



HAMAKUA JODO MISSION OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2025



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contact@hamakuajodomission.org

"Honoring Tradition, Embracing Community"

PEACE & JOY



As the holiday season arrives, we extend our warm wishes to everyone for a season filled with happiness, harmony, and time well spent with loved ones.

The holidays remind us that lasting happiness is not found in gifts or material possessions, but in the practice of loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and goodwill toward all beings. It is a time to embody mindfulness, nurture peace within ourselves, and extend that peace outward into the world.

May these Buddhist teachings guide our hearts, inspire kindness, and bring peace to all throughout this holiday season and the year ahead.

2025: A YEAR IN RETROSPECT

As 2025 comes to a close, we reflect with gratitude on a year of growth, connection, and community. We welcomed visitors from near and far, including those reconnecting with their roots and the temple after years away.

Our volunteer team grew, bringing invaluable energy and support, while ongoing repair and beautification efforts, from plumbing and landscaping to security upgrades helped preserve and enhance our grounds.

This year, we celebrated many milestones: the largest Obon Festival to date, *Kodomo No Hi* (Children's Day) with a festive koinobori display, our 129th anniversary, and the hosting of Japanese Cultural Heritage Day in collaboration with the Honokaa Heritage Center. We were honored to be featured on PBS Hawaii's *Home is Here* and in a music video by international jazz guitarist Yoshiaki Masuo.

We also strengthened our organizational foundation with the updating of seven provisions of our Bylaws, implemented fire safety measures, and secured fire insurance. We also further expanded our online presence by launching an Instagram page.

We welcomed new members, hosted students and researchers, received valuable historical research on our temple's land, and celebrated acts of generosity from our members and community, including a *yagura* and *maku* donation.

While we said farewell to friends and members who passed this year, we remain grateful for the enduring spirit and support of our *sangha*.

As we look toward 2026, we carry forward these accomplishments with deep appreciation and a steadfast dedication to preserving the traditions and legacy of our landmark temple, ensuring its teachings and spirit continue to inspire generations to come.

BODHI DAY



On December 8th, Buddhists celebrate Bodhi Day, commemorating the moment Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment. After meditating for 49 days under a Bodhi tree, he reached Nirvana and became Buddha, *the Awakened One*.

The day is observed with meditation, acts of kindness, selfless giving, and sharing a traditional rice and milk meal. Lighting candles or lamps often symbolizes the wisdom he discovered, providing a peaceful opportunity to reflect and practice mindfulness in daily life.

OTHER NOTEWORTHY HAPPENINGS

- Landscaping efforts continued across the property, with banana trees being dug up and replanted farther from nearby structures to discourage rats from inhabiting the area.

In addition, volunteers thinned the overgrown bird of paradise plant behind the shed area by separating its root clumps and replanting them in several locations near the front yard.

- Our last Beautification Work Day for 2025 will be on **Sunday, December 28, 2025** starting at 8am, rain or shine. Traditionally, Buddhist temples hold a year-end clean-up to welcome the New Year, so your kokua is welcomed and appreciated!

- To prevent our email correspondence and newsletters being filtered into your spam folder, please add our email address contact@hamakuajodomission.org to your contact list.
- Our website has recently been updated with new photos highlighting recent events, visitors, useful links, and more! Over the past month alone, we've welcomed online visitors from a diverse range of countries including Canada, Vietnam, Japan, China, Iraq, Croatia, Bangladesh, Chile, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, Sweden, and Singapore, demonstrating the website's broad reach across the global community.

2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES

We are accepting membership dues for 2026 now through March 31, 2026. Dues remain at \$60 for the upcoming year.

If you missed the deadline to pay your 2025 membership dues, you can still reinstate your membership to an active status by remitting your 2025 dues along with any outstanding dues you may owe for previous years.

Dues are to be sent in the form of a check or money order made payable to Hamakua Jodo Mission to:

Hamakua Jodo Mission
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 7
Honokaa, HI 96727

We also welcome individuals who are interested in becoming members of HJM. For more information on how to join or if you are unsure of your membership status, feel free to contact us at (808) 775-0965 or via email at: contact@hamakuajodomission.org

DID YOU KNOW?



On New Year's Eve, a Buddhist tradition at temples is the ringing of the *bonshō*, a large temple bell. The bell is rung 108 times in a ritual known as *Joya no Kane*. Each ring represents the release of one of the 108 earthly desires or human afflictions believed to cause suffering, symbolically cleansing the mind and spirit as the new year begins.

The deep, ringing sound invites contemplation, marking a transition from the old year to the new with clarity and intention. This ritual reflects Buddhist values of impermanence, self-awareness, and renewal, setting a peaceful tone for the year ahead.

In keeping with this tradition, our temple regularly held a New Year's Eve service back in the day, where members and visitors were invited to take turns ringing the *bonshō*, located on the veranda on the Kona side of the temple.

