected as incoming Hawai'i Kyodan President.

A special collection of funds totaling \$3,126 was collected from attendees to benefit the HHMH Living Gratitude Program.

Certificates of Appreciation from Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i and Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha were presented to Rev. Shindo Nishiyama upon his retire-



Courtesy of Alan Kubota

ment after 34 years of service, and to Rev. Sol Kalu who retired after 12 years of service.

Rev. Kalu joined the Assembly via Zoom and expressed his gratitude for the certificate and for his years working with HHMH.

Ten resolutions were presented with nine including the 2026-27 budget approved by delegates.

One resolution formally approved the closing of Wai'anae Hongwanji effective Dec. 31, 2025 after more than 120 years. The subsequent disposition of property was approved by the Board of Directors on May 31, 2025.

The resolution expressed

profound gratitude and appreciation for the years of devoted service by ministers and lay members of Wai'anae Hongwanji Mission.

An impactful resolution was introduced to address the shortage of active HHMH ministers and to bring their salaries closer to that of BCA ministers.

It established the Minister's Supplemental Compensation Fund which would be funded by sources including proceeds of property sales and large contributions.

Monies will be drawn from the fund annually and used to supplement the ministers' compensation package.

Still another resolution addressed the needs of temples to sustain or grow membership amid challenges caused by decreasing and aging membership.

A new task group will be formed to assess individual temples' current situation, including its resources and strengths, identify its surrounding community and conduct a decision making process to develop plans to address the temple's challenges.

Presentations were made

by Pacific Buddhist Academy head of school Josh Hernandez Morse; incoming President Michael Munekiyo and HHMH business manager Derrick Inouye on the progress of rebuilding Lahaina Hongwanji; Linda Nagai of Kona Hongwanji on the 2027 BWA World Convention; Debbie Kubota on LGBTQ issues; Rev. Satoshi Tomioka of Puna Hongwanji Mission, and Wendy Nickl and Emi Hashi on HHMH's Short Video Project.

The plenary session on Saturday morning opened with a morning service that included an installation of incoming officers, directors and advisors.

Incoming President Munekiyo delivered his first remarks by thanking Dr. Tamamoto for his leadership, dedication and time over the past six years.

"Dharma propagation, engaging the broader community and financial stability are key determinants in what our sangha will look like in a generation," he said.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Tamamoto pledged his support for the new president.

BWA

Continued from Page 1

growing the Hongwanji. Instinctively we want to see the Nembutsu flourish and grow. Michiko posed a different perspective:

"The Nembutsu is not fragile, surprisingly it doesn't need our protection. . . you are held, you are not alone, come as you are.

"What the Nembutsu needs in this moment is not our protection, what it needs is our presence," she said.

She offered three principles that have become anchors in her life.

The first, "Exposure in

Environment" exemplified her being raised in an environment immersed in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha as the daughter of Reverend Nobuo Miyaji and granddaughter of the late Rev. Kakue Miyaji, the only Kangaku or highest ranking priest in the United States.

Her second principle, "taking things out of the oven at the right time" recognizes that life, individuals and the circumstances we encounter are all different. Each situation has a different "right time to be taken out of the oven." We must recognize the need to be flexible.

The third principle is "wisdom in what we cannot control." Where shall I spend

my energy, if I cannot control everything? The Nembutsu does not ask us to build faith, to spread the awakening, rather to create conditions and remove obstacles and then let go, even if we don't get the results we want.

Michiko asked a question of each participant to answer for themselves: "What does the Nembutsu need from me, in this moment and in this community?" Her response was to "Spend your time on presence. . . IRL (in real life)."

"How do I nurture the Nembutsu? By letting it nurture me!"

She shared profound and thought-provoking insights.

A choice of workshops

explored topics ranging from temple archiving and gratitude practices to music therapy, positive living and financial sustainability for Buddhist organizations.

A rehearsal session for the upcoming 18th World Buddhist Women's Convention also brought participants together through dance and music.

Sunday featured a panel discussion featuring four notable women: Lt. Governor Sylvia Luke, Acting Supreme Court Chief Justice Sabrina McKenna, Hawaiian cultural practitioner Kehaulani Lum and Lori Teranishi, CEO and Founder of iQ 360.

