



HAMAKUA JODO MISSION OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2026 - OBON EDITION



P.O. Box 7 Honokaa, HI 96727 Ph. (808) 775-0965
contact@hamakuajodomission.org

"Honoring Tradition, Embracing Community"

A CELEBRATION MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH COMMITMENT & PERSERVERANCE



Photo credit: Sarah Anderson

Our 2026 Obon Festival was held on August 8, 2026, and despite pouring rain that seemed determined to test us at every turn, it turned out to be a beautiful, memorable, and deeply meaningful evening.

If there was one message this year's Obon reminded us of, it was this: rain or shine, we show up.

Our small but dedicated group of volunteers, together with our wonderful community of attendees, came together to honor those who came before us: the loved ones and ancestors who paved the way for the lives we live today.

That spirit of perseverance, gratitude, and community is at the heart of Obon. *Okagesama de.*

The evening began with a gravesite service in front of the *Mueno Haka* in our cemetery. Rev. Junshin Miyazaki officiated the service, joined by a small group of attendees who gathered to honor those interred there.

Under a rainy sky, the traditional offering of *mizunoku*, a mixture of raw rice, chopped eggplant, and chopped cucumber, was sprinkled over the graves. Even with the rain, this important tradition continued as it has for generations.

Following the gravesite service, everyone gathered inside the temple and on the veranda for a poignant *Hatsubon* service. Loved ones who had passed away within the past year were remembered in prayer, along with those whose families and friends had requested *toba* in memory of those who are no longer with us.



Photo credit: Sarah Anderson

We also took time to recognize our *Keiro* temple members, who are 80 years young and older. These remarkable individuals have devoted many years of volunteer service, dedication, and love to Hamakua Jodo

Mission. Their contributions have helped preserve our temple and our traditions for future generations, and we are deeply grateful for all they have done.

We were especially honored to have Sadako Kato (95), Earl Tanaka (83), and Kazue Kimura (95) join us for this year's festival. We were grateful for the opportunity to recognize them and celebrate their many years of devotion, service, and wisdom.



L-R: Sadako Kato, Earl Tanaka, and Kazue Kimura
Photo credit: Sarah Anderson

They happily posed for photographer Sarah Anderson, who captured this wonderful moment with a photograph that will serve as a lasting reminder of their presence and the generations of dedication they represent.

We would also like to recognize our *Keiro* members who were unable to join us that evening: Susumu Fujii, George Higaki, Edward Honda, Toshiko "Shirley" Ito, Kenneth Toyama, Eugene Okamoto, Sr., and Diana Nui.

Then came the moment when everyone realized this would not be a typical Obon night. The rain was coming down hard.

Our gracious guests and volunteers quickly cleared chairs from inside the temple to make room for the dancers. Without missing a beat, the Bon Dance began indoors, with Taishoji Taiko providing the powerful drumming that accompanied timeless songs.



Photo credit: Nic Tanaka

It was a sight to behold: dancers filling the temple, moving together in celebration and remembrance. Then, as the rain briefly eased, the dancers slowly made their way down the stairs and outside, gathering beneath the elaborate lights and around the *yagura* in the yard. And when the rain returned? They moved again, back inside. Then outside. Then inside again.



Photo credit: Sarah Anderson

At one point, half the dancers were dancing in the rain while others continued dancing under cover inside the temple. Two Bon Dances were essentially happening at the same time and everyone was having a wonderful time! Perhaps there could be no better illustration of the spirit of this year's Obon. We weren't going to let the rain stop us!

The rain also brought some unexpected moments of fun. During intermission, door prizes generously donated by KTA Super Stores, Hamakua Living, Beach Dog Books, and Punahuele Jerky Company were given away, just as another downpour arrived. Our

activities booth continued to welcome both children and adults, with opportunities to play *Kingyo Sukui*, the traditional goldfish-catching game, and decorate an *uchiwa* fan.



Photo credit: Samantha Kalilikane

Our lighted lantern display also had to be relocated. The stanchions were quickly moved from in front of our poinciana manor tree and rearranged beneath one of our pop-up tents so the beautiful paper lanterns could remain protected from the rain.

