



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

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Please note that the Headquarters Update is an official monthly communication from the HHMH Headquarters to the temples, ministers, lay leaders, and affiliates of the Hawaii Kyodan. The Headquarters encourages you to share the news in this update with your temple or community members.

BISHOP UMITANI'S MESSAGE AT THE HHMH BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The recent Civil Beat article, "This Form of Japanese Buddhism in Hawaii Could Disappear," has prompted conversations about the present condition and future of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. An aging congregation, dwindling attendance, and declining membership are not new concerns for us. However, I would like to take this article as an opportunity to reflect together once again: Why do we do what we do as temples and as Hawaii Kyodan? What is it that we must truly value and preserve?

First of all, what do we mean when we call someone a "member"? Is a member someone who pays annual dues? Someone who actively volunteers at the temple? Someone who serves on the board? Someone who has received a Homyo?

In Japanese, we traditionally call our members as *monto*. The word *mon* (門), or "gate," does not simply refer to the physical gate of a temple. It can also represent the gate of the Buddha Dharma—the gate through which we encounter the teaching of the Nembutsu. A *monto*, then, is someone who enters that gate and lives one's life with Namo Amida Butsu as a source of guidance and refuge.

The Light of Amida Buddha reaches everyone, whether or not they are officially a member of a temple. It makes no distinction between Japanese and American, Japanese-speaking and English-speaking, young and old. Amida Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion are reaching us at all times, wherever we may be and whoever we may be.

In times of difficulty and sorrow, in times of joy, and when we feel lonely and alone, we say Namo Amida Butsu. We are reminded, "I was never alone." Although I am a being of blind passions, incapable of becoming perfect, there is a world of Great Compassion in which I am never abandoned. Since Shinran Shonin shared this Nembutsu teaching, countless people have been illuminated and encouraged by this Light and have received the strength to live their lives.

Recently, I received a letter from someone who wanted to tell me how deeply appreciative they were of one of our ministers. The minister's Dharma message and compassionate presence had touched this person deeply. The fact that this individual took the time to write to me showed how meaningful that encounter must have been. Through this minister's service, I believe this person was able to experience the warmth of Amida Buddha's Compassion. And I am so grateful and proud of that minister's compassionate service.

I believe that such encounters are at the very heart of our propagation of the Dharma.

Our mission is not simply to increase our membership numbers. Our mission is that as many people as possible will encounter the Compassion of Amida Buddha and, with Namo Amida Butsu as their source of guidance and refuge, live the lives that have been given to them as fully as possible with joy and gratitude. We engage in the many activities of our temples and our Kyodan to create such opportunities. We must not lose sight of that mission.

It has been 137 years since the Nembutsu first reached Hawai'i. The decline in our membership did not suddenly begin one day. Society has changed. Families have changed. People's values and their relationship with religion have changed. Our predecessors have also faced those changes, and dealt with them with creativity and adaptability. But they never lost sight of the mission of the Honpa Hongwanji. They have responded to each encounter and each individual sincerely and compassionately. The accumulation of those compassionate services has helped shape the Honpa Hongwanji we see today.

So, we must question ourselves: Are the things we are doing today truly creating opportunities for people to encounter the Buddha Dharma? Our Sunday services, memorial services, Buddhist education, Bon Dances, community services, meetings, newsletters, websites, and social media—what is the fundamental purpose behind all of these activities? If some of what we are doing is not sufficiently creating opportunities for people to encounter the Dharma, how might we do it differently?

And beyond reviewing our programs and activities, perhaps we should also reflect upon our own words and actions. How do we welcome someone who walks into our temple for the first time? Are we listening to those who are struggling, grieving, or feeling alone? Are we creating a Sangha where people of different backgrounds and perspectives can feel, “It is okay for me to be here”?