They shared some of their

life experiences and what they see as women's roles going forward in 2026, challenging the audience not to be afraid of what the future brings, but to embrace changes in relationships, careers and technology with a can-do attitude.

Coordinated by 2025 Hawai'i BWA Exchange student Chad Okawa, Saturday evening's entertainment was a display of talents including performances on taiko, violin, shinobue (Japanese flute), flute, koto and vocal numbers.

As Federation president, my heartfelt gratitude goes to the United of O'ahu BWA for organizing the conference.

IN MEMORIAM

Ehime Maru Memorial Continues Its Tradition of Remembrance

Indoor and waterfront services honored the victims of the 2001 tragedy

Severe weather on Feb. 9 forced Hawai'i officials to declare a state of emergency, disrupting plans for the 25th anniversary ceremony of the Ehime Maru tragedy.

Originally scheduled for Kaka'ako Waterfront Park, the memorial service was moved indoors to the offices of the Japan-America Society of Hawai'i (JASH) on Kapi'olani Boulevard.

Despite the disruption, the solemn gathering brought together bereaved family members, representatives from Uwajima Fisheries High School and community leaders. Flooded streets prevented ceremonial wreaths from being delivered to the waterfront memorial that day, so they

were placed the following morning by JASH representatives and attendees.

As administrators of the Ehime Maru Memorial Association, JASH continues its mission to preserve the memory of those lost.

Lei and floral tributes honored the nine victims among the 35 aboard the vessel: four high school students, two faculty members from Uwajima Fisheries High School and three crew members.

Messages of condolence and gratitude were shared from Ehime Prefecture Gov. Tokihiro Nakamura, Uwajima Mayor Fumiaki Okahara and Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi.

Speaking on behalf of the bereaved families, Tat-



Courtesy of Claire Matsumoto

Members of Konko Mission of Wahiawa joined members of Mililani Hongwanji Mission for an April 25 memorial service at the Ehime Maru Memorial in Kaka'ako Waterfront Park. Officiating was Rev. Joshin Kamuro, second from left, with his wife, Minako, and daughter, Nanami.

suyoshi Mizuguchi, whose son died in the tragedy, expressed appreciation for the continued support of the Honolulu community and hope that such a tragedy would never happen again.

Mika Makizawa, widow of a faculty member from Uwajima Fisheries High School, reflected on the passage of time, saying she still finds it difficult to be-

lieve 25 years have gone by. While the lives lost can never be restored, she said, she hopes their memory will continue reminding others of the value of life.

In his remarks, Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani echoed those sentiments.

"This tragedy reminds us that we live in a world of impermanence and interdependence, and that our actions — individual and col-

lective — have consequences for one another," he said. "May this moment of remembrance strengthen our resolve to act with wisdom, care and compassion."

The Ehime Maru, a Japanese training vessel, sank in 2001 after the USS Green-ville, a U.S. Navy submarine, surfaced during a demonstration for civilian observers. A court of inquiry later determined the maneuver was reckless.

In 2002, the U.S. Navy and Ehime Prefecture reached a \$13.9 million settlement that included funding for a replacement training vessel, support for bereaved families and construction of the memorial at Kaka'ako Waterfront Park.

Today, O'ahu temples continue helping care for the granite memorial. Among them, Mililani Hongwanji Mission hosts remembrance visits twice a year. Rev. Joshin Kamuro and representatives from Mililani Hongwanji, along with ministers from Konko Mission of Wahiawa, held a service on April 25.

Vivid Memories of Tsunami Survivors Highlight 80th Anniversary

Tomoko Izumi had a slight cold on the morning of April 1, 1946, so her mother insisted that she and her brother Takaaki ride the bus rather than walk to Laupāhoehoe School.

Normally, of the seven Izumi children, only the youngest, Junko, took the bus regularly, chaperoned by her oldest brother and sister. Tomoko and Takaaki usually walked together with their friends Norie, Hiromichi and Ronald.

Mrs. Izumi's decision that day likely saved her children's lives, getting them to school earlier than they normally would have.

