Pure Land Life

The Pure Land Buddhism of Honen Shonin





2023 No. 36

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2022 International Kaikyo-ku Report

Hawaii



2022 Hawaii Report

By Bishop Kosen Ishikawa Iodo Mission of Hawaii

The year 2022 had various surges which caused restriction and relaxation to go up and down as the year went on. This time, however, many of us feel more relaxed and feel safer to go out to join in the activities because the symptoms and spread of Covid-19 has gotten milder. We should continue to do whatever we could to stop spreading the virus but we shouldn't hesitate to go out to enjoy in-person experiences.

Fortunately, some of our Jodo Shu temples were able to hold an in-person Bon Dance finally last summer since they were held last time back in 2019. Because many temples cancelled Bon Dance again, many people came flooding to the temples which observed in-person Bon Dance. Our Jodo Mission has especially experienced the largest crowd in its history. To our surprise, all the food and drink we prepared were instantly sold out and we had nothing to sell soon after the Bon Dance started.

It became obvious that many people were looking for the opportunities to participate in the physical events after getting used to the online experiences. It is true that online service and meeting were so convenient and useful. We don't need to drive nor travel to the physical location in order to attend the services. In fact, we were able to attend monthly international meetings with people in various places through Zoom. Before covid, there was no option to attend online but having an option to attend online has become our new normal. This is especially wonderful for those who live far from the location of the event. The online tools surely made the "impossible" to be possible. It also brought us more opportunities to stay connected closer to each other. However, it was also true this constant connection made us busier than ever.

After all, many people realized such a precious in-person experience where we can feel and sense with all our six senses rather than just seeing and hearing these events online. We were very

happy to see many temples resume in-person services and meetings together with online.

One of the successful inperson events held at Jodo Mission in 2022 was the Koinobori Celebration from April 23 to May 23. As you know, Koinobori is a Japanese word to mean "Carp Streamer" or carp-shaped windsock. Traditionally, Koinobori are flown or displayed to celebrate Boy's Day on May 5th, now





Koinobori celebration at Jodo Mission of Hawaii

known as "Children's Day" which is a national holiday in Japan. Here in Hawaii, Koinobori has been well-known and quite a few houses follow this tradition to display the carp streamers in May. However, surrounded by the tall buildings in Honolulu, the Koinobori is difficult to see individually.



Sponsor cards with messages were also displayed in the temple.

Then, the idea of displaying the hundreds of carp streamers all at Jodo Mission came to mind. I imagined that doing so would be gorgeous and cheerful. Because we have all been restricted to stay inside, just watching hundreds of Koinobori all at one place flying under the blue sky in Hawaii must be encouraging.

This is the motivation as to why I proposed to start this project to display hundreds of Koinobori to celebrate all lives. Traditionally, carp is believed to be a spirited fish which represents strength and energy which could overcome difficulties to attain higher goal. It was our hope that Jodo Mission could be a wonderful landmark in the community which gives strength, peace and hope to all the people like the Koi.

When I asked our members and friends to be a sponsor of Koinobori in our monthly bulletin, many people instantly responded and became sponsors for Koinobori steamers. Thus, we were able to display over 400 streamers on our temple ground which was very visible from the highway. At the same time, we created Koinobori sponsor cards on which their short messages were written and displayed in the temple to honor their good wishes. Some people dedicated Koinobori in memory of their beloved ones. And others dedicated to wish their children and grandchildren to grow healthy. This Koinobori celebration brought us unexpected donations in addition to many Koinobori.

We will continue this tradition in many more years to come. At the same time, we would like to encourage and support other Jodo Shu temples to start Koinobori Celebration.



