

# Pure Land Life

The Pure Land Buddhism of Honen Shonin



2026 No. 38

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# 2025 Messages and Reports from Jodo Shu Overseas Districts

Note: The spelling of 念仏 (*nien-fō* in Chinese) is pronounced “NEN-BUTSU” in Japanese and is commonly spelled either *Nembutsu* or *Nenbutsu*, as seen in the articles of this booklet. Please note that we leave the spelling as it is written by each author to respect their intentions.

## Hawaii



### Living the Nenbutsu: Reflection and Renewal at the 851st Anniversary of Jodo Shu in Hawaii

Bishop Kosen Ishikawa  
Hawaii Council of Jodo Missions

Every day and every moment is meant to be precious. Yet when days pass without pause, we easily grow accustomed to them, and the sense of wonder that once touched our hearts gradually fades. This is a natural part of being human. Observances and anniversaries exist for this very reason: they invite us to pause, reflect, and rediscover the value of each moment we are given.

Honen Shonin, the founder of Jodo Shu, taught three essential attitudes in Nenbutsu practice. The first is **Jinjō Gyōgi**, the ordinary Nenbutsu of daily life. The second is **Betsuji Gyōgi**, special periods of focused practice observed on particular occasions. The third is **Rinjū Gyōgi**, the Nenbutsu at the moment of death. Among these, Honen Shonin placed the greatest importance on Jinjō Gyōgi. He taught that our everyday Nenbutsu is itself precious and that any single recitation may be our last. At the same time, he encouraged Betsuji Gyōgi, recognizing that special observances help refresh our bodies and minds and renew our awareness of life’s sacredness. Through such moments, we are reminded that each breath and each recitation arises through countless causes and conditions.

With this spirit of renewal, the ministers of the Kanagawa district generously sponsored this year’s 851st Anniversary Observance, offering a meaningful opportunity to deepen our appreciation of the Nenbutsu. On October 26, 2025, the Jodo Mission of Hawaii was blessed to host two significant services: the Yula Yula Repentance Service, and the 851st Anniversary of the Founding of Jodo Shu together with the 131st Anniversary of Hawaii Jodo Shu. Led by Bishop Yuki Natsumi and Bishop Yugen Miyabayashi, and supported by ministers from Hawaii, Kanagawa, and Miyagi, the day unfolded as a living expression of gratitude, reflection, and fellowship rooted in the Nenbutsu.

The morning began with the Yula Yula Repentance Service, which is grounded in “sange”, the humble acknowledgment of our limitations as ordinary beings burdened by greed, anger, and ignorance. As the hall remained dim, LED candles were lit one by one while voices gently recited *Namu Amida Butsu*. Slowly, the



Jodo Mission Sanctuary illuminated by the gentle glow of LED candlelight



Ministers and participants at the commemorative services

darkness gave way to a warm and steady light. This moment vividly expressed a central teaching of Jodo Shu: no matter how deep our darkness may be, Amida Buddha embraces us with boundless compassion.

Participants quietly traced letters of repentance and passed them to the ministers, who brought them before the altar. In the stillness of that moment, we were reminded that liberation does not arise from our own effort or self-power. Rather, it is received through the compassionate vow of Amida Buddha. The name “Yula Yula,” describing the gentle flicker of candlelight, reflects our own lives—fragile and unsteady, yet continually guided and sustained by the Buddha’s light.

At noon, the anniversary service was conducted with solemn dignity. Ministers from Japan and Hawaii gathered together, embodying the unbroken flow of the Nenbutsu from Honen Shonin to the present day. The offering of incense by representatives of both regions reminded us that the Dharma has crossed oceans, languages, and generations, not through authority or force, but through the simple and universal calling of *Namu Amida Butsu*.

In his message, Bishop Natsumi reflected on the hardships and dedication of those who brought the teachings of Jodo Shu to Hawaii. Their perseverance and faith continue to support our spiritual lives today. The service thus became not only a remembrance of the past, but also a renewal of our shared resolve to carry the Nenbutsu forward with humility and gratitude.

