

Pure Land Life

The Pure Land Buddhism of Honen Shonin



2022 No. 35

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2021 International Kaikyo-ku Report

Hawaii



How We Reached Out Through A Pandemic

By Rev. John Cho-on Hara
Wailuku Jodo Mission

In the early part of the Covid pandemic in 2020 in Hawaii we had to shut down our temple activities completely at Wailuku & Kahului Jodo Mission on Maui. At first it was a month that passed by and then another. Things weren't getting better; they were getting worse. Many of the temples nearby went online. Either through Youtube, Zoom, or other means. We found ourselves having to come up with alternative ways to meet and have services. Zoom was becoming very popular and many of us accepted the platform. Today, I continue to use Zoom and most of the members attend physically and from time to time I have those members who physically cannot attend join us through zoom.



Wailuku Jodo Mission's temple altar

Covid has reminded us all that life is constantly changing. In 2020 at Wailuku Jodo Mission, we had to come up with different ideas to reach out during this pandemic. Services of all kinds were available online from funerals, memorial services, to Obon Services and Hanamatsuri. The Central Maui Hanamatsuri service was prerecorded and posted on youtube this year, https://youtu.be/F-51Vm7__9w. We found ourselves adapting to the current state of the pandemic. Hatsubon services were both available online through zoom and by attending physically. The challenges of having a service online and making sure that viewers could hear and see was almost a juggling trick.

Safety is the number one concern. When we started back up with services in June of 2020 it was still an unsure time. There were no vaccines and the virus was still new to us. We set up the temple so each person attending was checked in for temperature and contact tracing. Everyone attending would wear a mask at all times. At one point, even the incense powder was separated to small containers to limit the contact of surfaces. The



Pumpkin Carving of 2021 Halloween held at Wailuku Jodo Mission

changes that were happening were to insure a marginally safe environment for everyone and it worked. Those that attended felt safe, those who felt unsure attended online. We were fortunate that no one member had spread Covid in our temple or circle, but we also set up safety measures so that in the event that someone was sick from Covid that we could make sure every attendee would be notified.

We became more confident in navigating through this pandemic. People continued safe practices and we reminded ourselves to be vigilant. The vaccine became available to the public and the situation improved. Today we are still vigilant and working together to ensure a marginal safe environment while still reaching out to members and connecting with the public.

This past year through the leadership of our Kyodan President Shannon Loo we started a craft market and a monthly workshop. The "Morning Makeke at Wailuku Jodo Mission," Makeke meaning in Hawaiian market. This brought local artisans to our temple to sell their local produced goods. Fourteen different vendors selling goods made in Hawaii. The famous Molokai Bread, to new upcoming business startups like the Maui Chili Chili Oil. Our endeavors included monthly workshops that invited guests to share their knowledge and skills.

We had a pumpkin carving workshop, a Bon Dance workshop and several different cooking workshops. This introduction to the temple to non-members and outsiders has given opportunities to reconnect with our neighbors and members and establishing new relationships. It's also opened up doors that we haven't realized were there for us.

Having an online presence is paramount in this new Covid age, but the lack of touch and smell is something that cannot be replaced digitally. Creating bonds and relationships is a living breathing experience. When you smell incense coupled with the smell or taste of chow fun, your brain reacts and your memories are activated. You are transported to the experience of OBon in Hawaii. When I look back at the last two years without the Bon Dance I am saddened, but I am also correct in thinking that we made the correct choice for our community in cancelling those events. This next year we look at planning our Bon Dance with the experience from our Morning Makeke to our different events and zoom services. I am confident we will connect with our members and our community and continue to honor our loved ones and the cultivate Jodo Shu Buddhism in Hawaii.



