



HAMAKUA JODO MISSION OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER MAY 2026



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“Honoring Tradition, Embracing Community”

FREEMAN FOUNDATION VISIT



Freeman Foundation Board of Directors
with Kyodan President Sandy Takahashi

Last month, we were contacted by Historic Hawaii Foundation Executive Director Kiersten Faulkner, who asked whether Kyodan President Sandy Takahashi would be available to meet with members of the Board of Directors of their funding partner, the Freeman Foundation, at the temple. The purpose of the visit was to showcase the many restoration and preservation projects completed through the generous grant funding our temple received over the years.

Many of you may recall that our temple was awarded two grants through the Historic Hawaii Foundation, generously funded by the Freeman Foundation. These grants were truly a lifeline, allowing us to address numerous long-standing repairs and preservation needs that would otherwise have been financially impossible for us to undertake on our own.

The first grant, awarded in 2017 in the amount of \$75,000, enabled the complete replacement

of the temple roof in 2018. A few years later, Sandy inquired about the possibility of applying for additional funding.

Initially, she was informed that the program was intended as a one-time opportunity, with organizations eligible for only a single grant. However, through her persistence and dedication in advocating for our temple's ongoing needs, an exception was granted, allowing HJM to submit a second application.

Sandy independently prepared the extensive grant proposal, which required obtaining contractor estimates, developing a proposed budget and timeline, and compiling a detailed account of the repairs and projects that would be completed if funding were awarded.

The process was especially challenging because it took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, when lockdowns and business closures made it extremely difficult to secure estimates and coordinate with contractors.



2022 Termite tenting treatment

In the Fall of 2021, we were thrilled to receive a second grant in the amount of \$46,000. These funds made possible a number of

critical improvements, including trimming overgrown trees encroaching on headstones and utility poles, termite tenting, structural foundation repairs, erosion mitigation through professional grading behind the temple, installation of gutters, replacement of the cottage stairs, siding repairs, and many other essential preservation projects.

Without these grant funds, many of these much-needed accomplishments would not have been possible.

On April 22, 2026, Sandy welcomed Graeme Freeman and his wife Nancy, along with Lance Goto, Shereen Goto, and New York based trustees David Stack and George Tsandikos for a tour of the temple and grounds.



Nancy & Graeme Freeman

During the hour-long visit, Sandy highlighted the many accomplishments made possible through the Foundation's generosity and support. She also answered a wide range of questions about the temple's history, its role in the community, and our vision for the future.

Their Board of Directors all expressed admiration for the ongoing efforts to preserve and sustain this historic temple site for future generations.

We are deeply grateful to both The Freeman Foundation and the Historic Hawaii Foundation for their invaluable support and partnership, and we look forward to continuing to strengthen our relationship in the years ahead!

OTHER NOTEWORTHY HAPPENINGS

- We had the annual servicing of our fire extinguishers by service technician Malia Mikaele of Alert Alarm Hawaii.
- Sanding and the repainting of the temple's handrails have been underway.
- HJM member and volunteer Pickens Kehrer and Kyodan President Sandy Takahashi met with Kylie Tavares, assistant extension agent with the University of Hawai'i at Hilo College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience, to discuss the ongoing erosion issues at the site.

During the meeting, they also helped spread the word about opportunities to obtain vetiver grass at a discounted bulk rate for erosion control efforts.

- Our next Beautification Work Day is scheduled for *Sunday, May 24, 2026* at 8am. Please RSVP if you will be volunteering that morning. Your kokua is greatly appreciated!
- Mahalo nui loa to Susan Horie for volunteering hours of her time this month outside of our monthly Beautification Work Days!
- The Hawaii Jodo Shu Rengo Fujinkai is currently accepting applications for the Namiye Nakamura Scholarship. For details on the qualifications and an application, interested parties can contact the Jodo Mission of Hawaii (Betsuin) office directly at (808) 949-3995.

2026 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING RECAP

We want to thank all the members who joined us in person and on Zoom for our annual membership meeting on April 26, 2026! There were a lot of things that were reported during the meeting, everything from accomplishments since last year, ongoing projects, our finances,

and a question and answer section from our members who attended.

We experienced some minor Zoom glitches at the beginning, but were able to successfully have a hybrid meeting. Until next year!

DID YOU KNOW?

With Obon season approaching, many dancers will wear *yukata*, a lightweight summer kimono, as they gather to dance around the *yagura*. In Okinawa, one lesser-known traditional fabric sometimes used to make these garments is *bashofu*.