2022 Bon Dance at Jodo Mission

North America



By Rev. Kodo Tanaka Jodoshu North America Buddhist Missions

On New Year's Eve 2021, our annual special Nembutsu retreat was held as a hybrid service with a ½ hour Nembustu session. In spite of being held on a half scale with a ½ hour Nembutsu and about 20 people via in-person and remote, it was nice to be able to welcome live congregants again at our main hall on New Year's Eve. On the following New Year's Day 2022, we held Shusho-e (New Year's Day Service) and accepted about 120 visitors who paid their first temple visit of the year. Although the mask mandate was lifted then, I remember many people were still wearing face-covering on that day. Since the regulation on places of worship was lifted, we have been holding our regular temple services hybrid, in-person and remote, and from Spring Higan Service in 2022, we started preparing lunch to serve the congregation during the social hours. Although the number of live congregants was not as many as in previous services before the pandemic started, it was encouraging that worshippers began returning gradually to our regular temple services. Finally on New Year's Eve 2022, for the first time in 2 years, we were able to hold the special Nembutsu retreat on a full scale with a 1-hr Nembustu session with about 25 attendees both in-person and remote. The following New Year's Day, about 150 people, most of whom with no-mask on their faces, came to pay their first visit to our temple, where Amida Buddha is enshrined. Other than services, especially in 2022, thanks to Kaikyo Shinko-Kyokai, we were able to publish a book called "The Essential Teachings of Honen Shonin", the translation of "Honen Shonin Gohogo" which is now available on our website. This longawaited translation was made possible by Dr/Bishop Atone's commitment for many long years and editorial support from a temple member who is a professional writer, to make the book comprehensive for western readers.

In all Jodo Shu services, we extend a prayer wishing happiness and achievement of Buddhahood of our congregants' ancestors in the Pure Land. Each congregant dedicates ten recitations of "Namu Amida Butsu" not only for his/her ancestors but for all others' ancestors. That is, I think, the most beautiful and impressive moment seen in a Jodo Shu service. This act is called "eko," asking Amida Buddha's divine protection and guidance for merit contained in each Nembutsu to be transferred to our loved ones who are no longer with us. This aspect seen in Buddhist services is a bit negatively regarded as "ancestor worship" because it seems to be only dealing with those who passed already and has nothing to do with those who are still living.

By the way, is there anyone who can always visualize Buddha's face in their mind wherever or whenever? I cannot and suppose neither can many of you. I think that a religious faith that enables one to always visualize Buddha's face in one's mind is something that cannot be acquired easily. Then, let me ask you, can you always visualize your loved one's face, such as your

parents, children, siblings, and partners? I assume that everyone can. This is because their faces are burnt into your eyes throughout your life.

Let us regard our journey after death as being thrown away in the sheer darkness where no signs are provided to give us directions. Pure Land Buddhism teaches us that Amida Buddha never misses hearing each of our vocal Nembutsu and shines





Menbers of Jodoshu North America

His light of great compassion. How encouraging it would be if we find a light in the darkness. Also, Amida Buddha comes from the Pure Land to receive one who is dying with his many disciples. How relieving it would be to take every step to the light if we find the familiar faces that are burned into our eyes among these accompanying disciples?

When we imagine this moment of our life, it would become far more important than anything for us to believe that those who are no longer with us attained birth in the Pure Land and became a disciple of Amida Buddha there. In that sense, I think that a Jodo Shu service is beneficial for both those who passed and those who are living right now.

Brazil



News from South America

By Bishop Ryoho Sasaki Jodo Shu South America Missions

We are all going through times in modern history nowadays that demand the best of our qualities: wisdom, compassion and faith. Practicing the Nenbutsu Recitation, calling the Name of the Buddha Amida surely has been an important spiritual refuge. It has been almost 3 years since the outbreak of COVID 19 and we are still in a confusing situation which makes one feel optimistic about controlling and overcoming the pandemic, however, reality bites warning that this menace is serious and it finds new ways in order to perpetuate itself. For those who have lost friends and relatives, we extend our words of sympathy and condolences. For those who are recovering from it, we offer our words of strength and support for a rapid recovery. We would like to express our gratitude to the community for your support in these times when life has placed such a challenge in our lives path.

The public health protocols have been vigorously followed in our Jodoshu Denomination temples for memorials and religious events. The majority of religious services have been restricted to funerals, wakes and memorial services. This unexpected situation has forced all of us to realize and make decisions facing the truth of living. In other words, one realizes the hardships of living and survival, keeping your mind cool in order to make a better and wise decision. Thus, life shows us that one cannot keep whining

and complaining because it is simply counterproductive. There is a famous parable in the Buddhist tradition that's used frequently. It's about a story of a warrior during a battle



who is suddenly hit by a poisoned arrow. At that moment, in a matter of seconds, he asks himself why he was chosen to be hit, and on top of that, he was wondering what kind of poison the arrow was impregnated with. Suddenly, and immediately, he realizes that arguing all that only allows the poison to spread in his body, shortening his chance of survival. Then, the warrior pulls out the arrows, thus stopping the poison circulating in his blood stream and keeping him alive. Does it sound familiar to you?