Wailuku Jodo Mission's craft fair sign. "Makeke" in Hawaii means market

North America



Remembering the past two years

By Kodo Tanaka
Jodoshu North America Buddhist Missions

Once the Covid-19 pandemic took place in early 2020, we all have been coping with an issue of how we can provide religious activities to our congregation. Remembering the year 2020, a series of difficulties continued to happen in Southern California, such as lockdown, stay home order, the protest demonstrations to the social injustice, the act of looting in many businesses, many nights under curfew, and vandalism targeting the Asian community. We were worried about the security of our temple neighborhood, where the issue of homelessness had already been a big concern. It was an emotional rollercoaster for us, who plan and prepare for each religious gathering, to learn the constant changes of the administrative regulations to indoor activities of the places of worship. In the end, like many places of worship in our community, from Spring Higan, March 2020, to Gyoki, January 2021, we had to hold all our temple regular services “remote” only.

However, in March 2021, the indoor activities started to be approved with live congregants at 25% of the capacity of each place of worship, observing social distancing and face-covering. Accordingly, we could hold Spring Higan Service as a hybrid service with about 25 live congregants and remote attendees. For the first time in a year, our congregation finally gathered at our temple in person. In summer 2021, this regulation was modified to 50%. After that, we could observe Bon Segaki Service in July with about 65, Autumn Higan Service in September with about 40, and Juya Service in November with about 35 people gathering together at our temple. Because we had gone through all difficulties in 2020, it felt a great relief to have completed all religious activities in 2021 as hybrid gatherings, in-person and remote. One thing still lacking in our regular services due to the administrative regulation is lunch cooked by our Fujinkai members. To make our religious gathering at the temple as safe as possible, we serve individually packaged lunch boxes for the live congregants. It is always nice to find all our congregation is delighted to share the time with the fellow members of the sangha, cultivating friendship with each other.

One of our continuing efforts for the past two years is the weekly live-streaming of the Jodo Shu Daily Service



Bon Segaki Service

via Facebook. We started this remote activity to provide an opportunity for our congregation to say “Namu Amida Bustu” even though they cannot gather at the temple. First,

we thought it merely a temporary measure to keep our religious activity alive until the Covid-19 pandemic would soon be over. We learned that we were wrong, and it would take more time till our daily life could be complete “back to the normalcy”. So, we are continuing this live-streaming as one of our commitments to our congregation to provide them an opportunity to say “Namu Amida Butsu” in their daily lives. At the beginning of the new year, we renew our mind that our temple’s commitment is to providing any possible means for our congregation to say the very word, no matter how our social lives change constantly.



Social Hours

“All conditions behind the scene make one phenomenon arise.” It is called “en-gi”, the essential teaching of Buddhism. For the past two years, we have seen many changes in our social life under the pandemic. These changes were made subject to the inter-relationship of many conditions, such as the transmission rate, vaccination, holiday season, and winter climate. Counting conditions for the transition of our social life, a question occurred to me, “How many conditions are there for us to say Namu Amida Butsu?” The answer took me by surprise. It is one, whether you say the word or not. Of course, there are mental and physical attitudes required in reciting Nembutsu. However, Honen Shonin, the founding master of Jodo Shu, teaches us that your voice of “Namu Ami Dabu, Namu Ami Dabu...” would accompany all these attitudes necessary for Nembutsu. For Nembutsu, there is only one condition: you say it or not. Covid, quarantine, any inconveniences in life, nothing matters. It teaches that it is all up to you. I was overwhelmed to learn how simple and equal to all of us, the practice of Nembutsu is.

Brazil



Maintenance and Development at Temple’s Activities During Covid 19 Pandemic

By Bishop Ryoho Sasaki
Jodo Shu South America Missions

We’re crossing a time that we’re completing two years of Covid 19 pandemic. We’re doing our best to maintain the temples with zeal, adjusting our activities to the new protocols imposed by health authorities. During this time, we dealt with an aftermath of social distance in which, among other things, brought emotional challenges and mental difficulties to many people who come to the temple. We are nonetheless coping with families experiencing grief to which make ourselves ask on how we could help



Japanese language classes



martial arts groups



volunteer bazaar in driver-thru style

considering memories of their love ones.

We started comforting people around, reciting the refuge to Amida Buddha present in our hearts online, everyday starting at 7pm. We took advantage of the time by talking about Buddhism, intending to always be together in overcoming such a catastrophic moment.