Those looking for a break from the rain found a welcoming space in the dining hall, where a series of exhibit panels offered an opportunity to learn more about the history of our temple, the traditions and significance of Obon, and information about Jodo Shu Buddhism.



Photo credit: Sarah Anderson

There were also multiple food trucks such as Lowline Cattle Company, Ohana Bakery & Cafe, Thai Nong Khai Express, and Takoyatea serving up delicious food all night long!

The dancing continued well past 9 p.m. Many stayed until the very end, when the grand

prize, a YETI Roadie 15 cooler, was awarded to one very happy attendee.

What everyone sees on the night of Obon is the finished product: the lights, the *yagura*, the dancing, the food, the activities, the services, and the gathering of our community.

What is much harder to see is everything that happens behind the scenes to make that evening possible.

Our Obon Festival is a tremendous undertaking that requires many weeks, and often months, of planning, organizing, coordinating, preparing, and working through countless details.

There are supply runs, setup, cleanup, equipment, decorations, food, lighting, grounds maintenance, scheduling, troubleshooting, and all of the many unglamorous jobs that simply need to get done. Much of that work happens quietly, without recognition.



Photo credit: Laura Newland

This year, that work was made even more challenging by a series of circumstances that seemed to happen one after another. We experienced unusually rainy weather for many weeks, delaying much of the lighting setup.

Meanwhile, the grass and weeds seemed to grow almost as quickly as we could cut them, sometimes sprouting back only days after being weed-whacked or mowed.

Volunteers spent significant time away from their day jobs. Long nights were spent preparing and making sure everything was ready. Personal and family sacrifices were made along the way.



Photo credit: Linda Thompson

Then, just days before the festival, an unexpected vehicle emergency occurred for one of the two volunteers at the heart of our Obon preparations during a supply and food run. With transportation suddenly uncertain at a time when there was still so much left to accomplish, preparations could easily have been disrupted. Instead, a generous member loaned a vehicle, allowing the work to continue.

But the challenges weren't finished yet.

Only a couple of hours before the first service was scheduled to begin, a food truck attempting to maneuver into its designated area accidentally brought down a large mango tree branch onto part of our elaborate lighting setup.

The impact caused a significant section of the light strands and pole setup to collapse. With the event only hours away and heavy rain still falling, there was no time to simply leave the problem for another day. Two volunteers, Pickens Kehrer and Nic Tanaka, stepped in to save the day.

Working in the pouring rain, a chainsaw was used to cut down and remove the fallen

branch, and they worked to repair and restore the damaged section of the lighting setup.



A section of the fallen tree branch after it was cut down to moveable pieces

It would have been understandable to look at that situation and wonder how everything could possibly be ready in time. Instead, Pickens and Nic saw a problem that needed to be solved. And they solved it.

That moment captured what happened throughout this year's Obon. There were plenty of opportunities to say, *this is too much*.

The weeks of rain could have delayed preparations further. The weather could have forced us to postpone or cancel. Equipment problems could have stopped us. The lighting debacle just hours before the event could have been the final straw. But it wasn't.

Plans were adjusted. Problems were addressed. Volunteers stepped forward and lent a hand. When one approach didn't work, we found another. And the event went forward.

In fact, what was accomplished this year was nothing short of remarkable.

It is also of note that it was the first time in decades that the Bon Dance was held indoors. Some say they remember it happening in the past, but according to the late Masa Nishimori, who served as Kyodan President for many years, he recalled years ago of only one previous occasion when the rain had been severe enough to force the Bon Dance inside the temple and on the veranda.

He could not remember the year, but he said that it was a very rare occurrence. Decades later, we found ourselves making that same adjustment. And just as those before us did, we carried on.



Photo credit: Eric Page

Perhaps that is the greatest lesson from our 2026 Obon Festival. Obon is about remembering our ancestors. It is about gratitude for those who came before us and recognizing the sacrifices that made our lives possible.

But Obon is also about the people standing beside us today. It is about the volunteer who stays late. The person who is visiting the island on vacation who comes to volunteer. The member who offers to lend their vehicle selflessly. The people who work in the rain to repair fallen light strands and pole. The guests who move chairs so the dancing can start. The dancers who keep dancing outside when the rain comes down. The families who bring their children. The people who stay until the very end.

