

Last Month Was a Busy One

Maui United BWA Care Facility Visitation & Spring Assembly

Lahaina Hongwanji BWA members, accompanied by Rev. Ai and Megumi Hironaka and family, traveled to Central Maui by MEO bus. The care facility that we visited was Kahului Hale Makua. A donation of bingo prizes was presented, and the group visited with residents from Lahaina, as well as greeting residents whom we met along the way.



The MUBWA Spring Assembly & Luncheon was held at Maui Tropical Plantation. MUBWA President Sylvia Ishikawa of Wailuku Hongwanji presided over the meeting / program. At the event's conclusion, the Lahaina group spent a few minutes at the agricultural fair that was being held at Maui Tropical Plantation. The Hironaka children had their faces painted!



Kokoro

Hoken

Ayumu

HANAMATSURI Sponsor: West Maui Buddhist Council Host Temple: Lahaina Shingon Mission



Shingon Temple



Happy Birthday, Buddha



Derrick Fujiwara pours sweet tea.



Kiara Fleetham at play



Violet Nishijima at play

LAST MONTH

West Maui Buddhist Council-Sponsored SERVICE & RUMMAGE SALE for Tohoku Region Relief Benefit

Hosted by LAHAINA JODO MISSION



Officiants: Rev. Takayuki Meguro of Lahaina Shingon, Rev. John Hara of Wailuku / Kahului Jodo Missions, and Rev. Ai Hironaka of Lahaina Hongwanji (not in photo).



The proceeds from sales of rummage items, food & beverages, etc. will be sent directly to Tohoku University, which runs a hospital in Sendai City. They are providing direct medical aid to the disaster victims. The university students have also been delivering relief supplies.

Acknowledgements: Rev. John Hara, Rev. Takayuki Meguro, Rev. Ai Hironaka, Yayoi Hara for her great work in promoting and emceeing for the event, and many volunteers who prepared food and beverage items, and who set up and managed sales. Gratitude also goes to members and friends of all three temples who donated items and/or provided volunteer labor.



Look who's here !
Minori Katie Hironaka
Born on April 6, 2011
8 lbs.

MORE of LAST MONTH

Lahaina Hongwanji BWA – Sponsored ESHINNI – KAKUSHINNI SERVICE



Mrs. Kumika Soga served as our guest speaker for the service. Mrs. Soga is married to Rev. Jeffrey Soga of Kahului Hongwanji Mission. She is well known to many of us because she served as an interim Resident Minister for Lahaina Hongwanji

Mission from the first of November, 2006 through the month of February, 2008. As Minister's Aide for Lahaina Hongwanji, she commuted six days each week between Kahului and Lahaina – for approximately 15 months. We remain indebted to Rev. Kumika Soga for: dharma messages that started the increase in our service attendance; getting our group started with Project Dana; officiating at our regular and major services and funeral and memorial services. ARIGATO, KUMIKA-SAN.

Highlights of dharma talk:

- Talking about the letters written by Eshinni-sama to her daughter, Kakushinni.
- How each of these women, pioneers of their era, contributed to Jodo Shinshu.
- Kumika's meaningful chance meeting at Honzan – which she related to her own mother's saying, "Life is about meeting people. If you don't have good meetings, your life will be very sad."



Sharon Nohara's creative table décor.

Upcountry Excursion on MEO Bus



Stop and shop at Kula's roadside mart.

and STILL MORE of LAST MONTH



Kaukau stop at CAFÉ 808



Carol the dog-lover seems to adore goats, too.



Awww ... what a kid !



Whassup, ladies? What's so interesting?



Aha ! So that's how goat cheese is made !