The lesson here, at this moment, is that one needs to take action, making decisions based on knowledge and wisdom. One can think and reflect upon all this when things cool down. Reciting the Name of the Buddha, practicing the Nenbutsu, goes all through this. Whether it's dichotomy or ambiguous, reciting Nenbutsu while begging for a miracle, or simply and solely chanting Namu Amida Butsu. This is the dramatic moment when East and West meet each other along with their differences as far as the religious emphasis is concerned. Is the rational and logical understanding more important than the eventual contemplative experience? Is the individual overcoming better than the collective survival? Don't worry, that's the way it is. It's not a matter of right or wrong. There is a right moment for everything. Let's keep being gentle to each other. Let's keep being friendly, not because it's nice, but simply because it's necessary. Let's keep the quest to be a better being, and these times demand exactly that.

Each community in the South America Jodoshu Denomination has set its mission and social work, taking into consideration its capability at a local level, under its directors and monks. As a matter of fact there's been quite a challenge for all involved in it to find a balance here. The pain and suffering has driven all of us to find refuge reciting the Name of the Buddha. In the end, in fits and starts, the prospect is actually positive, which allows us to keep going forward. We already have started work on the new building of the Nippakuji Temple at Curitiba, hoping that it becomes a landmark for a new phase in our missionary history. Namu Amida Butsu

Australia



The Community Gathered Around Amidaji

By Rev. Tetsuyu Wilson Jodo Shu Buddhism Cmmunity of Australia

After the turmoil caused by Covid in 2020 and 2021, life for Australians had settled down in 2022. Lockdowns and travel restrictions have receded into the past. Face masks are only required in a few circumstances. However, life is not the same as pre-pandemic days. As we go about our daily lives there is always

the threat of contracting Covid.

In this new "now", the community gathered around Amidaji was able to carry out its yearly activities. In March, we held our Autumn Ohigan and Commemoration for the Victims of the Great Earthquake and Tsunami of Eastern Japan. Again, the Consular General of Japan attended. This year it was the newly appointed Consular General, Mr Ono who attended. The Vice Consular General, Ms Masuda also attended. Our members very much enjoyed talking with them. In March, we also held our Hana Matsuri.

Autumn changed to Winter and it was time for Obon at Amidaji and at the Japanese Cemetery on



Ceremony at the Japanese Cemetery in Cowra



Hawaiian Hula Dancers at Spring Ohigan



Reading of letter from Ms Satomi Sato, a survivor of the Fukushima earthquake

Thursday Island. But first, I travelled to Cowra to perform the ceremony on August 5 to commemorate the 1944 Break Out of the Japanese Prisoners of War. There, I met the newly appointed Japanese Ambassador, Mr Yamagami. He later told me that he was moved by my reading of the requiem.

Two weeks later, Mr Yamagami travelled to Thursday Island to take part in the Obon Ceremony at the Japanese Cemetery. It was the first time for an Ambassador from Japan to attend this ceremony. The Japanese community and Torres Shire Council were very pleased to meet with him and his wife. After the ceremony, I visited the tiny Japanese community on Friday Island to hold a Memorial Service. All too soon my time with these remote Japanese communities came to an end and I had to return to Brisbane to hold our Obon at Amidaji. Many people were able to attend. At this event our members can come together to honour their ancestors and to confirm their faith in the Nembutsu.

As the mild Winter changed to Spring, it was time again for Ohigan. Joining us for the first time was the Hawaiian Hula Dancers. Their festive costumes and music added a touch of colour and vibrancy to this fine Spring day. We are very fortunate at Amidaji in that we are always welcoming new members into our

community. And, at events such as Obon and Ohigan, one can easily feel the warmth of the interactions between the members. Indeed, it is these events that provide an opportunity for some members to get together again. They have not seen each other since the last event, however, when they come together again it is as if they had never been



"七五三お祝い" for Mia Li, 3 years old.

apart. Such is the strength of the connections formed within the community centred around Amidaji. No one is alone. We all belong to the Jodoshu Buddhist Community of Australia where the light of Amida shines on all of us.

Namu Amida Butsu

France



Activities of Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center in the year 2022.

By Rev. Koryu Koso Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center

About the activities as a Buddhist monk and missionary priest of Jodo Shu after the relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions

Let me report about my stance as a missionary priest who spread the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and Honen Shonin.

In Europe, we established the Jodo Buddhism European Buddhist Center in France as a cultural association, and at the time of the opening, I asked the late Ven. Master Ryukai Mano, to whom I have been indebted greatly since my student days, to give a lecture during the founding ceremony of the association. As the topic of his lecture, I asked him to talk about "What is Buddhism actually?". It was a question and problem that I, who was born and raised in a temple, and once left the temple, always wanted to solve. Therefore, I myself wanted to hear Master Mano's words. The word "shukyo" in Japanese is a direct translation of the Western word "Religion," and I have heard that it is a new word in Japanese. I have also heard that the same word "shukyo" is a Buddhist term. In any case, I feel that the perception of "religion" is different between Japan and Europe.