After the services, ministers and members shared fellowship through food, conversation, and a beautiful gagaku performance by the Hawaii Gagaku Ensemble. Rev. Genyo Sasaki also offered a seven-meter koinobori in support of Hawaii Jodo Shu’s annual celebration. Like the carp swimming upstream, this symbol reminds us that our journey is sustained not by our own strength, but by Amida Buddha’s compassionate vow.

Although commemorations are often reserved for major milestones, this year’s observance followed closely after last year’s memorials. This continuity conveys an important message: Buddhism is not practiced only on special days, but lived each day through the Nenbutsu. As we look ahead, we renew our commitment to nurturing a Dharma community rooted in tradition and open to the present, walking this path with gratitude—embraced by the light of *Namu Amida Butsu* and guided by the wisdom of our teachers.

## California



### “Okagesamade”

**Bishop Joji Atone**  
**Jodoshu North America Buddhist Missions**

Our Jodo Shu Temple once located in Little Tokyo provided religious services in Los Angeles for over thirty years. Unfortunately, the temple had to close in 2023 due to declining public safety in the neighborhood. We moved to a temporary office in Torrance and continue to search for a new permanent site in the South Bay area, where most of our congregation resides. We sincerely hope to enshrine the principal image of Amida Buddha in a new temple. Thanks to our congregation’s understanding and support, our temple has been continuing several religious activities despite difficulties brought by this transitional phase of our relocation. In Japanese, we call it “okagesama” to express thankfulness to invisible conditions that enable a pleasant incident to occur. This phrase “okagesama” always reminds me of a lady with whom I became acquainted when I was much younger while serving as a resident minister for the Jodo Shu temple in Hawaii.

Long ago, in Honolulu, Hawaii, there lived a woman named Mrs. Florence Hyland, a devoted admirer of Japan. Her husband, Admiral John Hyland, once served as Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. The couple shared a deep appreciation for Japan and had remarkable insight into its history and culture.

Mrs. Hyland was a close friend of the late Mrs. Haruko Satoh, the first chairperson of the Association of Jodo Shu Ministers’ Wives. Their friendship grew over many years in Japan and the United States. Mrs. Hyland was especially drawn to the Japanese aesthetic rooted in simplicity and quietness. She understood the difference between *wabi* and *sabi*, two important ideas in Japanese concept of beauty, and she often explained their meaning to American audiences.

During the admiral’s posting at the U.S. Naval Base in Yokosuka, Mrs. Hyland once traveled on her own to Byōdō-in Temple in Uji, Kyoto. She arranged her visit in advance. As many know, Byōdō-in was founded in 1052. Its Phoenix Hall, a National Treasure created to represent the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, enshrines the Amida Buddha statue carved by the master sculptor Jōchō. Today, Byōdō-in is widely recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

When Mrs. Hyland arrived just after noon, she was guided to the main hall. She turned to the attending monk and said, “Please let me be alone for a while.” She then sat quietly before the principal image of Amida Buddha, gazing at the serene face of the statue. Concerned for her, the monk occasionally peeked from



Scenes from our service: Social hours

the shadows to see if she was all right. One hour passed, then two. After three hours, she was still sitting in silence, absorbed in the presence of the Buddha. When the monk finally approached and said, “We must close soon; the sun is setting,” she



Scenes from our service: Purification Ceremony

rose slowly, offered a deep bow of gratitude, and left the temple.

Years later, when I met Mrs. Hyland in Honolulu, I asked her, “Why did you spend so long gazing at the Amida Buddha statue in Byōdō-in?” She smiled and said, “Because a face so gentle simply doesn’t exist in the West. I wanted to understand what the countenance of Amida Buddha truly meant.”

On another occasion, she told me, “One of the most beautiful phrases in the Japanese language is *okagesamade*.” This expression, used so naturally in daily life in Japan, conveys gratitude not only toward people but also toward unseen forces that support us: divine protection, sentient beings, nature, and all the influences beyond our sight. Mrs. Hyland translated it (*okagesamade*) as “*Thanks to whomever and whatever.*” She explained that in Western culture, gratitude is often directed toward people, yet seldom toward nonhuman existence, such as nature. She found deep meaning in that difference, and in the spiritual depth reflected in Japanese culture.