The temple bell stops
but I still hear the sound
coming out of the flowers

-- Basho,

UPCOMING EVENTS



2011 FUJI MATSURI 'WISTERIA FESTIVAL'

(Celebration of the Birth of Shinran Shonin)

Maui Hongwanji Council-Sponsored Event at:
Kahului Hongwanji Mission

MAY 1, 2011 – 9:00 am

Service
Songfest
Games
Refreshments

750th Shinran Shonin Memorial and 14th World BWA Convention KYOTO, JAPAN

- **MAY 15, 2011** – Shinran Shonin 750th Memorial Service in the morning; BWA Representative Meeting in the afternoon / dinner in the evening.
- **MAY 16TH** – BWA Convention Registration / BWA Workshops afternoon / Japanese Cuisine bento dinner PULSE PLAZA
- **MAY 17TH** -- PULSE PLAZA 14th World BWA Convention: Opening Ceremony / Keynote Speaker / Lunch / Presentation / General Assembly / Closing Ceremony & Adjournment

UPDATE (3/26/11 from Honpa Hongwanji Federation BWA Website)

- 73 individuals from Hawaii will attend the 750th Shinran Shonin Memorial Service. 60 BWA members from Hawaii will attend the 14th World BWA Convention.
- Site Visitations: **Moiliili** Hongwanji group will visit Hongwanji Shoin & Hiunkakaku, Ryukoku Museum, Otani Honbyo / **Jikoen** Hongwanji group will visit Shoin & Hiunkaku / **Hilo Betsuin** group will visit Shoin & Hiunkaku, Otani Honbyo, Hino Tanjyoin, and Shorenin.

Due to the recent natural disaster in the Tohoku region of Japan, all of the Maui temple groups have cancelled their trips to Japan for the two important events in Kyoto. With gratitude and compassion, we acknowledge that the events WILL be held as scheduled – and that Hawaii is represented by individuals from Honpa headquarters, and from Hilo Betsuin, Moiliili Hongwanji, and Jikoen Hongwanji.

Namo Amida Butsu

SHUSO GOTAN-E SERVICE



Lahaina Hongwanji
MAY 29, 2011
9:30 am

Guest Speaker: Rev. Tatsuo Muneto

- “Shuso” means “sect-founder”, which refers to the founder of the Jodo Shinshu school of Buddhism, Shinran Shonin. “Gotan-e” means birthday gathering.
- Shinran’s actual birthdate is said to be May 21, 1173. He was born in Hino, near Kyoto – to Lord and Lady Arinori. His given name was Matsuwakamaro.
- Both parents died when Matsuwakamaro was very young – the reason, it is said, that he decided to become a priest. At the age of 9, he was ordained at Shoren-In temple in Kyoto.
- He endured 20 years of difficult study and practice on Mt. Hiei, but found it impossible to attain Perfect Enlightenment through his own efforts.
- At age of 29 he was led to the path of Nembutsu by Honen and found the way to the attainment of Buddhahood through the Wisdom and Compassion of Amida Buddha.
- During the time of persecution of the Nembutsu movement, Honen and his disciples, including Shinran, were exiled to remote areas of Japan.
- Later, after being pardoned, Shinran returned to Kyoto. There he devoted his latter years writing and clarifying the essence of Namu Amida Butsu. He died at the age of 90.



news from related links

Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha
HONGWANJI INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Kyoto, Japan

MONTHLY DHARMA THOUGHTS [Direct quote]

Just as Shinran Shonin is revered as the Founder of our Jodo Shinshu tradition, Shinran Shonin revered Honen Shonin as his teacher. The life of Honen Shonin and the life of Shinran Shonin share similarities. They both left home at a young age to enter the monastic life, and engaged in study and practice on Mount Hiei. Despite the long years of seeking salvation, however, they could not find a way to save themselves and their hearts were left in turmoil over it. In Honen's case it was not until the age of forty-three that he discovered the teaching of the Chinese Pure Land master Shan-tao (Jpn. Zendo Daishi). Shan-tao taught that all people, no matter who they were, were sure to be born in the Pure Land through the power of the Tathagata's Vow, as long as they said the Nembutsu. When Honen Shonin learned of this teaching, he took refuge in the Way of the Nembutsu. From that time on, his life became one with Namu Amida Butsu, and while reciting the Nembutsu constantly, he went around recommending it to others as well. According to Honen Shonin, Amida Tathagata sought to save all people equally and without discrimination, out of the desire to bestow the Great Compassion of the Tathagatas on all living beings impartially. Honen Shonin made a conscious choice to abandon the path of self-power and to choose the path of Other Power. The path of self-power is the path of difficult ascetic practice that only the saintly could make progress on. It was not a path that all people could take up. Instead, Honen Shonin made the conscious choice to take up the path of living practice open to all in the form of the Nembutsu of Other Power. In a vow, Amida Tathagata says, in essence, "Trust in me, that those who say the Nembutsu will surely be saved, with no discrimination made among them as to good or bad, wise or foolish'. This is the essence of the Eighteenth Vow. It is in this Vow that he abandoned his efforts to save himself out of self-power and embraced the path of Other Power, putting his life in the hands of Amida Tathagata. Honen Shonin taught that those who said the Nembutsu made the wish the Tathagata had placed