It is about all of us deciding that something important is worth the effort.

This year's Obon reminded us that traditions don't continue simply because we put them on a calendar. They continue because people care enough to make them happen.

And this year, our community showed just how much it cares. To everyone who helped with setup or cleanup, performed, provided

equipment or supplies, supported the festival, attended, donated, encouraged the organizers, or simply lent a helping hand: **THANK YOU.** Thank you for showing up. Thank you for persevering.

The rain may have changed our plans, but it never changed our purpose. Rain or shine, we show up. And perhaps that is exactly what Obon is all about. *Okagesama de.*

HURRICANE LALA

Mother Nature certainly seems to be keeping Hawaii and especially the Big Island on its toes this year! From weeks of constant rain and Kona Low storms to Kilauea's eruptions, earthquakes both large and small, and most recently, Hurricane Lala, our island has experienced more than its share of unpredictable weather and natural events.

We hope all of our members, friends, volunteers, and community members came through Hurricane Lala safely and without significant damage to their homes or properties.

On August 15th, strong winds and heavy rains swept across the islands, leaving many without electricity, water, phone, and internet service for days. Some areas are still awaiting full restoration. We are grateful that power has been restored in most of the Hamakua area and recognize how fortunate we are to have our essential services back.



Thankfully, our temple and its structures weathered the storm well, with no significant

damage reported. We did, however, lose a banana tree, and several large branches broke from our avocado, orange, and ironwood trees during the high winds.

The grounds did not fare quite as well. The rain during our Obon Festival left the lawn and grassy field beyond the mango tree extremely muddy, with little opportunity for the ground to dry before Hurricane Lala arrived and brought even more rain. As a result, the area remains soft and difficult to navigate.

Although we are beginning to see some sunshine, the forecast calls for additional rain in the coming days. If you are planning to visit the temple, please use caution, particularly when driving or parking in the front yard. Vehicles may have difficulty navigating the muddy areas, and tires can lose traction or skid. For safety, the grassy field past the mango tree has been temporarily blocked off with caution cones.



We appreciate everyone's patience and understanding. Hopefully, a stretch of drier weather will give the soil a chance to dry out and allow us to return the property to normal.

OTHER NOTEWORTHY HAPPENINGS

- Hawi Jodo Mission, Hakalau Jodo Mission, and Kamuela Hongwanji Mission had to postpone their Bon Dance on August 15th due to Hurricane Lala.

Since then, Hakalau Jodo Mission has rescheduled their Bon Dance for September 12, 2026, and Kamuela Hongwanji Mission is on for August 29, 2026.

- Did you notice banners that were hung in Honokaa Town and in Waimea advertising our Bon Dance? Thank you to PJ Suds Laundromat, Malama Market, and the County of Hawaii Department of Parks & Recreation for allowing us to hang them!



- There will be **no** Beautification Work Day this month. We will resume our work day on Sunday, September 20, 2026 at 8am. Volunteers must **RSVP** by September 16th so that we can order lunch for you.
- We welcomed Dr. Eriko Yamamoto of Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan, who stopped by for a visit, along with a friend and colleague of hers.
- Hakalau Jodo Mission will be hosting a showing of the Hawaii Department of Transportation's documentary film, "*Hakalau - Bridges Across Time*," on Sunday, August 29, 2026.

Doors open at 4pm and the film screening starts at 5pm, with a discussion and Q&A session following at 5:30pm.

Two of our Executive Team members, Nicole Garcia and Sandy Takahashi, who both work at the Honokaa Heritage Center, researched and provided historical photos for this project.

- Mahalo to Wayne Kawakami for donating a pre-owned line striping machine that will come in handy when we have future events.

We also want to thank Phaethon Keeney for the beautiful tropical floral arrangement for Obon. Our gratitude also goes out to Maren Lambeth for donating potted plants, tropical flowers, and flower arrangements for Obon, too!

DID YOU KNOW?