Little did anyone know that thousands of miles away, off the coast of Alaska, an 8.6 earthquake had already triggered waves that



Courtesy of Leo Til

Tomoko Izumi Mohideen, seated, with childhood friend Kawaihona Poy reconnected at the Tsunami Memorial services on April 4.

would strike coastlines across Hawai'i—some reaching 35 feet—destroying parts of Hilo and killing 159 people

statewide.

Known as the Aleutian Tsunami, or the April Fool's Day tsunami, the catastrophic event is commemorated annually, rain or shine, at the Laupāhoehoe Point Beach Park pavilion.

This year, marking the 80th anniversary, the April 4 program was larger than usual, drawing civic and political leaders along with survivors, now in their 80s and 90s.

Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betuini Rimban Kazunori Takahashi officiated at the service, with Tomoko Izumi Mohideen delivering the keynote address, tracing her life and the events of that day.

"From our school alone, the tsunami claimed 24 precious lives — 16 students, four young teachers, Mrs.

Florence Nakano and her three children," Tomoko said.

"Early that morning, students noticed the ocean strangely receding. Many rushed to the shore to see fish flapping on the exposed reef. Then the waves returned — huge and unstoppable. The third and largest wave swept away the teachers' cottages, the garage, part of the school and 24 lives were lost."

As the bus made its route, the owner of Terada Bakery flagged it down and urged the driver to turn around and send the children home.

The daughter of the late Rev. Kakusho Izumi, Tomoko, now 92, vividly recalls the names, faces and events of that day.

"At a 2013 luncheon, Herbert Nishimoto shared how he fashioned a makeshift raft from a door, pounding nails with an ax handle. Spotting Asao Kuniyuki and Takashi Takemoto in the water, he swam out, pulling one aboard and towing the other with a piece of lumber."

"Hours later, after retrieving and inflating a rubber raft dropped from a rescue plane, the three drifted to Kohala, where they were finally rescued."

"My father arrived later and offered the first memo-

rial service, walking among the debris-strewn grounds, chanting sutras and 'Namo Amida Butsu.'"

Months later, after a father lamented that he could not properly mourn his only child, Rev. Izumi resolved to build a monument to honor the victims. He went door to door from 'Umauma to 'Ō'ōkala seeking donations, and on April 1, 1947, a memorial monument was dedicated.

In 2023, Tomoko's Class of 1952, the school's final graduating class, added a second monument and planted a tree in memory of their alma mater.

"These monuments remind us of the dangers of tsunamis, the fragility of life and the resilience of our communities," she said. "We are grateful for the modern warning systems that help protect lives from such disasters."

"But we believe in the Law of Cause and Effect, we are the masters of our own fates through the paths we walk in this life of impermanence."

Mrs. Mohideen is the author of "Laupāhoehoe 1946 Tsunami Memorial Monument" and "The Crystal City Story: One Family's Experience With the World War II Japanese Internment Camps."