on us, come true. It was Honen Shonin who made us realize that other than choosing the Nembutsu that has been imparted to us out of the Tathagata's Great Compassion, there was no other path to save our ignorant selves. Honen Shonin thus pays reverence to the Tathagata's deep compassion that vows to save even ignorant people like ourselves, as long as we say the Nembutsu. There is in this something remarkable, is there not?

HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII
Headquarters Update - April 4, 2011

Personnel: Rev. Yukiko Motoyoshi, Fuku-Rimban of Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin, will resign from the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii as of June 30, 2011 and transfer her ministry to the Buddhist Churches of America as of July 1, 2011. Rev. Motoyoshi will also be relieved from Pacific Buddhist Academy as its School Chaplain as of June 30, 2011. [From an Internet issue of the monthly newsletter of Buddhist Church of Stockton, it is learned that Rev. Motoyoshi has been assigned to be the Resident Minister at that church.]

PACIFIC BUDDHIST ACADEMY

Mr. Arun Gandhi Visits PBA
Grandson of Mahatma Gandhi

[Excerpts]

- Featured speaker at weekly temple service.
• Born in racially segregated South Africa during the years of apartheid.
• Mr. Gandhi & late wife Sunanda moved to India, where he worked for 30 years as a journalist for The Times of India.
• Mr.&Mrs. Gandhi developed social and economic projects to benefit the most disadvantaged people.
• In 2008, he founded the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence. Together, the programs have improved the lives of more than half a million people in over 300 villages in India.
• Mr. Gandhi talked about how religion & labels are used to judge and divide people and to create competitive environments. Instead, relationships, he said, "should be built on the four principles of respect, understanding, acceptance and appreciation.



SPRING . . .

a new beginning . . .

[From TREND, Travel Retail Executive News Digest]

Symbol of Hope Comes With Sendai Opening

By Doug Newhouse, April 14, 2011

While it is not an international facility, this week's partial reopening of Sendai Airport in Natori, north-east Japan, only five weeks after being engulfed by the March 11 tsunami is a shining example of symbolic resilience and little short of remarkable.

In just a matter of weeks Japanese self-defense forces and the US military have combined resources to clear more than 5,000 cars and trucks, plus the remains of houses, trees and general debris which were swept onto the airport by the tsunami. Such was the force of the waves that smaller aircraft were even dragged out to sea as the water levels subsided.

Symbol of Hope The reopening of Sendai Airport to commercial flights is also much needed to help restore badly needed basic supplies to the area, since it is the biggest airport in the region. Japan Airlines and All Nippon are also restoring their flights.

Having said this, large US and Australian military aircraft capable of landing without air traffic control assistance have been using the runway for several weeks now, bringing in heavy plant machinery to help clear the debris.

[From shelterbox.org/news]

Hope for the Future as Japan Rises to Her Feet



Girl in front of her tent – Inwanua, Miyagi Prefecture

April 20, 2011 There is a strong sense of hope for the future of Japan, according to the ShelterBox Response Team (SRT) operating in the country.

