



# Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

## HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

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MARCH 2022

### BISHOP'S CORNER

#### **“Dharma Message for a 49<sup>th</sup> Day Service in honor of the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh (Part 1)**

Bishop Eric Matsumoto

This message was given at a 49<sup>th</sup> Day Service in honor of the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh at Honokaa Hongwanji on March 12, 2022



Aloha Kākou! Today, as we pay tribute to one of the greatest modern day Buddhist Teachers in the world, the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, who passed away on January 22, 2022 at the age of 95, it is not without sadness that I share this message. Many in the world may be thinking, as what happened when the Historic Buddha entered Parinirvana, that “Too soon he passes from this world.” Needless to say, the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh was an extraordinary leader and teacher embodying so much of the Buddhist Teachings, the Dharma with his thoughts, words, and actions. In fact, it was his life.

In our allotted time, today, I cannot enumerate all of his life endeavors and accomplishments. Also, many of you, know much more about his contributions in which he stayed true to the words of the Historic Buddha, Sakyamuni, *“Go forth for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the good and the happiness of gods and men.”* Thus, today, I would like to focus my message, in honor of him, on the significance of the comment he made in 2015 and how we might truly pay our respects, express our gratitude and possibly alleviate some of the sadness and lament which many might be experiencing because of his passing.

If I were a great bodhisattva or highly advanced on the Path, I would be able to fully integrate without obstacles the words of the Historic Buddha, *“My disciples, my last moment has come, but do not forget that death is only the end of the physical body. The body (that was) born from parents and nourished by food; just as inevitable are sickness and death. “But the true Buddha is not a human body-it is Enlightenment. A human body must die, but the Wisdom of Enlightenment will exist forever in the truth of the Dharma, and in the practice of the Dharma. He who sees merely my body does not truly see me. Only he who accepts my teaching truly sees me.” “After my death, the Dharma shall be your teacher. Follow the Dharma and you will be true to me.”*

Most recently, we, at Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, had our Ministers’ Spring Seminar with our Guest Lecturer Prof. Rev. Kensuke Okamoto of Ryukoku University of Kyoto, Japan. Two of his lectures focused on the topic of “What the Buddha Taught Before His Death.” In one of his lectures, he shared the attitudes and perspectives of 3 disciples when they were confronted with the absence of the Buddha. To be clear, these 3 stories are not from the time of the actual demise of Sakyamuni, but from the episode

of his life when he was not physically present in the human world or dimension with his ascending to the Heavenly Realms as he sought to share the Dharma with his deceased Mother, the former Queen Maya who did not have the opportunity to hear the Dharma while she was living in the human world.

As the Historic Buddha, out of compassion, embarked on this particular journey of sharing the Dharma, the disciples of the Buddha in the human dimension were faced with the dilemma of his absence. In a way, similar to what many would later experience with the Buddha's Parinirvana. The question is "How did people deal with and respond to the Buddha's absence?" Likewise, "How are we, of the present, responding to the passing of one of the greatest teachers of our current times?"

As we continue to reflect, let me introduce, the responses of the Disciples Uppalavanna, Pingiya, and Subhuti which was shared by Prof. Okamoto.

First, the Disciple Uppalavanna. She wanted to be the first to worship the Buddha after the Buddha's return from the Heavenly Realms. Thus, she dispersed a crowd that had gathered to greet the Buddha and was able to worship the World Honored One before anyone else. She was focused on the physical presence or the human body of the Buddha which is a very common reaction.

Next, there was the Disciple Pingiya. He, in part says, "I cannot stay away from him even for a moment...from Gotama of great understanding, from Gotama of great intelligence". "I see him with my mind as if with my eye..." "I go constantly on a mental journey for my mind...is joined to him." According to Prof. Okamoto, *"Pingiya...presents the position that through the act of thinking of or remembering the Buddha, we can meet him, even if he (the Buddha) is not in front of us. In other words, even if one is away from a person one depends on, it is possible to relieve one's anxiety."*