This ritual stopped decades ago due to the decline in membership, however the spirit of the tradition remains close to our hearts.

We hope to one day reinstate it in the future, as our membership continues to grow.

FIRE PREVENTION UPDATE

Over the past several months, Honokaa has experienced numerous brushfires, some occurring close to the temple grounds. Unusually dry conditions combined with strong winds have created an environment where fires can spread rapidly and unpredictably. In response to these conditions, HJM implemented enhanced fire safety measures to protect our temple, cemetery, and surrounding community.

These measures included the removal of all incense sticks (*senko*), candles, and lighters from the premises, replacing them with granular incense. Clear signage has been posted to inform visitors of this updated policy. Unfortunately, despite these efforts, we have noticed individuals are bringing their own lighters and *senko* into the temple and cemetery, in violation of the posted fire safety rules.

Recent history reminds us how devastating fires can be. The Lahaina wildfires, which destroyed our sister temple, Lahaina Jodo Mission, along with countless homes, landmarks, and lives, are a painful reminder that tragedy can strike suddenly and without warning.



Yongqing Temple complex in China
Photo by: ABC News

Fire risk is not limited to any one location. Last month, ABC News reported that a pavilion at the Yongqing Temple complex in China was destroyed after a tourist lit incense and

candles, causing a devastating fire. Although it did not occur here in Hawaii, it underscores how quickly a single action can result in irreversible loss.

While we are now in the winter months and have experienced occasional rainfall, and even though a suspected arsonist in town was recently arrested, these developments do not eliminate the risk of fire. Complacency can be just as dangerous as dry weather. Fire safety requires constant vigilance.

Our temple is located away from nearby neighbors and immediate assistance. This makes adherence to fire safety policies even more critical. Your cooperation is essential to ensuring the safety and preservation of HJM for generations to come.

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES



For the past 12 years, Grace Flowers Hawaii has proudly served the Big Island with beautiful floral arrangements, lei, cut flowers, plants, and more.

Located in Honokaa on Rickard Place in the former Radio Electronics, Inc. building (known to many kamaaina as the *Matsuda Electronics Store*), Grace Flowers Hawaii is a full-service florist open seven days a week and offering delivery services as well.

When we reached out to Big Island florists this year with a request for floral donations for our Obon Festival, proprietor Allison Higgins and manager Missy, immediately stepped forward to help. Allison graciously invited us to their shop, where we were able to select the flowers

we needed, and she generously donated multiple buckets of flowers to support our event. We are truly grateful to have local businesses like Grace Flowers Hawaii that support community organizations during times of need.

If you are looking for lei, floral arrangements, or flowers for an event, wedding, service, or special occasion, be sure to contact Grace Flowers Hawaii at (808) 443-6953 or visit their website: www.graceflowersthawaii.com

In addition, Allison shares her expertise through a monthly column, *Grow with Grace*, in the Hamakua Times, where she offers helpful tips and information on plants, flowers, and fruits. Be sure to check it out!

FLASHBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Before the era of Zoom conventions, members represented their respective temples by attending gatherings in person, whether held on an outer island or here at home.

This photograph, from the Sakae Higaki Collection, captures one such moment from that time. While the exact date is unknown due to the absence of handwritten notes on the back, several familiar faces can be identified, including past HJM members Hisao Higashi on the far left, Sakae Higaki, Masateru Oketani, Mitsuo Kato, and Rev. Kogan Ekuan on the far right.



Photo credit: Sakae Higaki Collection

If you recognize any of the other individuals pictured, we would like to hear from you so we may properly record their information in our digital photo archive.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



Our Question and Answer column resumes this month with a question we received via our voicemail system.

"Why doesn't anyone answer the phone when we call your number?" - E.N.

HJM currently maintains a landline service at **(808) 775-0965**. As a small temple, we do not have a staffed office of volunteers available to answer phones and greet visitors during regular business hours, unlike some larger Jodo Shu temples in Hawaii.

As a result, all incoming calls are automatically directed to our voicemail system, where messages may be left at any time. These messages are reviewed and retrieved regularly by a member of HJM's Executive Team, also known as your Board of Directors.

For privacy and security reasons, we do not publish the personal cell phone numbers of our Executive Team in public forums. The most effective way to contact HJM is via our email address, which is monitored frequently throughout the day, or by leaving a voicemail message on our temple's phone line.

Please keep in mind that all members of our Executive Team have full time jobs, so non-emergency messages received during work hours will be returned after pau hana time.

JANUARY 2026 NENKI MEMORIAL SERVICES

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>YEAR</u>
1/01	Shunsuke Fujioka	33rd
1/02	Toshiko Wachi	25th
1/19	Amy Matsukado	13th
1/21	Gisuke Yuki	47th
1/22	Tame Higaki	43rd
1/23	Roy Muramoto	37th
1/28	Tomoki Uyeda	43rd

Please contact the HJM Executive Team at hamakuajodoexecteam@gmail.com or call (808) 775-0965 if you would like to schedule a *nenki* memorial service.