It is now nearly six weeks since the earthquake and tsunami destroyed swathes of Japan's coastline. A huge clean up operation has been underway since the disaster struck and the Japanese authorities are making strong progress as Japan rises back to her feet.

'The country and the people are doing a phenomenal job of recovering,' says SRT member Tom Lay (UK). 'The progress of the clean up operation is creating a massive psychological and emotional benefit. There's very much a feeling of Japan standing back up after a knockout blow and still fighting. There's definitely a sense of moving on from the people who have been affected by the disaster and they have hope as they move forward and look to the future.'

The cherry blossom in Japan's north is starting to bloom, a sign the weather is beginning to turn and the cold weather is coming to an end, a key factor as families begin to rebuild their lives.

Tom Lay added, 'The support we're currently receiving from Rotarians in Japan is invaluable and they've been crucial in helping us operate in the areas we're working in.'

ShelterBox is an international disaster relief charity that delivers emergency shelter, warmth and dignity to people affected by disaster worldwide.

[From unicef.org/infobycountry/japan]

Students in Japan's Miyagi Prefecture return to school a month after the quake. By Mihoko Nakagawa 4/12/11

For four weeks, the Second Onagawa Primary School building in Miyagi Prefecture was empty, but now students are back in its classrooms and filling its corridors with their laughter. Nearly 800 children returned to the school today, a month after the disastrous earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan on 11 March.

The building will be shared with students from another school whose facilities were destroyed by the earthquake.

Traditionally, April is a time of new hope as children start a new school year in Japan. Though children were thrilled to be back at ... school, terrible memories of the recent tragedy were still very fresh. "I lost so many things in the earthquake. My beloved friends left for somewhere far away", said 6th grader Anna Watanabe. "But I will try to smile. Our smiles can rebuild not only the school, but also the community."

NAMO AMIDA BUTSU

A Secret Revealed

When was the last time you attended a funeral service? Can you recall the way you felt during the visitation and the service for the deceased? Did you experience any discomfort or anxiety? I ask these questions to help you take a moment to reflect on a ritual that is perhaps one of the most challenging in our lives. Before I digress, please allow me to describe for you my own experience.

Years ago, probably as long as I can remember, I had experienced a great deal of discomfort while attending funeral services. It really didn't matter whether the service was for a loved one, a friend or even for a stranger when a friend may have asked me to accompany her or him to the service. Above all, I found myself confronted with the need to express sympathy for the family and relatives of the deceased. I recall vividly going over in my mind the words I would say to express my sympathy while empathizing with the relatives of the deceased. I literally agonized over the words for days before the service. I was always concerned that the words I planned to say would never be enough, or my expressions of sympathy would somehow be misconstrued, taken the wrong way or I would somehow err in my delivery. Although I cannot recall ever anyone coming up to me saying something like, "Eh, what did you mean by saying what you did to the family, you should have said ____." Nevertheless, the anxiety I felt before and during a funeral service never diminished, until recently.

It is said that funeral services are for the living. Even if the deceased frequently dictates the kind of service and who should participate before passing, the plans account for and involve the living. Some services focus on a celebration of the deceased person's life, thereby accentuating the positive and perhaps making the event more comforting for the survivors. I was somewhat more comfortable when there was a celebration of life, when the deceased's life is recapped in photos, slide show, and lively eulogies. Sometimes even music helps make the atmosphere less gloomy. Without a doubt, celebrations of life when included in a funeral service made me feel less anxious, but nevertheless still concerned about my own interaction with the deceased's family. So what was it that finally helped me overcome my anxiety? Easy answer – the teachings of the Buddha and Jodo Shinshu belief.

As followers of Shinran Shonin and Jodo Shinshu, we all believe that salvation, i.e., rebirth in Amida Buddha's pure land is assured. The journey to the Western Shore begins with death. And, the cycle of birth and suffering ends with rebirth. It took me awhile before I began to comprehend the significance of this, the Buddha's compassion and the power of the Primal Vow. It was like a flashbulb in my brain. Wow, I thought, what joyful passage for all who entrust in the Buddha. The celebration of life practiced by so many was an even more momentous occasion. With this realization, all my previous discomfort and anxieties were swept away.