Bashofu Kimono

Photo credit: Shareen Nishikawa Aranaydo Collection

Bashofu is a traditional Okinawan textile woven from fibers taken from the Japanese fiber banana plant, known as *itobasho*. Lightweight, breathable, and durable, the fabric has long been prized for its comfort in Okinawa's warm, humid climate and was traditionally used for kimono and other summer clothing.

Creating *bashofu* is an intricate and labor intensive process. Artisans manually harvest banana plant stalks, extract and sort the fibers by hand, spin them into thread, dye them, and weave the fabric using techniques passed down through generations.

Because each stage requires meticulous handwork, authentic *bashofu* is considered both rare and highly valued today.



Itabosho banana plant fibers

Photo credit: Okinawa Institute of Science & Technology

The craft is especially associated with the Kijoka hamlet in the village of Ogimi, where local weavers and cultural organizations continue working to preserve the tradition despite modernization and a declining number of artisans.

Recognized as an Important Intangible Cultural Property of Japan, *bashofu* reflects both the artistry and cultural heritage of Okinawa.

What was once an everyday fabric worn across social classes has become one of Japan's most respected traditional textiles and an enduring symbol of Okinawan craftsmanship.

Thank you to Shareen Nishikawa Aranaydo, who shared this information and photos of her maternal grandmother Mary Higa's bashofu kimono.

Shareen's grandfather, Sanji Nishikawa, was an important figure in the temple's establishment and helped steward it, especially during World War II. She is also the niece of our former Kyodan President, Masa Nishimori.

2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES

If you missed the March 31, 2026 deadline to pay your 2026 membership dues, you can still reinstate your membership to an active status by remitting your 2026 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

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

We received a question this month related to why our bon dance has changed over the last years:

“Your bon dances are much different now. Why do you have to get food trucks and other activities besides the dance?” - G.C.

While some aspects of the celebration may appear more “modernized” compared to the past, these changes reflect our efforts to adapt to the needs and realities of our temple while ensuring that the spirit and traditions of bon dance continue for future generations.

In earlier years, we were fortunate to have a much larger congregation, and many of our members, especially the women, would spend long hours preparing food in the kitchen for attendees.

Today, we simply do not have enough members and volunteers available to dedicate the significant time and labor required to prepare and serve food on that scale.



Photo credit: Sarah Anderson

Bringing in food vendors and food trucks allows us to continue offering a variety of food options to attendees without placing an overwhelming burden on our members and volunteers. It also helps alleviate the many logistical and permitting requirements involved with preparing and serving food to the public. The vendors are invited to participate in the event and, in appreciation for the opportunity, traditionally provide a donation back to the temple.

In addition to the bon dance, we have expanded our activities to include cultural games and interactive experiences such as lantern hanging, *kingyo sukui*, and educational exhibits.

These additions are intended to help engage younger generations and introduce them to Japanese culture and Buddhist traditions in a fun and enriching way. Our hope is that these experiences encourage people to return, learn more about the temple, and eventually become involved as volunteers and supporters themselves.

With each passing year, our bon dance continues to grow, and we aim to keep the event welcoming, engaging, and enjoyable for both longtime attendees and first-time visitors.

While honoring tradition remains at the heart of the celebration, we also recognize the importance of evolving with the community and finding ways to create new connections. We always welcome feedback and suggestions on activities or experiences attendees would like to see in the future.

REMEMBERING MEMBERS OF THE PAST



This month, we honor the memory of Masateru Oketani, a lifelong member of our temple whose quiet dedication, humility, and countless hours of service helped sustain and strengthen our temple for many decades.

Masateru was born in Paauhau on January 5, 1923, to Sekijiro and Hisayo Oketani, Japanese immigrants who raised a family of seven children. He attended Honokaa High School before beginning his career with the Paauhau Sugar Company and ending with Hamakua Sugar Company, where he worked as a machinist.

A devoted member of HJM, Masateru represented the temple at numerous Jodo Shu conventions and was an active participant in the Senior Young Buddhist Association. Over the years, he served on many committees and earned a reputation as a dependable and hardworking individual who carried out his responsibilities with quiet efficiency and dedication.

Beyond the temple, Masateru was actively involved in the community. He served on the Board of Directors of the Paauhau Federal Credit Union and was a committee member supporting the formation of Cub Scout Pack 34.

In 1953, he married Tomoe “Violet” Oketani, and together they raised three sons: Denis, Alan, and Arthur. Both Masateru and Violet were familiar and welcoming presences at the temple, always willing to lend a hand wherever needed.