We do not necessarily have to begin with something big, something no one has ever done before. We can begin by treasuring each encounter. Listen to the person before us. Share in that person's sorrow and joy. And do what we can so that each encounter might become an opportunity to experience the Buddha Dharma. Everything begins with these seemingly small but precious moments.

When people find warmth, joy, and a sense of being welcomed and accepted, they will want to return. And I believe that beneath such human warmth lies the heart of the Nembutsu—the Great Compassion of Amida Buddha that embraces all people without discrimination.

We do not need to end our conversation by simply debating whether a particular article is right or wrong. We can receive the article itself as another opportunity to reflect upon ourselves. “What can I do for the one person I meet today?” “What kind of condition can I provide so that this person may encounter the Buddha Dharma?”

Let us treasure each encounter with sincerity and compassion. By walking alongside each person and listening to their joys and struggles, may we continue to share the teachings of Jodo Shinshu with as many people as possible.

In closing, I thank you all for your dedication and contributions to the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. As Bishop, I am so proud and grateful for all you do in your respective places.

Namo Amida Butsu.

Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani
Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii
September 12, 2026

IMMEDIATE PAST AND NEW HHMH PRESIDENTS HONORED AT ALOHA LUNCHEON

Dr. Warren Tamamoto and Mr. Michael Munekiyo, the immediate past and new presidents of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, were honored Saturday, September 12, at an Aloha Luncheon at PBA Founders Hall.

Guests included statewide Hongwanji board members (who had met that morning in the Hawaii Betsuin Social Hall), family members of the honorees, organizational representatives, event committee members and volunteers, and Headquarters staff.



pc: Alan Kubota, Lenses Photography

After opening remarks by emcee Dennis Sekine and the introduction of the honorees and their family members, Rev. Eric Matsumoto led words of thanksgiving. A buffet lunch followed, catered by Ige's.

The program began with a welcome and appreciation message from Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani and presentations to the honorees. For Dr. Tamamoto, Bishop Umitani presented a Certificate of Appreciation and a gift from Honzan (the mother temple in Kyoto). The other organizations presenting gifts to "Dr. Warren" were HHMH, the State Ministers Association, the Hawaii State Lay Association, the statewide Buddhist Women's Association, the statewide Jr. Young Buddhist Association, and Pacific Buddhist Academy. Dr. Tamamoto shared a message.

"Serving as your president has been a wonderful life experience for me," he said. "Never had a regret."

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Tamamoto said, "We the Hawaii Kyodan — all of us — responded to the challenge in the most positive way possible. So, thank you, all of you, for helping our temples survive and thrive through the pandemic."

Presentations to Mr. Michael Munekiyo included the official appointment letter from the Gomonshu in Kyoto (presented by Bishop Umitani), and a gift from HHMH presented by Dr. Warren Tamamoto. Michael shared his message.

"The only thing I can say is that I am committed to carrying out Warren's work as well as those of our other past presidents," Michael said. "I'll try my best to honor the principles of integrity and respect of Jodo Shinshu teachings that they so aptly pursued."

Michael shared how his father's resilience during wartime incarceration serves as a foundation for his own values. He said, "The lessons of confronting life's most difficult conditions and finding your way through still resonates with me, and I'll try my best to share that inspiration with all of you as best I can."

Headquarters expresses its sincere appreciation to Dr. Warren Tamamoto and Mr. Michael Munekiyo for their dedicated service to Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. We mahalo the Aloha Luncheon committee chaired by Cynthia Rodriguez, and the committee members and volunteers who attended to the many details and tasks that help create such a meaningful and smooth-running event. Finally, we thank Pacific Buddhist Academy and Head of School Josh Hernandez Morse for the use of the beautiful PBA Founders Hall.

AFFIRMATION RITES

Affirmation Rites, “Kie-Shiki,” officiated by the Bishop of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, will be held as follows:

Host: Oahu District

Saturday, October 24, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

Ewa Hongwanji Mission (91-1133 Renton Rd, Ewa Beach, HI 96706)

For application details, please contact Rev. David Fujimoto at dfujimoto@honpahi.org

Host: Honolulu District

Saturday, November 14, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.

Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin (1727 Pali Highway, Honolulu, HI 96813)

For application details, please contact Rev. Yuika Hasebe at yhasebe@honpahi.org

The meaning of the Affirmation Rites becomes clear when we look at the original name, “Kie-Shiki.” *Kie* means to seek refuge, and in Buddhism this refers to seeking refuge in the Three Treasures of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The other part, *shiki*, means ritual. Therefore, with these meanings in mind, the term “Affirmation Rites” was adopted.

The Affirmation Rites is a ritual that gives the recipient a clear awareness of becoming a follower of the Buddha’s teachings and a member of the Hongwanji. During the Rites, each recipient will receive their own Homyo (Dharma Buddhist Name) from the Bishop.

There is no age limit. However, if the aspirant is under 20 years of age, their parent or guardian will be asked to sign the official record. It is hoped that through this ritual one would gain conviction in their religion and that it would be a definite start to a life of a Buddhist.

VIRTUAL DHARMA SCHOOL GATHERING

Please join us virtually on Zoom for the 8th Virtual Dharma School Gathering – *Nurturing Nembutsu: Sharing Gratitude* on **Sunday, October 18 at 9 a.m.** (see [associated flyer](#)). This is an INTERGENERATIONAL event in which we invite our sangha of all ages from across the state to participate. It’s fun to see your friends from other temples online.

The morning will begin with a service featuring Dharma School student emcees representing each district along with their district ministers doing different parts of the service. Our guest speaker will be Reverend Blayne Higa, Kona Hongwanji resident minister and Buddhist

**Dharma Message &
Adult Breakout Room
Message by:
Reverend Blayne Higa
Minister - Kona Hongwanji,
Director - Buddhist Study Center**



Study Center Director. After the service, we will have breakout rooms with Reverend Higa giving a presentation in the adult breakout room, and the Dharma School students divided by grade level in different breakout rooms doing gratitude-related activities. After the breakout rooms, everyone will gather together again so that the students can share their gratitude creations. The “gathering” ends at 11 a.m. We will then have a Dharma Educators’ session from 11:10 a.m.–12 p.m.—all are invited.

Register at <https://honpahi.link/dsg26> to receive the Zoom link. Please contact Debbie Kubota (dekub88@gmail.com) if any questions arise. Hope to “see” you then!

SHINING SPIRIT AWARD

Name of Award: Shining Spirit Award

Deadline: November 15, 2026

PURPOSE:

To recognize youth in Hawaii for their outstanding community service and embodying the spirit of selfless giving. Our aim is to inspire the next generation to understand and embrace the importance of serving and contributing to the greater good of society. With this honor, we believe these young individuals will continue to grow into Living Treasures in our community.

ELIGIBILITY:

- 10-20 years old
- Legal resident of Hawaii
- Engaged in activity for at least 12 months prior to date of application

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION:

Impact on Community: Evidence of meaningful change, whether through addressing a community need, improving quality of life, or inspiring others.

Initiative: How does the individual demonstrate leadership, show creativity in problem-solving or developed new ways to address issues.

Effort: How does the individual exemplify dedication and resilience, demonstrate consistent, sustained effort in their projects or causes, even under challenging circumstances

Personal Growth: Describe how the individual gained new skills, built confidence, or learned valuable lessons that have contributed to their personal development.

NOMINATION PROCEDURE:

An organization or person from the community (teacher, advisor, counselor, mentor, clergy, coach, etc.) may nominate a young person for this recognition by submitting the following:

- Nomination form with information on the nominee (see [form on Google Drive](#))
- Recommendation letters (maximum of three)

You may submit completed nomination forms and recommendation letters:

- By mail - Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii
Attn: Youth Award
1727 Pali Highway, Honolulu, HI 96813
- By Email - admin@honpahi.org
- Dropped off at Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii during office hours

The completed nomination form and letters of recommendation must be received by the Living Treasures of Hawaii™ Committee no later than November 15, 2026. Any nomination received after December 1 will be considered for the following year. If selected, parental consent will be required if the nominee is under 18 years of age. The selection committee reserves the right to not select an honoree and that the decision of the committee is final. For more information, please call the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii main office at (808) 522-9200.