****If you come across any errors, we kindly ask that you notify us so we can promptly update our records.*

We have identified discrepancies in certain entries and greatly appreciate the assistance of individuals who bring these issues to our attention. Thank you for your cooperation!

IN APPRECIATION



We want to acknowledge those who generously gifted us with monetary donations:

Doreen Canario.

UPCOMING EVENTS & SERVICES SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>TIME</u>
12/28/25	Beautification Work Day	8:00am

These are events and services that have been confirmed by HJM's Executive Team. If you have made arrangements for a service or event and do not see it listed, please leave a message at (808) 775-0965 or send an email to: hamakuajodoexecteam@gmail.com

This calendar is being provided to avoid visitors from stopping by during private functions/services, and to prevent double bookings.

these connections and ensuring that loved ones are not forgotten.

Please contact us by phone at (808) 775-0965 or sending us an email with your updated info at: contact@hamakuajodominion.org

CONTRIBUTIONS & SUBMISSIONS

Do you enjoy writing or have a memorable photo you'd like to share? Here's your chance to be featured in our upcoming newsletter!

We welcome submissions in Word, PDF, JPEG, or PNG formats. Please send your contributions by the 15th of each month to: contact@hamakuajodominion.org to be considered for inclusion.

CONTACT INFORMATION REQUEST



We continue to receive a small number of undeliverable emails and returned USPS mail, and we kindly ask for your help in ensuring that the contact information we have on file for you is current.

When contact details are not kept up to date, we risk losing touch with the families of those whose loved ones are laid to rest in our cemetery or whose urns are kept in our temple.

Over time, this loss of connection makes it difficult for us to share important updates about the temple and any matters that may affect those entrusted to our care.

As years pass and older generations are no longer with us, maintaining accurate contact information becomes essential to preserving

Mahalo for reading & your continued support!



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

*- The Hamakua Jodo Mission
Newsletter Committee*

***"The journey of a thousand miles begins
with one step." – Lao Tzu***

For those of you that have email addresses but receive our newsletters via USPS, please consider saving a tree and a stamp by receiving them electronically. Sign up by sending an email to: contact@hamakuajodominion.org



Hamakua Jodo Mission 2026 Nenki Memorial Service List

JANUARY

Shunsuke Fujioka	1/1/1994	33 rd
Toshiko Wachi	1/2/2002	25 th
Amy Matsukado	1/19/2014	13 th
Gisuke Yuki	1/21/1980	47 th
Tame Higaki	1/22/1984	43 rd
Roy Muramoto	1/23/1990	37 th
Tomoki Uyeda	1/28/1984	43 rd

FEBRUARY

Mina Ota	2/6/1984	43 rd
Shoichi Fukaura	2/14/2024	3 rd
Clyde Yano	2/15/2020	7 th
Kikue Wachi	2/25/2010	17 th
Taneo Hayakawa	2/28/1984	43 rd

MARCH

Yoshiko Kawashima	3/10/2024	3 rd
Isami Okunami	3/10/1990	37 th
Mitsuo Nakagawa	3/18/2014	13 th
Paul Osako	3/26/1994	33 rd
Arlene Watanabe Pullen	3/31/2025	1 year

APRIL

Waku Fukaura	4/9/1977	50 th
Tami Yuki	4/21/2020	7 th
Sandra Nakagawa	4/25/1994	33 rd

MAY

Tozo Takamine	5/13/1977	50 th
Masuji Iwasaki	5/24/1990	37 th
Kamado Toyama	5/26/1984	43 rd

JULY

Kimiyo Nishimori	7/2/1994	33 rd
Iris Nakagawa	7/4/1990	37 th
Rev. Kogan Ekuon	7/6/1977	50 th
Mark Nakashima	7/11/2024	3 rd

AUGUST

Kyoko Fujitani	8/17/2000	27 th
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SEPTEMBER

Susumu Uyeda	9/20/1980	47 th
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OCTOBER

Shigeko Takamine	10/26/2014	13 th
Midori Enanoria	10/28/2000	27 th
Herbert Abe	10/30/2014	13 th

NOVEMBER

Katsumi Uemura	11/8/1984	43 rd
Richard Matsumoto	11/19/2004	23 rd
Tsuneichi Takahashi	11/24/2014	13 th
Haru Okunami	11/26/1977	50 th
Kiyoko Okunami	11/29/2010	17 th

DECEMBER

Toru Gyotoku	12/3/2004	23 rd
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While we await the assignment of a new resident minister, **we have an on-island Jodo Shu minister available to officiate services during the interim.*

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hamakuajodoexecteam@gmail.com if you would like to schedule a memorial service.

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Hamakua Jodo Mission

*The First Sanctioned Buddhist Temple Built in
Hawaii*

www.hamakuajodomission.org

<http://Bit.ly/HamakuaJodoMission>