During his retirement years, Masateru remained active through the Honokaa Senior Citizens and continued volunteering regularly at the temple, often caring for the grounds by mowing the lawn and assisting with maintenance projects. He also placed great importance on maintaining his health and staying active. In 2004, he earned first place in the men’s division for ages 75 and older in the two-mile Walk-A-Thon at the Moku O Hawaii Senior Olympics.

Masateru passed away on September 2, 2011, at the age of 88. He will always be remembered as a quiet, steadfast, and selfless individual whose contributions to our temple and community continue to leave a lasting legacy.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteering at HJM is one of the most rewarding ways individuals can contribute to the strength and well-being of our temple.

Through the giving of one’s time, skills, and energy, volunteers help preserve traditions and our historic temple. Whether assisting with events, maintaining facilities, supporting fundraising efforts, or simply helping where needed, every act of service plays an important role in building a stronger foundation that allows important cultural, spiritual, and educational activities to continue for future generations.

To learn more about volunteering opportunities, please send us an email to:

contact@hamakuajodominion.org or via phone at (808) 775-0965.

IN APPRECIATION



We want to thank those who graciously gifted us with monetary donations:

Charles Umamoto, Hamada Ohana, Lembi James, Melissa Thompson, Mr. & Mrs. Richard Pascual, Lester Okunami, James Arita, Katie Kosara, Charlotte Kakita, Phaethon Keeney & Kainoa Withington, Joni Rapozo, Toshiyuki Nakagawa, Grace Salera, Donna Ching & Richard Leman, Mr. & Mrs. Warren Osako, Gail Walker, Roger Kaku, Mr. & Mrs. James Burton, Terence Kato, Mr. & Mrs. George Higaki, Blane Takamine, Mike Stolp, Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Hamai, Florence Higa, Anthony Arita, Kevin Nishikawa, Helen Matsui, and Mr. & Mrs. Gerald De Mello.

And mahalo to those who asked to remain anonymous.

Membership dues:

John Arsenault, Kanoa Withington & Phaethon Keeney

CONTRIBUTIONS & SUBMISSIONS

We encourage all members and friends of the temple to contribute to our newsletter by sharing photographs, articles, stories, memories, or research related to our temple

Please email your materials in Word, PDF, JPEG, or PNG format by the 15th of each month to:

contact@hamakuajodominion.org

UPCOMING EVENTS & SERVICES SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>TIME</u>
5/24/26	Beautification Work Day	8:00am
8/08/26	Private Nenki Service	4:00pm
	<u>2026 Obon Festival</u>	
	Gravesite Service	5:00pm
	Indoor Service	6:00pm
	Bon Dance	7:00pm

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: hamakuajodoexecuteam@gmail.com

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

Mahalo for reading & your continued support!

*- The Hamakua Jodo Mission
Newsletter Committee*

"Life doesn't get easier or more forgiving, we get stronger and more resilient."

- Steve Maraboli

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

2026 DONATION LETTER CAMPAIGN DRIVE

By now, many of you who have an address on file with us may have received a recent letter from HJM humbly inviting you to consider making a donation to our temple. We recognize that there are numerous organizations currently reaching out for support. In a close-knit community such as ours, it is often the same generous individuals who are asked to give time and again. We do not take this lightly, and it is with humility that we ask you to consider extending your kokua to our temple.

It has been nearly two years since we last conducted a major donation campaign. During that time, we have continued to care for our temple as best we can, but there remain important repairs, ongoing maintenance needs, and day-to-day operational expenses that require attention. Your support will directly help us sustain and preserve our historic temple for current and future generations.

We also continue to work toward a long-term goal: the purchase of the land from Kamehameha Schools. This is a significant undertaking, one that will take years of thoughtful planning, steady fundraising, and the collective strength of our community. While the goal is substantial, every contribution, no matter the size, moves us closer to securing a permanent home for our temple.

We are deeply grateful for your support and for your thoughtful consideration at this time. Your generosity, in all its forms, truly makes a difference!

Yes, I want to help **Hamakua Jodo Mission** with a donation.

Donation amount enclosed: ___\$20 ___\$50 ___\$100 Other \$_____

Please complete the section below for proper donation acknowledgment and kindly return this form along with your charitable donation to:

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

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email Address _____

_____ I would like to have my donation remain anonymous.

_____ I would like to be added to the Hamakua Jodo Mission mailing list to receive your monthly newsletter by **email**. My email address is listed above.

To save a stamp and envelope, you may donate online at www.hamakuajodomission.org by clicking the "Donate" button, or by scanning the QR code below:



Mahalo for your support!

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



Hamakua Jodo Mission

*The First Sanctioned Buddhist Temple Built in
Hawaii*

www.hamakuajodomission.org

<http://Bit.ly/HamakuaJodoMission>