The *Meditation Sutra*, one of the three major Pure Land Sutras, states, “the heart of Amida Buddha is Great Compassion.” This refers to the Buddha’s promise to save people from suffering and offer them peace, often characterized as the protective spirit of a mother who never abandons her children. Mrs. Hyland surely recognized this compassionate heart in the countenance of Amida Buddha in Byōdō-in.

## Brazil



### “Svāhā”: Let There Be Happiness, Blessings, and Fulfillment.

**Bishop Ryoho Sasaki**  
**Jodo Shu South America Missions**

In June 2025, we were privileged to witness an auspicious occasion that commemorated the history of the Jodo Shu ministry in Brazil and celebrated the dedication of a new temple in Curitiba, the country’s fourth Jodo Shu temple. It was an honor for us to host the 70th Anniversary Commemorative Service in São Paulo, officiated by Abbot Jitsuyu Iida of Shojoke-in, one of the main temples of Jodo Shu, and the Dedication Service of Curitiba Nippakuji, officiated by Archbishop Kokyo Kawanaka, Secretary General of Jodo Shu. Both services turned out to be joyful celebrations welcoming many congregants locally and internationally, including numerous Jodo Shu delegates and ministers from Japan.

During the commemorative service in São Paulo on June 6th,

Abbot Iida extended a special prayer to acknowledge the late ministers. This was especially true for the late bishops Ryoshin Hasegawa and Yomei Sasaki, who dedicated their lives to founding Jodo Shu temples in Brazil. He also honored lay members who contributed to the well-being of the three existing Jodo Shu temples for the past 70 years. We appreciate this acknowledgment for those who are no longer with us. Without their tireless endeavor, the succession of our ministry for 70 years and the establishment of the fourth temple, Curitiba Nippakuji, would not have been possible.



Abbot Iida delivering his message

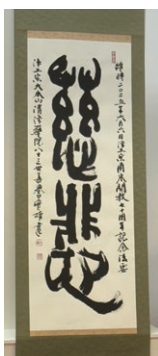


Brush Calligraphy by Abbot Iida

Notably, the 70th Anniversary Commemorative Service featured a special dedication of brush calligraphy by Abbot Iida, celebrating the history of the Jodo Shu ministry in Brazil and the establishment of Curitiba Nippakuji. First, while the congregants watched his move in awe, Abbot Iida started gently but determinedly to brush two letters, 慈 (maitrī) and 悲 (karuṇā). He

explained that the former means fellowship and the latter empathy, compounded as “jihi” (compassion). This word “jihi” is appreciated in Pure Land Buddhism as Amida Buddha’s compassion, which is extended to all beyond time and space. His speech was enlightening when we pondered the initial event that led us to this celebration 70 years later. It was the enshrinement of Amida Buddha at the sanctuary of São Paulo Nippakuji, the first Jodo Shu temple in Brazil. We were reminded that it was only Amida Buddha of São Paulo Nippakuji who witnessed the entire events, both pleasant and sad ones, for 70 years. This fact renewed our appreciation that the 70th anniversary would have been impossible without receiving the divine protection from Amida Buddha that must have guided us in the course of expanding our ministry.

Next, Abbot Iida brushed another word, “娑婆訶 (svāhā)”, and explained that “svāhā” is the sacred phrase that is added at the end of mantras popular in Esoteric Buddhism. “Svāhā”



Jihi (Compassion)



Svāhā



Rite of Purification by Archbishop Kawanaka (Center in orange robe)

expresses a wish for the fulfillment of prayers and is often used to pray for the benefit of happiness, blessings, and fulfillment to be there. “May the teaching of Honen Shonin expand from São Paulo, Maringá, Ibiúna, and Curitiba, and our voice of Nembutsu echo all over Brazil!” It felt that our sincere wish was embodied in the graceful manner of Abbot Iida hand-brushing the words “jihi” and “svāhā”.