This new reality imposed upon us made us learn quickly and one of the outcome was to promote online benefit events, mainly focused on social action supported by our temples. The community responded very well for our initiative and soon was followed by other groups. Nobody

would guess how long this epidemic was going to last, but bringing encouragement through Nembutsu recitation was very helpful.

Our temple's martial arts groups, as well as the youth and ladies groups organized a volunteer bazaar every Sunday in driver-thru style. This initiative helped enormously the temples, and showed how important it was to adapt and deliver the feeling of belonging in the community. We hope to overcome the pandemic as soon as possible and wishing you all to take a good care. Namuamidabustu

Australia



Not Just the Propagation of Jodoshu

By Rev. Tetsuya Wilson
Jodo Shu Buddhism Community of Australia

When I look back at what was 2021, I am above all relieved that none of the members of Amidaji caught Covid 19. This is of course a selfish thought considering the millions of people who did catch Covid and those who



Shichi-go-san

died. There were many factors that saved us from a similar fate. Firstly, we were fortunate in that Australia is an affluent country and thus

could afford the high costs of vaccinating its population. Also, Australia moved quickly to close its international borders to prevent large numbers of infected people from entering.

Added to this was the response from the individual states within Australia. Amidaji is situated in Queensland where the government also closed its border to heavily infected states like New South Wales and Victoria. Being isolated in this way the residents of Queensland could in the most part continue their lives as they did before the pandemic.

Within this setting, Amidaji was able to continue its missionary work without much disruption throughout 2021. This meant that almost all our annual events were able to be held. In March, we held our commemoration ceremony for the 2011 Great Earthquake of Eastern Japan. This marked ten years since that disaster and we were joined by the Consular General of Japan, Mr Kazunari Tanaka and his wife. The Vice-Consul, Mr Tomohiro Koyama was also in attendance. Later in March, we were able to hold our Autumn Ohigan Ceremony. Following that, Hana Matsuri was held in April. However, due to a lockdown in Brisbane in August, Obon had to be cancelled. And, so too, the Obon Ceremonies in Cowra, Broome and Thursday Island were also cancelled. This was quite disappointing for many people in many places.

Fortunately, this was the only lockdown in Queensland in 2021 and it did not last long. In September, we were able to hold our Spring Ohigan Ceremony and I could also travel to Thursday Island to hold an Ohigan Ceremony there. In September, Brisbane has many fine days with mild temperatures and it was decided to bring forward Shichi-go-san so as to avoid the hot Summer days of November. This made it much more comfortable for children to wear kimono.

Throughout the year, it was possible to have small gatherings of people attend Amidaji for various activities. These included Sutra Copying as well as Memorial Services. There was a small surge in the numbers of families wanting to do Memorial Services as they could not travel to Japan because of the international border closures. In addition, students could regularly attend our Terakoya to continue their study of Japanese. We also started a Sumie class this year which is quite popular.

When one looks at the number of non-Japanese who are drawn to the Terakoya, Sumie classes and annual events such as Obon one notices that my role is not only to take care of the religious needs of the Japanese community but it is also to contribute to the



Terakoya



Sumie class

deepening of understanding between Australia and Japan. This role has been officially recognised by the Japanese Government. At a special ceremony in June, I humbly accepted a Commendation Award by the Consular General of Japan, Mr K. Tanaka.



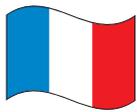
Receiving a Commendation Award from the Consular General of Japan, Mr K. Tanaka

In addition, I am frequently asked by various organisations to give a talk on Japanese religion and culture. In July, I was asked by a Christian private girls' high school to address their students. After I had finished my presentation, I asked the students if they had any questions. To my surprise almost every student had put up their hand.

When I established Amidaji twenty years ago I had no idea of the far reaching influence that propagating Honen's teachings would have. And, it is through the help and support of so many people both here and in Japan that this propagation has been possible. For this I am truly grateful.