Finally, there is the response of the Disciple Subhuti. According to Prof. Okamoto, in sharing about Subhuti, *"He did not go to the Buddha's place of descent, but rather deeply contemplated the Buddha's teachings (dharma observance)."* In one of the accounts, it is said that Subhuti is about to do the same as Uppalavanna, but reconsiders when he deeply reflected and realized that the physical body and mind of the Buddha and human beings including the surrounding physical environment all are composed of the same earth, water, fire and wind and when he further contemplated on the following teaching, *"The buddhas of the past and the future, as well as the Buddha of (the) present, are all impermanent. If you want to worship the Buddha, you should observe the dhammas in the past, future, and present."* According to Rev. Okamoto, Subhuti's response shares that *"deep consideration of the Buddha's teaching (dhamma observance) is nothing other than worshipping the Buddha."* He (Prof. Okamoto) consoles and encourages us that *"We feel anxious when someone close to us, someone we respect and depend on, leaves us... And if such a person passed away, it is not hard to imagine that one would then be filled with anxiety and loneliness. The Buddhists of the past must have felt the same unease when the Buddha went away and when he entered final nirvana. However, Buddhist scriptures teach us how to stay close to the Buddha even in such times."*

The Historic Buddha is known to have said that even if a person is right next to him holding on to a corner of his robe if that person does not embrace the Dharma, the person is not close to me. However, a person who might be separated from me by hundreds or even thousands of miles, but knows the Dharma, that person is very close to me.

Let us now turn to the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh. He is known to have said,

*I have a disciple in Vietnam who wants to build a stupa for my ashes when I die. He and others want to put a plaque with the words, "Here lies my beloved teacher." I told them not to waste the temple land...I suggested that, if they still insist on building a stupa, they have the plaque say, "I am not in here." But in case people don't get it, they could add a second plaque, "I am not out there either." If still people don't understand, then you can write on the third and last plaque, "I may be found in your way of breathing and walking."*

This is my interpretation, but to me, the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh is saying exactly the same thing as the Historic Buddha and encouraging us to focus on the Dharma, the Teachings and this is the way to be close to the Buddha and also honor our great masters and teachers. It is by not overly focusing on their physical presence or lack of it, but focus on what they taught, focus on how they lived in the Dharma.

(To be continued in the 2022 April issue of Bishop's Corner)

### **STATEMENT BY THE JODO SHINSHU HONGWANJI-HA**

Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii would like to share the statement on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine presented by Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha in Kyoto, Japan. The statement was released on March 8, 2022.

#### **Statement on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine**

On February 24, 2022, Russia aggressively began its invasion of Ukraine through military force.

It has been reported that in cities across Ukraine, many civilians including children have become victims in addition to the well over one million Ukrainian citizens forced to flee becoming refugees.

We, the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Buddhist organization, strongly condemn taking human life lightly as well as using military force to unilaterally try to change reality through violent actions for no matter what reason.

In addition to the invasion of Ukraine, the reality is that terrorist attacks and military warfare continue across the world. Reiterating our stance against violence, it is our fervent hope that a peaceful resolution may be realized as soon as possible and that there be a safe return to peace for the people of Ukraine.

Overcoming conflict that arises through mutual exclusion and differences in thinking and values, I firmly believe that through joint efforts, the path to perpetual peace will open up to a life of spiritual richness.

March 8, 2022

IWAGAMI Chiko

Governor General, Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

## CONDOLENCES

**Mr. Sadao Harold Aoki**, a member of Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin, passed away on January 28, 2022. Mr. Aoki served as the President of Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin from 1988 through 1991. He was also an advisor for Hilo Betsuin Kendo Club. He contributed to the community through as Vice Principal of Kapiolani School, Waiakea High School and Waiakea Elementary School. He coached the Waiakea High School Baseball and the Hawaii AJA Baseball. The Ingo of KAI-DOU-IN 開導院 which means “One who truly Provided Guidance” in recognition of his life of Nembutsu was conferred by Bishop Eric Matsumoto on February 25, 2022.

## COMMUNICATIONS & RESOURCES ON COVID-19

The Office of the Bishop has issued a series of memos (1-18) to provide directives and recommendations regarding temple activities and procedures during the COVID-19 outbreak. These are available in the following page of our Hawaii Kyodan Website. The latest memo was issued on March 3, 2022 because of all Counties in the State of Hawaii have lifted all restrictions put into effect by County ordinances.

<https://hongwanjihawaii.com/blog/2020/03/13/covid19/>

## COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS

### Donations

The Committee on Social Concerns has made the following donations to organizations supporting relief efforts and humanitarian aid in Tonga as a result of the volcanic eruption and the ongoing war in Ukraine:

**For Tonga:**

\$750 The Salvation Army

**For Ukraine:**

\$1250 Doctors Without Borders

\$750 World Central Kitchen

### COVID-19 Resilience Grant

To help ensure temples can safely operate during the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic the Committee on Social Concerns has created the COVID-19 Resilience Grant. This grant can be used to help purchase Personal Protective Equipment (masks, gloves, etc.) as well as cleaning and disinfecting supplies used to reduce the risk of infection.