On the early morning of June 8th in Curitiba, we must have received that compassion and blessings. The rainy sky suddenly changed to a fine day with warm sunshine just before the procession of the officiant and children commenced. No words could express how fortunate it was. Embracing the sun before the 10-foot square pole, erected to commemorate the establishment of a new temple, Archbishop Kawanaka observed the rite of purification to pray for divine guidance and protection. Entering the newly furnished sanctuary, filled with the scent of Paraná pine and a solemn atmosphere, Archbishop Kawanaka performed the ritual of enshrinement of Amida Buddha. We were overwhelmed by the Nembutsu recitation from about 200 congregants welcoming the Amida Buddha to our fourth temple. Following the service, Abbot Iida kindly wished for this new temple to receive much happiness, blessings, and fulfillment, referring to the word “svāhā”.

Embracing the two auspicious religious gatherings in 2025, we are determined to continue our efforts to encourage more people to be engaged in the recitation of “Namu Amida Butsu” in São Paulo, Maringá, Ibiúna, and Curitiba. Experiencing both gatherings in São Paulo and Curitiba, we are humbled that it all depends on our subjective engagement in Nembutsu whether divine benefits of happiness, blessings, and fulfillment would await us or not.



Ritual of Enshrinement by Archbishop Kawanaka



Flower Offering by Curitiba members

## Australia



### Interconnectedness

Rev. Tetsuyu Wilson  
Jodo Shu Buddhist Community of Australia

Amidaji is at the heart of a community who are brought together by their shared belief in Amida. Here, our community has the opportunity to connect with one another at the various events held during the year. The first event of the year is Shusho-e. It was held in the beginning of January 2025. January is the middle of Summer in Brisbane with temperatures reaching over 35 degrees C. For this reason, we cannot hold the ceremony outside as we do for Ohigan and Obon. Instead, we hold the ceremony inside the Main Hall of Amidaji where it is cooler. Unfortunately, because space is limited only around 20 people can be seated comfortably. After the ceremony, we partake in light refreshments. Everyone has brought one dish to share. While enjoying each other's company and sharing food during Shusho-e, we are mindful of our connection to each other and to Amida. We are interconnected and together we become the Jodoshu Buddhist Community of Australia.



Amidaji members with Rev. Sugiyama  
(the second person from the left in the front row)

JBC also forms connections with other communities. In particular, there is a strong connection with adherents of Amida in Japan. Their contribution supports the activities of our Mission. In February, Mr. Yukio Satoh and Rev. Sugiyama along with their retinue visited Amidaji. Rev. Sugiyama conducted a ceremony at Amidaji and met with some of our members. Our members greatly appreciated this opportunity to meet with Jodoshu priests from Japan. Rev. Sugiyama also travelled to Thursday Island and Cowra to visit the Japanese cemeteries there. Mr. Satoh joined us in Canberra where we first met with Mr. Suzuki, the Japanese Ambassador before travelling to Cowra. At both Thursday Island and Cowra, this delegation from Japan met with local council members and members from the local community. I think that one of the most positive outcomes of their visit was to strengthen the ties between the Jodoshu communities of Japan and Australia.

Our Mission also connects with people from other communities. On two occasions this year I was asked to give a talk to a group of elderly people in aged care facilities. Each of them faces the various challenges of aging. Amongst these challenges is loneliness. They live separated from family and find comfort in the company of other residents. For most of them, their minds are still active, and they still maintain an interest in the world around them. For this reason, I was asked to talk with them about the



With Arafura Sea Group at the Thursday Island cemetery

spiritual values of Buddhism. They listen intently and at the end of my talk they ask me very thoughtful questions. As I answer their questions, I am mindful that they and I are connected by our endeavours to understand people of a different race and religion. This understanding leads to respect and tolerance of each other and thereby creating peace in the world.

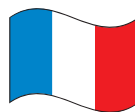
As the year wears on, Spring and Autumn Ohigan as well as Obon are observed at Amidaji. And again, these events provide an opportunity for the members of the JBC to reaffirm their connections to each other and to Amida.

Following my visit to Thursday Island with Rev. Sugiyama in February, I went there again in May. This time I was invited by the Japanese Consulate in Cairns to bless the erection of the last grave posts in the Japanese Cemetery. The restoration of the grave posts was a project that began about 5 years ago. This year the last of these 519 posts was finally erected. By replacing the old, dilapidated posts with new posts, I felt that dignity had been restored to the final resting place of the Japanese pearl divers. Time had not forgotten them.