OBON 2026 OPENS JUNE 12-13 IN WAHIAWA

LOCATION	ADDRESS	PHONE	DATE	TIME
HONOLULU				
Honpa Hongwanji Hawai'i Betsuin	1727 Pali Hwy, Honolulu	(808) 536-7044	June 26-27	6:30 PM
Jikoen Hongwanji Mission	1731 N. School St, Honolulu	(808) 845-3422	July 18	5:00 PM
Moiiliili Hongwanji Mission	902 University Ave, Honolulu	(808) 949-1659	July 4	5:00 PM
Windward Buddhist Temple	268A Kuulei Road, Kailua	(808) 262-4560	July 11	7:00 PM
OAHU				
'Aiea Hongwanji Mission	99-186 Puakala St, Aiea	(808) 487-2626	July 25	7:00 PM
Ewa Hongwanji Mission	91-1133 Renton Rd, Ewa	(808) 681-5222	June 20	6:30 PM
Mililani Hongwanji Buddhist Temple	95-257 Kaloapau St, Mililani	(808) 625-0925	August 21-22	5:30 PM
Pearl City Hongwanji Mission	858 2nd St, Pearl City	(808) 455-1680	August 8	7:00 PM
Wahiawa Hongwanji Mission	1067 California Ave, Wahiawa	(808) 622-4320	June 12-13	6:45 PM
Waipahu Hongwanji Mission	94-821 Kuhaulua St, Waipahu	(808) 677-4221	July 4	7 p.m.
KAUAI				
Kapa'a Hongwanji Mission	4-1170 Kuhio Hwy, Kapaa	(808) 822-4667	July 17-18	7:30 PM
Līhu'e Hongwanji Mission	3-3556 Kuhio Hwy, Līhu'e	(808) 245-6262	June 19-20	7:30 PM
West Kauai Hongwanji (Hanapepe)	1-3860 Kamaulii Hwy, Hanapepe	(808) 335-3195	July 24 -25	7:30 PM
West Kauai Hongwanji (Waimea)	4675 Menehune Rd, Waimea	(808) 335-3195	N/A	N/A
MAUI				
Kahului Hongwanji Mission	291 S. Puunene Ave, Kahului	(808) 871-4732	July 17-18	7:30 PM
Lahaina Hongwanji Mission	551 Wainee St, Lahaina	(808) 661-0640	*	*
Lanāi Hongwanji Mission	1364 Fraser Ave, Lanai	(808) 565-6817	August 29	TBD
Makawao Hongwanji Mission	1074 Makawao Ave, Makawao	(808) 572-7229	July 24-25	7:00 PM
Wailuku Hongwanji Mission	1828 Vineyard St, Wailuku	(808) 244-0406	July 31-August 1	7:45 PM
*The three Lahaina temples (Hongwanji, Jodo, and Shingon) will host a Lahaina Community Bon Dance on Friday, August 14, at Jodo Mission, located at 12 Ala Moana St, Lahaina. Time TBD.				
HAWAII				
Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin	398 Kilauea Ave., Hilo	(808) 961-6677	July 11	7:00 PM
Honohina-Papaaloa Hongwanji Mission	32-896 Mamalahoa Hwy., Ninole	(808) 936-9052	August 22	2:00 PM
Honokaa Hongwanji Mission	45-5016 Lehua St., Honokaa	(808) 775-7232	July 18	7:00 PM
Hononu Hongwanji Mission	28-1658 Government Main Rd., Hononu	(808) 963-6032	July 18	2:00 PM
Kamuela Hongwanji Mission	65-1110 Mamalahoa Hwy., Kamuela	(808) 885-4481	August 15	7:00 PM
Kohala Hongwanji Mission	53-4300 Akoni Pule Hwy., Kapaau	(808) 775-7232	July 4	6:00 PM
Kona Hongwanji Mission	81-6630 Mamalahoa Hwy., Kealahou	(808) 323-2993	July 25	6:00 PM
Naalehu Hongwanji Mission	95-5695 Mamalahoa Hwy., Naalehu	(808) 966-9981	September 19	5:00 PM
Paauilo Hongwanji Mission	43-1477 Hauola Rd., Paauilo	(808) 776-1369	August 1	6:00 PM
Pahala Hongwanji Mission	96-1123 Paauilo Pl., Pahala	(808) 928-8254	Pahala-Naalehu Joint Bon Dance (5 PM) - Sept 19 at Naalehu Hongwanji	
Papaikou Hongwanji Mission	27-378 Old Mamalahoa Hwy., Papaikou	(808) 964-1640	June 20	6:00 PM
Puna Hongwanji Mission	16-492 Old Volcano Rd., Keaau	(808) 966-9981	June 27	6:00 PM

Onizuka

Continued from Page 7

— we are creating lines and borders separating us all.

When Amida's light of wisdom reaches the dark recesses of the human mind, and liberates us from suffering and sorrow of human existence, then, we are guided to work for peace and happiness for all.

Looking at Earth from space, Ellison was awakened to the Buddha's eyes of wisdom. For this reason, I say that Ellison was a Buddhist

not only in religious identity, but also in his own way of thinking.

And his way of thinking was nurtured in the rich soil of Hawai'i, especially Kona. This rich soil raised numerous members of Kona Hongwanji sangha in the past and present.

It is already 40 years since Ellison passed away. His physical being is gone, but his heart and mind and spirit are alive.

They are with us within the Infinite Light and the Immeasurable Life of Amida Buddha.

Namo Amida Butsu