Any temple affiliated with Hawaii Kyodan may apply to receive a grant of up to a maximum of \$500.00. To apply, submit a letter indicating the amount requested and detailing how grant funds will be used. The letter must be signed by Temple President or Minister. Committee on Social Concerns, Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, Attn: Rev. Blayne Higa, Chair. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis as they are received.

**Current Grants Awarded:**

- \$500 Makawao Hongwanji Mission
- \$500 Moiliili Hongwanji Mission
- \$500 Kahului Hongwanji Mission
- \$500 Mililani Hongwanji Mission
- \$500 Papaikou Hongwanji Mission
- \$500 Puna Hongwanji Mission
- \$500 Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin
- \$200 Lihue Hongwanji Mission

**Our Interdependent Lives: Food Waste and Sustainability**

An educational Zoom event on food waste reduction, composting with worms, and “going compostable” at Obon. This event is sponsored by the Buddhist Churches of America Social Welfare Committee and the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii Committee on Social Concerns. Two speakers will address different aspects of food waste reduction with an emphasis on what we can do in our homes, temples, and organizations. An opening and closing by Buddhist ministers — Rev. Blayne Higa of Kona Hongwanji and Rev. Don Castro of Seattle — will help make the connection to the dharma.

Date: Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Time: 10 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. (HST)

Registration: <http://honpahi.link/foodwaste>

Speakers: Mindy Jaffe (Co-founder and Coordinator of Windward Zero Waste School Hui and Owner of Waikiki Worm Company)

Ron Hamakawa (Member of Seattle Betsuin and a district manager in food and nutrition services, serving multiple healthcare institutions across Western Washington)

**STATE DHARMA SCHOOL GATHERING**

We will be having a State Dharma School Gathering and Dharma School Teachers/Educators Session on Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup> from 9:30 am to 12 pm.

Please encourage everyone to register for this event by SATURDAY, APRIL 16<sup>th</sup> using the following link:

Registration: <https://forms.gle/krPJKHMqmp7VpBdA>

Here's the detailed info:

Date: Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

Time: 9:30 a.m. Service

Dharma Message: Rev. David Fujimoto (Mililani Hongwanji Mission)

10:00 a.m. Breakout Room Sessions

Adult Session: Rev. David Fujimoto “The Pale Blue Dot” discussion

Dharma School Sessions: Jr. YBA Moderators

10:50 a.m. Dharma School Families/Adult Sessions End

11:00 a.m. Dharma School Teachers/ Educators Gathering Session (Open to all)

12:00 p.m. Done

Platform: Zoom

Memo: Open Invitation to All

## SAVE THE DATE: UPCOMING EVENTS

### **BSC 2022 SPRING SEMINAR**

Date: March 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Time: Friday: 7 - 8:30 p.m. (HST)

Saturday: 10 - 11:30 a.m. (HST)

Topic: Dharma Through the Eyes of Youth

Platform: Zoom

- Panelists on Friday will be the Federation of Junior YBA Hawaii Officers, Manami Alspach, Chihiro Okawa, Kana Suzuki, Jay Yokoyama, and Naho Umitani.
- Saturday presents Jacob Chang, former HHMH Youth Coordinator as our guest speaker, along with panelists Wayde Toyama, Dwight Matsuo, and Wayne Yoshioka.

### **2022 KAUAI HONGWANJI COUNCIL NEMBUTSU SEMINAR**

Date & Time: Tuesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. (HST)

Platform: Zoom

Guest Speaker: Dr. Rev. Mutsumi Wondra, the resident minister of the Orange County Buddhist Church (OCBC) in California and the Institute of Buddhist Study instructor.

Topic: "Women in Buddhism - Historiographical Approach -"

Registration: <https://forms.gle/7oBvsVVrazFJM5ma6> (Registration Deadline: April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022)

Fee: Free

### **2022 SPRING VIRTUAL NEMBUTSU SEMINAR (HONOLULU & OAHU HONGWANJI COUNCIL)**

Date & Time: Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. (HST)

Guest Speaker: Rev. Blayne Higa, the resident minister of Kona Hongwanji Mission

Topic: Building Sangha Together: Nurturing Dharma-Centered Communities

Registration: <https://forms.gle/4ShPw8emshpmm9Sm8> (Registration Deadline: April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022)

Fee: Free