Photo credit: Sarah Anderson

Several festival attendees asked about the little ghost-like dolls hanging from the bamboo branches around the yard. In fact, it was the most frequently asked question of the evening, particularly among those attending our Obon Festival for the first time.

Since many of our newer newsletter subscribers may also be unfamiliar with them, we thought it would be a perfect opportunity to revisit this fun Japanese tradition, which we first featured in last year's newsletter.

Teru Teru Bōzu, a traditional Japanese handmade doll, is usually made from white

cloth that is used as a good luck charm for sunny weather before an important outdoor event, festival, trip, or excursion.

With all the rain we had been experiencing, we decided there was no such thing as too much help from our little weather charms. This year, we doubled the number of *Teru Teru Bōzu* hanging around the property, hoping they could "persuade" the rain clouds to give us a break.

Skeptics might argue that they didn't exactly do their job, considering how much it poured during Obon. But perhaps we should give them some credit! After all, the weather gave us just enough of a break to hold our festival before Hurricane Lala arrived....and there were several times during the evening when the skies cleared just enough for everyone to dance outside.

We're choosing to believe the *Teru Teru Bōzu* did their part. And just to be safe, next year we're doubling down again. Expect to see even **MORE** of these little rain-stoppers hanging around the property! 😊



Photo credit: Sarah Anderson

SEPTEMBER 2026 NENKI MEMORIAL SERVICES

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>YEAR</u>
9/20	Susumu Uyeda	47th

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!*

REMEMBERING MEMBERS OF THE PAST



Many of you who grew up attending services and events at our temple will remember Ethel Nishimura as a steady and familiar presence.

Ethel was an active member of our Fujinkai Women's Club and served as its treasurer, a responsibility that reflected the trust and confidence her fellow members placed in her. She also represented our temple at many Fujinkai conventions. Through her many years of involvement, she helped strengthen the bonds of friendship and fellowship that were such an important part of Hamakua Jodo Mission.

She was someone who could always be counted on to lend a helping hand, whether she was participating in clean-up days, working in the kitchen alongside the Fujinkai members to prepare delicious food during Obon and various events, or serving on various temple committees.

Ethel was born in Honolulu on April 12, 1921, to Katsuzo and Kiju Uyeno. She grew up in Honolulu and lived there until she met her future husband, Charles Sadami Nishimura. Charlie was born and raised in Paauhau and was serving in the military when the two met at a Post Exchange. Their meeting marked the beginning of a lifelong partnership.

After they married, Ethel and Charlie moved to the Big Island and made their home in Paauhau. Both of them worked for the Paauhau Sugar Plantation Company - Charlie was a welder, while Ethel was a junior accounting clerk. The company later merged with Hamakua Sugar Company, where Ethel continued working until their retirement. Her years of employment were another example of her dependable and hardworking nature.

Ethel's commitment to her community extended beyond the temple. She found time to serve on both the Supervisory Committee and the Education Committee of the Paauhau Federal Credit Union, as well as the Paauhau Home Demonstration Club. Balancing her work, family life, temple responsibilities, and community service, Ethel demonstrated dedication to helping others.

As Ethel and Charlie grew older, they made the decision in 1995 to relocate to Oahu so they could be closer to their daughter, JoAnn, and her family in Kaneohe. Although they left the Big Island, the memories and friendships they had built there remained an important part of their lives.

Retirement gave Ethel and Charlie more opportunities to enjoy time with family and friends. They especially enjoyed traveling to Las Vegas each year, spending time with their grandchildren, and visiting old friends.

Ethel passed away on December 22, 2005, at the age of 84. While she may no longer be with us, the memories she left behind remain. Those who knew her will remember her smile, her friendly nature, and her willingness to help whenever she was needed.