They will always be remembered. In November, the Arafura Sea Group travelled from Kushimoto, Wakayama Pref. to pay their respects to their ancestors who are buried in Thursday Island. Even though their ancestors died almost a hundred years ago, their descendants maintain their connection with them. Separation by place and time are of no consequence. The interconnectedness between one generation and the next exists because the present learns from the past and with that knowledge the future can be created.

We of the present are indebted to our ancestors. They lived their lives in the light of Amida and they transmitted the understanding of this light to us. Our future is secured. And, in turn we will transmit this light to our descendants. The past, present and future are all interconnected. As are we.

## France



### “Repentance as a Buddhist” - Conducting the Initiation Ceremony in Germany

Rev. Koryu Koso  
Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center

Almost 20 years have passed since we hosted a special lecture by the Late Abbot Ryukai Mano, who kindly traveled to France to commemorate the foundation of our Jodo Shu European

Buddhism Center. We would like to express our appreciation to the Jodo Shu ministers in Japan and our local congregation for their understanding and support. Especially, the generous cooperation and guidance from the Late Abbot Mano and the Late Bishop Yomei Sasaki of the Brazil district are never forgotten.

In addition to our activities in France, our branch in Germany was established in 2024, with operations primarily led by Mr. Frank Konen Buettgen, who is fluent in several languages, including German, English, and Japanese. According to him, some languages in Europe, such as those in Austria and Switzerland, are similar to dialects in Japan, as he was born in an area close to the border of Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

In late September last year, accompanied by Mr. Hashimoto, the Vice President of our organization, I visited Germany to conduct an Initiation Ceremony, which was hosted by our congregation in Germany. The venue was a gym in Bonn, which was provided at no cost by its owner, who was impressed by the purpose of our activities. In addition to the person to be initiated, many members gathered from Spain, Italy, and Munich, including those who attended online. Since I am incapable of speaking in German, Mr. Buettgen assisted me as interpreter.



Rev. Koso delivering a lecture in Milano, Italy

While Christian confession admonishes its followers to ask forgiveness from God, Buddhists' repentance in an initiation ceremony features the purification of our own karma, which holds us captive in the transmigration in the Six Delusive Worlds. During the ritual of repentance, we face the Buddha in solitude and

repent our karma accumulated from the past, which has been derived from our greed, anger, and ignorance. It features one of the essential teachings of Buddhism, which is to "purify one's heart and mind," as expressed as "Jijo Goi (自浄其意)" in the passage regarding the Buddhist precepts, which was commonly taught by seven Buddhas, including Sakyamuni Buddha. The participant faces a Buddha statuette surrounded by tranquility and serenity. Profound intimacy with Buddha awakens an emotion within us that is unfamiliar in our daily lives. We hope that through this Buddhists' repentance, the participant, impressed by the value of the ceremony, will walk his Buddhist Path. Afterwards, I guided him in taking refuge in the Three Treasures in Buddhism: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.



Initiation ceremony in Bonn, Germany

As the preacher, I spoke about my experience participating in an initiation ceremony at Zojoji, the main temple of Jodo Shu in Tokyo, when I was fourteen years old. I still remember the Late Abbot Benkyo Shii-o, who served as the preacher, speaking very kindly and frankly to all participants, including young children like me. While sharing my memory of the ceremony, I was struck by a sense of humbleness in transmitting the Buddha Dharma. While living, we all continue experiencing happiness, sadness, and pain. As Pure Land Buddhists, we are encouraged to accept them and embrace our lives with gratitude in mind, nurtured by the daily recitation of Nenbutsu. It was a mental renewal for me to have served as the preacher of this ceremony.

We would like to enhance our activities to introduce Buddhism and deepen the fellowship among the Nenbutsu practitioners in many European countries. Your continued support is greatly appreciated.