I'm called upon to deliver condolence messages on behalf of the Sangha at Lahaina Hongwanji, sometimes delivering as many as three messages a month. I now find this task easier to carry out than before. I have also come to appreciate more fully just how important a deceased person's life meant to his family, his friends and the community. Many say, "I was just a seamstress, I'm not that important." I rarely, if ever nowadays, accept that sort of statement at face value anymore.

Namo Amida Butsu.

'Noosh' Nishihara, Kyodan President

Dharma Message from Rev. Ai Hironaka, Resident Minister

While a student studying Buddhism, I remember one of my professors saying this, "Share the Jodo Shinshu teachings with many people. However, the most difficult to teach is your own family."

My friend and I listened to his talk. My friend was not from a temple family; he was born into a non-temple family. However, he studied Jodo Shinshu and became a minister. At his home, he had a family altar and he had a Shinto altar as well. He had lucky charms and *omamoris* as well. When you live with Jodo Shinshu teachings, you won't have the need to have *omamoris* or lucky charms. Shinran Shonin tried to encourage that.

My friend had told his mother to take down the Shinto altar, however she refused to. It took 5 years before it finally was taken down. I remember him saying, "To change my own family was the most difficult." I presume that each family has its own way of dealing with religion. Small differences or big differences – each family is different.

I would like to share a story with you. This is a story shared by a minister in Japan. It is a true story.

The minister had a member, a 6 year old girl who had passed away. Her grandmother had shared this with him.

This girl was born normal; however, when she was 2 and a half years old, her health began to deteriorate. It was a disease that affected 1 in 100,000 people. It was a very difficult disease to treat. It was a great shock to the family.

They were a devout Jodo Shinshu family. The father and mother were still quite young and both were working. The grandfather had passed away three years ago. The grandmother raised this girl.

Since she found out about her granddaughter's illness, she always told her stories about Amida Buddha and every morning and evening they would chant the Shoshinge together. They always slept together.

Within one year, that little girl was able to chant the Shoshinge by herself. She was quite young so she was not able to read yet. She memorized it from hearing it every day. Her grandmother had said, "It is good to have them listen to the teachings when they are young. It is harder to hear when you get older." So she shared stories of Shinran Shonin's hardships and Amida Buddha's compassion when they were in bed together.

The little girl's disease began to take its toll, and she became bedridden. One day her grandmother bought her a brand new school bag. The little girl was to start elementary school in the spring. The little girl was so happy to receive this gift. The grandmother placed the school bag by her granddaughter's bedside, thinking that it would cheer her up. But with her illness, the little girl was unable to put on her new school bag. So she hugged it as she went to sleep.

The little girl's father and mother both worked. As she neared the end of her life, her mother took off from her job to care for her. One day, the little girl said to her mother, "Mommy, I will say NamoAmidaButsu, so say it with me." Her mother had a strange look on her face. "Mommy, I will say the Nembutsu, so say it with me." Her mother scolded, "You don't have to say the Nembutsu ! Don't say luckless things !! You will not die !!" The little girl had a very sad look cast on her face. Her grandmother wondered, how could she, as a parent say such a cruel thing to her own child. Soon, the little girl stopped talking to her mother. So her grandmother said to the little girl, "Your mother is very worried about you, you should try to cheer up a little."

A week later she began to ask for her mother. As a child, you want to be close to your mother. So even though the little girl was upset with her, she slowly began to speak to her. Her grandmother was relieved. And so her mother said, "She will be happy if I say it, I understand, I understand, NamoAmidaButsu."

If the little girl says, "NamoAmidaButsu", then the mother too will say "NamoAmidaButsu". If the little girl asks, "Mommy say it once", then her mother obediently says, "I'll say it, NamoAmidaButsu", and the little girl also repeats, "NamoAmidaButsu". The grandmother listened to both of them from the next room. The grandmother had said, "Reverend, I was so happy." The grandmother thought that this was the result of cause and effect and she hoped that the girl's mother would begin to recite the Nembutsu.