IN APPRECIATION



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

Evangeline Kato-Barney • Maryellen Kaye • Iris Nakagawa • Earl Tanaka • Ann Inaba • Mr. & Mrs. Harlan Asano • Mr. & Mrs. Kenji Shiba • Mr. & Mrs. Destry Matsui • Mr. & Mrs. Edward Honda • Kevin Higaki • Michael Yamagata • Eugene Okamoto Sr. • Mr. & Mrs. Warren Miyasaki • Mr. & Mrs. George Higaki • Ashleigh Drake • Rachel Hiraoka • Jerby Ito • Lucas Arkin • Tanya Bondallian • Donna Mah, Hilda Bannister • Blane Takamine • Deanna Ishihara • Gail Ikoma • Yaeko Kunishige • Mayette Drake • Kazue Kimura • Akiko Masuda • Mr. & Mrs. Esteban Rabang, Jr. • Rika Boorsma • Berni Botelho • Lembi James • Luana Ogi • Mr. & Mrs. Steve Toma • James Waddington • Yukio Muramatsu • Yoshiko Dacanay • Terence Kato • Laura Newland • Toshiko “Shirley” Ito • Mr. & Mrs. Harold Hughes • Mr. & Mrs. Alan Nakagawa • Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Bondallian • Jason Higaki • Eric Page • Keith Higaki • The Family of Jeff & Carla Takamine • Marvin Kato • Deborah Yoshiyama • Allison Aganus, Clifford Nishimura • Susan Szotek • The Kawashima Ohana • Anonymous Donors •

Our gratitude goes out to the following individuals who either donated supplies, services, door prizes, and/or goods for our Obon Festival:

Sarah Anderson Photography • Steve & Clara Toma • Waimea Instant Printing • KTA Super Stores • Hamakua Living • Beach Dog Books • Punahale Jerky Company • Maren Lambeth • Nic Tanaka • Pickens Kehrer • Sandy Takahashi • Phaethon Keeney • Nicole Garcia • Rev. Junshin Miyazaki • Jen Tanaka •

Many thanks to those who volunteered on the evening of our Obon Festival either working at different activity booths or helping direct traffic & parking:

Shari Capilla • Donna Ching • Pedro Sanches • Seanry Agbayani • Keli Ann Kaholoaa • Renee Kinchla • Shirley Masuo • Kihana Moon • John Arsenault • Dr. Crystal Moon • Zac Moon • Samantha Kalilikane • Nicole Garcia • Pickens Kehrer • Sandy Takahashi •

Many heartfelt mahalos to everyone who volunteered helping us with either the cleanup, setup, tear down (or all three!):

Linda Thompson • Faith Elarionoff • Shari Capilla • Richard Leman • Donna Ching • Hattie Gerrish • Laura Newland • Phaethon Keeney • Nic Tanaka • Susan Horie • Dawn Matsui • Dylan Matsui • Danielle Matsui • Nicole Garcia • Dr. Crystal Moon • Kountry Garcia • Wayne & Jeri Kawakami • Irving Kawashima • Sadako Kato • Kihana Moon • Zac Moon • Samantha Kalilikane • Sandy Takahashi • Pickens Kehrer • Kristina Adams • Clara & Steve Toma • Eric Page • Keith Higaki • Glenn Oshiro • Shigeyo Ricci •

And MUCH GRATITUDE to everyone who went above and beyond to help us in the final two days leading up to the event and/or during the morning and early afternoon of our big day. Whether you were able to help for one, two, or all three days, your time, energy, and support made all the difference:

Laura Newland • Phaethon Keeney • Susan Horie • Dr. Crystal Moon • Kihana Moon • Zac Moon • Samantha Kalilikane • Wayne & Jeri Kawakami • Marvin Kato • Eric Page • Keith Higaki • Linda Thompson • Faith Elarionoff • Nic Tanaka • Pickens Kehrer • Sandy Takahashi •

A FEW SPECIAL MOMENTS FROM OUR OBON FESTIVAL

We'll be sharing more photos and a few videos on our website and Instagram soon. In the meantime, here are a few photos that were submitted to us for you to enjoy!



Photo credit: Nic Tanaka



Photo credit: Sarah Anderson



Photo credit: Sarah Anderson

UPCOMING EVENTS & SERVICES SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>TIME</u>
9/20/26	Beautification Work Day	8:00am
11/01/26	TBA	

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.

Mahalo for reading & your continued support!

- The Hamakua Jodo Mission Newsletter Committee

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." -Gandhi

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@hamakuajodomission.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