## READERS' VOICES

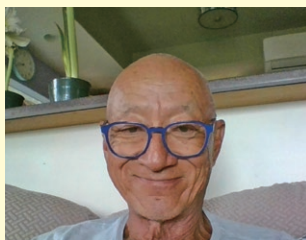
# Introducing members from Jodo Shu Temples around the world

## FROM HAWAII

### Edwin Sera

#### Member of Lahaina Jodo Mission

My first recollection of the Lahaina Jodo Mission was in 1963 when it was the location for the "soup kitchen" that provided meals for the striking Pioneer Mill workers which my father was part of. My parents were then the connection to LJM for decades that followed. They were devoted members and attended the services and activities the church provided. It was a social, cultural,



and spiritual gathering spot. The yearly summer Obon observance was a celebration that created fond memories for the whole community. I remember my mother getting up at 3 am in the morning to make sushi for church parties.

As devoted as my parents were to LJM during my younger years, I was far from it. They never asked me to join them for church services, but they and Reverend Hara always invited me to parties and simple shared meals. It wasn't until my father passed and I was the person to drive my mother to the church that I started to regularly attend the monthly services.

Today, as my involvement grows, I am learning and accepting of Buddhism as a guidance to a way of life. Unfortunately, our temple was destroyed in the Lahaina fire of August 2023, but we are going to rebuild with the spirit of remembrance of the generations before us who built this temple.

## FROM BRAZIL

### Akira Yoshii (right) & Family Member of Curitiba Nippakuji

It was an honor to be appointed President of Curitiba Nippakuji. In March 2026, I was also grateful to visit Zojoji in Tokyo during the breathtaking cherry blossom season. Entering significant sanctuaries, I felt a deep welcome to my Japanese heritage.



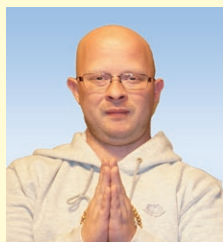
Honesty and diligence, cornerstones of my family's Japanese traditions, guided my upbringing. It surprised me that all three of my children chose to study in Japan without my prompting. I am always amazed to see Japanese heritage influence their modern lives in Brazil.

My relationship with Nippakuji started one summer long ago, when I attended the famous *Toro-nagashi* (lantern floating ceremony) in Carlópolis to pray for my ancestors. It was the first time I was exposed to the Nembutsu recitation led by the late Rev. Shikamori of Maringá Nippakuji. Since then, that initial Nembutsu experience has never faded. So, it felt natural that my family, living in Curitiba, gradually joined the religious gatherings of Nippakuji while our friendship with Rev. Oeda's family became more intimate. I will never forget the Goju Soden (the Five-fold Transmission Retreat) in 2018, the Dedication Service in 2025, and especially the Buddhist Wedding Ceremony of my son, Dennis, in 2024. Looking back, Curitiba Nippakuji eventually becomes the place where my family finds a home. I wish to do my best as President of Curitiba Nippakuji to create an environment where my fellow worshippers can feel the same sense of belonging that my family does.

## FROM EUROPE

### Andreas Schickle Member of Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center

I live in Southern Germany and joined the Jodo Shu Group in 2020, at a time when Covid-19 was actively spreading, and lockdowns had just begun. Although I had followed Buddhism for some time, I had yet to find a practice that felt truly comfortable. After reaching out to Tibetan, Theravada, and Zen Buddhist groups in Germany, I discovered the German website of the Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center ([www.jodobuddhismus.org](http://www.jodobuddhismus.org)) and contacted Mr. Frank Konen Buettgen. Mr. Buettgen informed me that I was among the first German members of the group. When I began attending the monthly Nenbutsu sessions and other activities, I soon felt that I had finally found a religious practice suited me. Then, in October 2021, I was honored to become the first German member to receive the Initiation Ceremony (Kikyoshiki) in Europe, officially taking refuge in the Three Treasures and the Jodo Shu teaching. Now, the daily Nenbutsu recitation calms me and provides peaceful moments in daily life. Looking ahead, my dream is to travel to Japan and join Nenbutsu recitation at Jodo Shu temples there one day.



## FROM CALIFORNIA

### Ayano Ichida (left) & Family Member of Jodoshu North America Buddhist Missions

I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to share a few words as a member of the North America Buddhist Missions in Los Angeles, California. I am an attorney as well as a law professor at the University of Southern California.