After a few days, one evening, the mother asked her bedridden daughter, "How are you?" The girl replied, "Mommy, I have a request." Her mother said, "What is it? I will listen to whatever you have to say." Her mother knew that her daughter did not have much longer to live. Her daughter said, "Mommy, can you recite NamoAmidaButsu before me?" Until now the little girl recited the Nembutsu before her mother, "I will recite the Nembutsu, so repeat after me." Today she asked, "Please recite the Nembutsu before me." Her mother agreed with her request and said, "NamoAmidaButsu". And the little girl said, "Thank you, Mommy". Upon hearing those words, her mother began to cry. Once again the little girl asked, "Mommy, please say the Nembutsu again." And her mother complied and said, "NamoAmidaButsu", and the little girl echoed, "NamoAmidaButsu". The grandmother, upon hearing them, joined in saying the Nembutsu.

Because she was such a young girl, she may have had many other kinds of requests, such as having new toys, having her mother hug her, wanting to eat cake, and so on. But the girl's final request was to have her mother recite the Nembutsu with her. For the mother, this was her daughter's final request. She desperately wanted to comply with her wishes. If the little girl asked her mother to die with her, she would most likely have done so. Both of them became more desperate as the little girl's death drew near.

It was the mother who first said, "Don't think about such things. Cheer up and get well soon." However, that was just surface words. She already knew that her daughter would not recover from this disease. The doctor had told her that she would probably not make it to elementary school. Admission to school was in April, the little girl passed away in February. The night before the day she passed away, the little girl said to her grandmother, "I am so happy that Mommy recited the Nembutsu before me."

Because she was just a child, she wanted to hear her mother's voice. She wanted to be comforted. Since her mother recited, over and over again 'NamoAmidaButsu' for her daughter, she said this one morning, "Mommy, recite the Nembutsu for me." Her mother said "NamoAmidaButsu". The little girl said, "NamoAmidaButsu. Mommy, I will be going to Buddha's place soon. Mommy, be sure to meet me there!"

The little girl always listened to the stories of the Pure Land that her grandmother shared with her, and so she believed that they will be able to meet there. When you enter the Pure Land, you will be able to meet with the Buddha. You will be able to meet with grandfather. As she recited the Nembutsu, the little girl passed on.

The grandmother said, "Okagesama de, my granddaughter was able to recite the Nembutsu, and I am truly happy for her." The girl's mother began to attend services at the temple. The minister of that temple spoke to her, "I noticed that you have been attending the services at the temple more frequently. Even when grand mother mentioned to you to come to the temple, you did not." The mother replied, "Yes, when my child said to me, 'Mommy, recite the Nembutsu with me', I said a horrible thing to her. I am so ashamed. I was not a good mother to her."

The little girl staked her life in teaching her mother to recite and practice the Nembutsu. Her life was so short and some may think how unfortunate it was, but, I don't think so. This little girl, as a Buddhist, did her best living from one moment to another moment until her death. From one moment to another moment she lived in Nembutsu. When I reflect on it, I feel ashamed. She was able to rejoice in Nembutsu and was able to share that with others. What do you think? There are so many things that we can learn from this story. This little girl was able to change the heart of an adult and direct it towards the right path.

In the letter of Rennyō Shōnin, our 8th Gomonshū, entitled, "On the White Ashes", he wrote, "There is nothing more real than this truth of life. The fragile nature of human existence underlies both the young and old, and therefore we must, one and all, turn to the teachings of the Buddha and awaken to the ultimate source of life."

Let us live each day to the fullest with Nembutsu.

Lastly, on behalf of my family and myself, I would like to extend my deepest Mahalo to all the members of Lahaina Hongwanji Mission and those who have been supporting and helping us. Okagesama de, we were able to welcome the new baby, Minori Katie Hironaka, on the 6th day of April. The mother and baby are healthy and happy in peace. Again, Thank you very much !!!

Reverend Ai Hironaka