Nama Amida Butsu

France



Activities of Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center in the year 2021.

By Rev. Koryu Koso
Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center

This is the report on activities of Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center in the year 2021.

Like the year before, France also had to endure several lockdowns in 2021. We therefore respected the warnings and principles of anti-virus-protection and had to plan our activities accordingly.

Thanks to the support and positive mind of our members, I honestly think that even in this situation, we were still able to have so many events over the year. I want to express my deep gratitude to them.

After the lockdowns, many people participated in our annual events like Obon, Higan-e, Juya-ceremonies, Ho-on ceremony of gratitude, and in the 24-hour-Fudan-Nenbutsu by Kanchiin Temple in May which was held via by Zoom. Certainly, their heartfelt belief in Buddhism and heart-moving commemoration of their ancestors gave



Obon

them strength in this situation. Some activities were unfortunately interrupted or cancelled. In any case, it is really the strong minds and hearts of our members that enabled us to continue last

year and this year with our annual celebrations, the study of Buddhism, Nenbutsu-Meetings and online classes by Zoom.

I am also thankful to the kind and supportive service of the hotel which we use for our events. Due to the Covid-19-restrictions, we could not use our usual room in the hotel, but were given an even larger one, so that enough space can be provided between the participants. I am deeply grateful to the hotel for their kind consideration.

My feeling is also that our Nenbutsu-recitation creates a better and better atmosphere over the years. It is also different each time, which is an astonishing and wonderful experience to us. I think it alludes to us what is really important.

So was the Nenbutsu of the January 2022 New Year's ceremony Shusho-e. It was a very solemn, calm, and salvific Nenbutsu recitation. I guess that it is due to the state of mind at that time of each participant.

In January 2022, we held the New Year's Shusho-e and get-together meeting. The new year's ceremony has been carried out since the establishment of our association. Five or six years ago, we decided to do the traditional Japanese style of O-toso (New Year's sake).

First of all, we pay our respect to Buddha, practice and do Nenbutsu for the first time in the New Year. Afterwards, each participant makes his greetings and talks about her or his aspiration for the new year and toso is received. After that, we celebrated the New Year in French style and toasted with champagne. The Nembutsu recitation of the New Year's ceremony was solemn, calm, and was very impressive as described previously, and everyone entered the mind of the Nembutsu respectfully and praised it.

And now, in Germany, the Jodo Shu RHEIN (named after the Rhein-river) has also started its activities, and Konen, an assistant minister of our Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center is holding meetings, Nenbutsu recitations, and classes frequently using ZOOM.

A joint nembutsu recitation of France and Germany was also held.

It seems to be unique to the EU, where many countries gather.

We look forward to your continued understanding and support in the future.



Obon (ZOOM)



Obon



New Year's Shusho-e

The READERS' Voice section introduces members from Jodo Shu temples around the world.

HAWAII

Shannon K. Loo

Wailuku Jodo Mission

Aloha!

Being born into a family with Buddhism and Christianity in practice, it only seemed obvious that I would question what religions or spiritualities worked for people. My grandmother was a member of SGI, Soka Gakkai International and my mother would take us to a Christian church on Sunday. I always gravitated to Buddhism and was always mesmerized when my grandma would chant religiously (pardon the pun) every morning. It was something that I thought connected me to my Japanese heritage more and I really connected with it on every level.

My name is Shannon K. Loo, President of Wailuku Jodo Mission in Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii. In 2015, I

started dancing for Maui Minyo Kai (a Japanese folk-dance group) which practices at WJM. It was just a natural progression that I became more involved in the temple and closer to some of the members. In 2019, I became an actual member and was nominated as president in 2021. For the beginning, my vision for Wailuku Jodo Mission was to keep it going as an integral part of the Maui community. It has been for over a century and with the recent decline in practicing Buddhists, there has been a decline in membership and participation. With the introduction of certain programs and events, I believe Wailuku Jodo Mission and Jodo Buddhism can thrive for another hundred years!