Over the years, my understanding of Jōdoshū has gradually deepened through attending the thoughtful sermons of Dr. Atone and previously Reverend Tanaka, whose teachings on the life and compassion of Hōnen Shōnin have helped me better appreciate the essence of Pure Land practice. Their reflections have encouraged me to approach Jōdoshū not only as a tradition, but as a living path grounded in gratitude and trust in the recitation of the Nembutsu.

In addition, I have been fortunate to receive guidance from my cousin, Reverend Gayu Kasai who heads a Jōdoshū temple in Nagano. Through his kindness, I have had the opportunity to visit several Jōdoshū temples in Nagano, including the venerable Zenkō-ji Temple, as well as his own temple. Walking through these sacred spaces and learning their histories has allowed me to feel a deeper connection to the lineage and spirit of Jōdoshū, and to reflect on how its teachings continue to offer meaning across generations.

I am thankful for these opportunities to learn and reflect, and I look forward to continuing my practice together with the Jōdoshū community.

## FROM AUSTRALIA

### Yoshino Pearson Member of Jodoshu Buddhist Community of Australia

My father was a person who greatly respected the Buddhist temple he belonged to and his family grave in Japan. Thanks to my father, I enjoyed listening to sutra chanting and sermons. I am grateful that he gave me the chance to become familiar with Buddhism when I was a child.



It was the death of my brother-in-law that drove me to learn Buddhism more seriously. Observance of him dying before my eyes made me reflect upon the meaning of life and death. So, when I knocked on the door of Amidaji for the first time, I was determined to follow the guidance of Rev. James Wilson, whom I barely knew then. Actually, my view on life has changed from that first visit to Amidaji.

I started my relationship with Amidaji by participating in the monthly calligraphy of Buddhist sutras. Especially last year, I was blessed with a chance to visit Thursday Island. It was an overwhelming experience for me to learn about the Japanese pearl divers and attend a memorial service at their graves.

Every gathering at Amidaji is an opportunity for me to make friends with fellow worshippers and learn about Buddhism. Also, I am grateful for Amidaji, which provides me with a place in Australia to pay homage to my ancestors. I am nothing but thankful to Rev. Wilson.

## Introducing Jodo Shu

### “Tsukikage (Moonlight)”, the Song of Jodo Shu

*“Tsukikage-no, Itaranu Sato-wa, Nakere-domo,  
Nagamuru Hito-no, Kokoro ni-zo, Sumu”*

Though the moonlight encompasses the world,  
its beauty dwells only in those who gaze at the moon.



“Tsukikage (Moonlight)” is the official song of Jodo Shu. Its lyrics were originally composed as a poem by Honen Shonin. The poem uses the moon shining on all roofs to illustrate the Amida Buddha’s promise, which reaches everyone. However, just as the moon’s light goes unnoticed unless we step outside and look up, Amida Buddha’s compassion requires us to seek it. In Japanese, the concept of brightness and darkness often describes whether one is well-versed in reason. Here, brightness reflects Amida Buddha’s promise to receive anyone who recites “Namu Amida Butsu” to His Pure Land. Darkness reflects the obstacles created by our passions and worldly desires.

Just as the moon appears much brighter when the night’s darkness is deepest—such as in deserts, mountains, or oceans untouched by artificial light—Amida Buddha’s light of compassion shines more brilliantly when the darkness in our minds feels thickest. Honen Shonin believes that we “should express sincere and joyful appreciation for our encounter with Amida Buddha’s essential promise, and be moved to look skyward and prostrate ourselves with great happiness.”

This song, “Tsukikage,” always encourages us to go outside and gaze at the moon, which ultimately means to recite “Namu Amida Butsu” by ourselves. Each recitation is to be illuminated by the light of Amida Buddha. In doing so, the song reminds us that spiritual illumination is always within reach, waiting to be realized through mindful recitation and reflection.

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Cover Photo

Top: Dedication Ceremony of Curitiba Nippakuji (Curitiba, Brazil)  
Bottom (from left): Yula Yula Repentance Service (Honolulu, Hawaii), Bon Segaki Service (Los Angeles, California),  
Lecture given to senior citizens (Brisbane, Australia), Initiation Ceremony (Bonn, Germany)