Jaimee Yokoyama was the 2026 recipient of the Shining Spirit Award. Nominations are now open for a 2027 honoree. Due date: 11/15/26.

PBA LIGHTING OUR WAY

The Kahala Hotel Maile Ballroom

November 6, 2026

Reception at 5:00 p.m., dinner at 6:00 p.m.

<https://pacificbuddhistacademy.org/giving/lighting-our-way>

PBA's Lighting Our Way banquet recognizes inspirational individuals and organizations exemplifying leadership principles and values of the school such as selfless service to others, gratitude, and compassion.

PBA seniors learn from our inspirational leaders by interviewing and writing brief biographies of them for the Lighting Our Way printed program. Students of all grade levels honor these leaders by presenting honorees with gifts at the event: a taiko performance, song, dance, or work of art. In this way, the banquet is integrated into the curriculum and highlights the school's collaborative learning opportunities. Participating in the banquet program develops students' critical thinking skills and their appreciation for the inspirational leaders they are privileged to meet. Interviewing honorees gives PBA seniors opportunities to imagine pathways to achievement and peace practice across many professional fields.

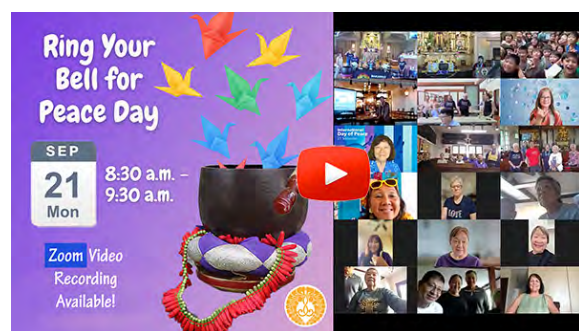
Each year, more than 300 guests attend the banquet. Support through ticket sales, sponsorships, and silent auction donations go towards advancing PBA's unique peace-based student programs. We hope you can join us in honoring the community leaders that light our way.



HONOREES

- **Dr. Nobuyuki Miki** - Vice President of International Relations and Chief Advancement Officer, Kuakini Health System
- **Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald (ret.)** – Hawaii Supreme Court
- **Vernon Wong** - Senior Vice President, First Hawaiian Bank Wealth Management Group
- **Omotesenke Domonkai Hawaii** - Celebrating 70 Years of Preserving and Carrying Forward the Way of Tea

PEACE DAY VIDEO AND MAUI NEWS ARTICLE



Now available on the HHMH YouTube channel at <https://honpahi.link/rybfpd26> Bell ringing, chanting, messages, performances, and more.

News Coverage of Maui Peace Day Event

See also <https://honpahi.link/peace26maui> for great coverage in the Maui News of an interfaith Peace Day event hosted at Makawao Hongwanji!

TALKS ON ERNEST AND DOROTHY HUNT OCTOBER 18 AT SHINGON HALEIWA

"The Contributions of Ernest and Dorothy Hunt to Buddhism in Hawaii" is the topic of Haleiwa Shingon Mission's the 25th Thanksgiving and Gratitude Seminar on Sunday, October 18, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Speakers are Dr. Masumi Kikuchi of Ryukoku University, Japan, and Dr. George Tanabe, UH Professor Emeritus. Haleiwa Shingon Mission, 66-469 Paalaa Road, Haleiwa, HI 96712.

Reservations

Email haleiwashington@gmail.com with the full name and contact number of each attendee by October 11, 2026, or call (808) 637-4423.