NORTH AMERICA

Suzana K. Ito Kawakami

Member of Joso Shu North America Buddhist Missions

It has been over 10 years since we moved to Southern California from Japan, and we used to live at the same complex building as Reverend Tanaka.

We have seen each other at the laundry room and at the elevator but we got to know that Mr. Takana was the minister at the Buddhist Temple in Little Tokyo when I first visited the temple, to apply for Shichigosan for my daughter.

I was born in Brazil, but my family was from Japan so was my husband. Even though, Shichigosan is not popular in Brazil, dominantly catholic, for our family follow Japanese costume was just natural.

For the past years, we had the opportunity to join

several activities at the temple and gradually we started making many friends, dearly to us as a family, within the community at the temple.

Later my mother, who lived with us for a while, had a great time with other elder worshippers while attending the Sunday's activities. We were so grateful for those that gave such happiness while she was with us, and we hope to nurture and develop our friendship for many years to come.

Not to mention that my daughter got to develop the feeling of being part of a big family and be touched by the Buddha's teaching.



SOUTH AMERICA

Henrique Takemi Satow

Married with Jocy Inague Satow.

Judo player under guidance of Chiaki Ishii, Brazilian first olympiam medalist

Aikido Instructor at Nippakuji Temple in São Paulo

I have known the Nippakui Temple since my childhood and I used to come to the Japanese language school then.

My father, Masao Satow, was a board member and our family came to the activities at the temple. He was a planning director of “Kodomo No Sono”, a NPO for the challenged children as well as the founding of Anhanguera Nikkei Clube, a local Japanese club in our city. He created both institution’s logo designs that are proudly used for decades.

Takeo Satow, my grandparent, was an agricultural planter in Suzano, outskirts of Sao Paulo, and was involved with the local Japanese community. He was a Kendo practitioner and instructor, even becoming VP of State Jukendo Federation. He and my father were both condecorated by the Japanese government.

Jocy Inague Satow, my wife, is an economist, daughter of Dr. Tomoyasu Inague, one of the earliest MD in our community in Presidente Bernardes. Her

grandparent, Kumagi Inague, was a founding member of the same town, and was directly innvolved in bringing Bishop Ryoshin Hasegawa in order to open a Jodoshu mission in Brazil.



Although my father was highly active in the Nippakuji Temple, he never forced none of us to follow any religious traditioin. My brothers and I were raised Catholics due to my mother’s influence but we went there on special occasions. One day, after 5 decades, there was a funeral service around a uncle of mine and that was our opportunity to be close at the temple due to Reverend Milton Yamada. We belong to a generation that no longer speak the Japanese language, but he was able to reconnect us in understanding and appreciate our ancestors teachings and ceremonies.

One day, Reverend Yamada came up to our dojo and told us that he used to practice Aikido, long ago. Some time later, he came up with a plan to open a space to practice it at the temple, to which we said yes immediately. That’s how we started at the temple. Today, we take part in most activities held there. We meet friends, new acquaintaces, making our circle even larger.

FRANCE

Konen Büttgen

Member of Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center

Living near the city of Bonn in Germany, Mr. Büttgen has been a Buddhist since more than 30 years. After studying Japanese Language and Translation Studies at Bonn University and Waseda University, he has been working for Japanese companies for many years and travels to Japan regularly every year. In 2017, he had the first contact with Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center in France and started his training as a monk under head priest Mr. Mitsutaka Koso. In 2019, Mr. Büttgen received his Tokudoshiki at Zôjôji

in Tokyo and became an assistant minister of Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible or very difficult to travel even within Europe or to organize meetings, so he concentrated his activities on online-Nenbutsu-meetings by Zoom, which continue to take place every month with European members of Jodo Shu community. In 2021, he assisted Mr. Mitsutaka Koso in the first Kigyôshiki ceremony taking place in Germany, for two new German members of Jodo Shu.





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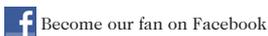
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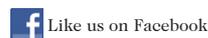
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• **Published by the Jodo Shu Kaikyo Shinko Kyokai**
(Association for the promotion of Jodo Shu)

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