Furthermore, before and after the founding of the Association, "Buddhism" was considered as "inconnu" and as an "unknown religion" was not recognized by the French state. This was also important in the spread of Buddhism to Europe. The Buddha, who had searched for the reason of this world and society, asked himself how people should live as human beings, searched for the right way to live, and reached it, which is a great legacy of irreplaceable wisdom of mankind that has endured over 2,500 years until the present day. And then there is Honen Shonin, who adored the Buddha and his teachings, chose the power of Buddha to unite mind and voice in the shape of the Nenbutsu, and advocated it.

As an expression of my respect, towards the Buddha and his teachings, the people of the Sangha and Honen Shonin, I want to convey these teachings together with their heart without defiling or modifying them.

Our Activities:

"Buddhist Gathering" once a month, our Association rents a conference room in a hotel in Paris and holds a "Buddhist gathering".

Furthermore, we hold annual Buddhist events, including Buddhist study groups, Buddhist retreats, and social events. Nenbutsu recitation is performed at every meeting and gathering. I find it very interesting because the atmosphere is different each

time. This is because each time, the hearts of the members who recite the Nenbutsu is in a different condition.

In January we had the New Year's meeting, paid our "first reverence" of the new year to Buddha, enjoyed "O-toso", the special Sake, and made our New Year's Greeting.

In February, unfortunately I was infected by Covid-19 myself, and had to cancel the Buddhist gathering.

In March, our assistant priest Konen and his German community used ZOOM to join our Higan ceremony in France, which we held together. He had founded the Jodo Shu community in





Hanamatsuri in April



Obon Festival in August

Germany and holds a Nenbutsu practice gathering every month there.

For the Hanamatsuri in April, we enjoyed the gorgeous appearance of a daughter and her mother in Kimono, with the daughter and her husband joining us with their children.

In July, we held our social BBQ Party in Acon for the first time in years, which we had not been able to do since the Covid-19 pandemic started.

In August, we celebrated O-bon Festival.

In our Buddhist study gatherings, I started to use Power Point. It makes me smile with a bitter taste, thinking that I myself, who never studied eagerly at university, am holding a lecture like a university professor.

In October, I went to the suburbs of Clermont-Ferrand, a city in the central mountain area of France, to hold an eye-opening ceremony at an Iai-Dojo (traditional Japanese sword fighting). It is a very scenic place about 430km from Paris, and home to the world-famous car tire company Michelin and the mineral water company Volvic. One of the members of the Dojo was a French licensed Iaido teacher, and his apprentice who lives in the area, built the Dojo and requested me to hold an eye-opening ceremony in the Dojo. The apprentice, his teacher and another apprentice joined the ceremony together with their wives and children. After the ceremony, we saw an Iai performance – Japanese Bushido performed by Europeans. At the end of the day, we enjoyed dinner and had a nice chat. It was a trip of three nights and four days.

In December, we closed the year by a Hoyo ceremony to take a review and express our gratitude. We looked back on the passing year, reflected on ourselves and felt grateful.

Finally, we held our Bonenkai, the year-closing party.

This was my introduction of the activities of our Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center in Europe and France. Thank you.

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



Toru Furukubo

Member of Jodo Shu North America Buddhist Missions

I am Toru Furukubo, Bukkyo University graduate. It has been more than thirty years since I started living in Los Angeles due to my occupational assignment. When I was a student at the campus, it was Archbishop Jogen Fujimoto who taught me German, as a second language course. After the course was over, I continued to visit his office and occasionally he would address lessons in life to me, many of which I did not understand then. When I started working in California, Fujimoto sensei kindly sent me a New Year card referring to a Jodo Shu temple and Dr. Joji

Atone, and one day, thirty-some years ago, I visited Dr. Atone. Looking back, it was the day my relationship with the temple started. Guided by Dr. Atone, I started to support Bukkyo University students who were periodically visiting Los Angeles



for their study program and eventually attended services at the temple. These experiences gave me opportunities to become friends with many ministers and led me to participate in Goju Soden in 2010. I am continuing to attend services and enjoying conversations with Dr. Atone and fellow worshippers. Every temple visit made me revisit the lessons Fujimoto sensei gave me when I was a college student.



Please Meet Mrs. Kageyama

Member of Templo Budista Jodo Shu Betsuin Nippakuji de São Paulo

Mrs Tsuyako Mori Kageyama was born in 1935, a daughter of Mr Sussumu and Mrs Kajiko Mori from Fukuoka, Japan. Her father came to Brazil when he was just 14 years old, and his uncle Toda and aunt Sayo Mori supported him until his adulthood. It was through them that he was presented to the Nippakuji Temple and its missionaries. His uncles were active members that helped to establish a Jodoshu community in South America. They immigrated to Brazil in 1917 and established themselves steadily at the Town of Presidente Bernardes, Sao Paulo State.

After the end of WWII, in 1954, his uncle had different views about the history and politics with his brother-in-law, Mr Kumajiro Inage. Both were from Tanushimaru, Fukuoka, members of Horinji Temple. These disagreements were

solved thanks to mediation done by late Bishop Ryoshin Hasegawa. In gratitude they committed themselves to supporting and developing the Jodoshu temple activities in Brazil. Aunt Sayo Mori pledged a large donation in real estate that allowed the



construction of the main Jodoshu temple in 1953.

Today, her family has 7 children, 17 grand-children and 6 great-grand-children, all active in the temple's events and activities. Mrs. Tsuyako is a Fujinkai Ladies Group member and used to be its president. Nowadays she comes on a weekly basis for senior's programs for health, fitness and spirituality. Not to mention that she's an active volunteer for flower arrangement, she says, with a broad smile on her face: "These are the occasions when we can express our zeal and gratitude for our ancestors, while we share these feelings to our youngsters telling them stories about our pioneers".

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HAWAII

Tamra Kawasugi

Member of Jodo Mission of Hawaii

I was a 7-year old when this picture was taken for Hanamatsuri at Kapiolani Park on April 3, 1966. Bishop Fujihana is in the middle. I am in the first row, third from the right with the taiko drum.I remember attending church services on Sundays and Sunday school after. It was a time way back when we had many more families attending church and the young members such as myself actively participated in church activities. I moved from Hawaii in 1983 but visited often to see my parents, family, friends, and to attend Sunday services if I were still in Honolulu. My grandmother and mother truly loved Jodo Mission of Hawaii. My grandmother's ashes are in the Nokotsudo. My mother always attended annual memorial services for our ancestors even though we are registered for Eitaikyo (Perpetual Memorial Services). When she passed away, I continued attending memorial services, especially making an effort to attend Obon Services. Covid-19 Pandemic has made it difficult to travel to Hawaii and attend church. I know the pandemic also made it very difficult for everyone living in Hawaii, as well. However, thanks to our tech savvy Bishop Ishikawa who saved the day... we are all fortunate to be able to attend services virtually via Zoom Meeting or to view past Sunday services on YouTube.Being able to see and hear the services, sermon, guest speakers and see the



big screen through my computer allows me to experience the Sunday service. In my mind's eye, I can feel the cool breeze of the fans above and the scent of burning incense. I believe Saint Honen and compassionate Amida Buddha would be very pleased to have Jodo Shu teachings shared using Virtual technology when in-person attendance is not possible. I am also grateful that he posts videos of celebrations, parades, and beautiful sunsets in Hawaii. I would also like to mention that the monthly Jodo Shu news bulletins which are e-mailed are a great way to keep me informed about future events and contain valuable articles about Buddhism, traditions, poems and activity pictures. Bishop Ishikawa, resident ministers, Reverend Takano, Reverend Tanabe and the Jodo Shu Board members have recently added some inspirational celebratory ideas such as Koinobori and family Halloween activities which encourage members and everyone to come out and visit the Jodo Shu Betsuin and learn about Pure Land Buddhism.

Namu Amida Butsu.

AUSTRALIA

Yoshie Dickson

Member of Jodo Shu Buddhist Community of Australia

My mother passed away during the pandemic and I was unable to return to Japan, so I visited Rev. James Wilson at Amidaji Temple in Brisbane with my friend who also lost her mother. I not only attended memorial services, but I also attended Shakyo and Sumi-e lessons. Once a month I painted bamboo, orchids, plums, chrysanthemums, irises, camellias, hydrangeas, and morning glories. Seeing flowers

as they are and drawing them as realistically as possible is a good learning experience. This is very difficult, but so

much fun! I need to concentrate deeply, and it calms my mind. I also enjoy listening to Rev. Wilson's lectures and chatting with other students.



Ms. Yoshie Dickson demonstrating "Singing Ring" at Ohigan.



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