



# HAMAKUA JODO MISSION OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER MARCH 2025



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*"Honoring Tradition, Embracing Community"*

## HIGAN



*Higan*, also commonly referred to as "*Ohigan*," is a significant week-long observance period for Buddhists held during the Spring and Autumn equinoxes, marking the transition between seasons.

The term "*Higan*" translates to "the other shore," symbolizing the journey from the world of suffering to the Pure Land, a state of enlightenment. During this time, we reflect on Buddhist teachings, meditate, and honor our ancestors who are believed to reside in the Pure Land, in the afterlife.

Spring Higan is observed in the month of March. This observance emphasizes spiritual growth, remembrance, and the pursuit of a higher state of being.

## OVERDUE FIRE INSURANCE OBTAINED

It may come as a surprise to many that our temple has never had a fire insurance policy since its founding over 128 years ago, without coverage for fire risks.

One of the main reasons for this was the high cost of annual premiums, which are significantly influenced by the temple's unique architectural design, artifacts, and the number of structures on the property.

This situation has now changed, thanks to the proactive decision of our HJM Executive Team to secure much-needed fire insurance coverage for the temple.



Photo by: dilokastudio

The devastating wildfires in Lahaina, where our sister temple, Lahaina Jodo Mission, was destroyed, and the destruction caused by the wildfires in Paradise, California, and Southern California, have served as a stark reminder of the importance of safeguarding our temple.

These tragedies have made it clear that even though the cost of fire insurance may be substantial, it is an **essential** investment in the preservation of our temple and its history.

While financial concerns are always important, the safety and protection of our temple and our members must always come first, and ensure we are prepared for the unexpected.

## OTHER NOTEWORTHY HAPPENINGS

- An inspector from Bowman Termite & Pest Management visited the temple to assess termite droppings found in several areas of the temple. Based on the color of the droppings, the inspector determined they were likely from before the temple and its structures were termite tented in 2022.



He suggested that the droppings may have fallen from above due to factors such as earthquakes, the movement of sliding doors, or contact with the walls. We will continue to closely monitor the situation moving forward.

- HJM's Directors & Officers insurance policy has been renewed for 2025 - 2026.
- A huge thank you to Lacey and Tiki, our incredible new volunteers, who made the journey all the way from Waikoloa to lend a hand at our recent Beautification Work Day.

They gave it their all and worked tirelessly. We are beyond grateful for their amazing support!

- Keith Burkhardt, a friend of HJM and volunteer, donated a pre-owned water heater to us that is in excellent, working condition. Mahalo, Keith for thinking of us!
- We've noticed an ongoing issue with individuals dumping trash and large bulky items along the road between the old plantation manager's house and our driveway. Items such as a refrigerator, old tires, and large bags of waste have been discarded, creating an eyesore for the community.

Both the Hawai'i Police Department and the County Public Works division have been notified about the situation.

If you witness anyone dumping trash along this area, please report it to the Hawai'i Police Department's non-emergency line at (808) 935-3311. Your help in keeping our community clean is greatly appreciated!

- Professor Hiroshi Tanaka, a distinguished academic from Japan, recently visited our temple in search of the gravesite of Katsu Goto.
- Many thanks goes out to Brittany Iga of Pyramid Insurance for her exceptional assistance with our insurance questions and needs. She went above and beyond to ensure all our concerns were addressed, and her follow-up skills were truly commendable.
- Our new Instagram account is growing steadily and gaining more followers every day! Be sure to follow us and join the journey at: [@hamakua\\_jodo\\_mission](https://www.instagram.com/hamakua_jodo_mission)



- The Hawaii Jodo Shu Rengo Fujinkai is still accepting applications for the Namiye Nakamura Scholarship. For an application and more details on the qualifications, interested parties can contact the Betsuin office at (808) 949-3995. The deadline to submit an application is June 15, 2025.
- A photo and information about our temple was submitted to the Honokaa Business Association for inclusion on their upcoming revamped website.
- All members are encouraged to watch for the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting information, which will be mailed via USPS by the end of this month. The meeting, scheduled for **Sunday, April 25, 2025 at 10:00am HST**, will be held in a hybrid format, offering members the option to attend either in person at our temple's dining hall or virtually via Zoom.

- We were shocked and saddened to learn of the passing of HJM friend and donor, Mila Burton. Our heartfelt condolences go out to her family and friends. *Namu Amida Butsu.*

### 2025 MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER

We are currently accepting membership dues for 2025, with a deadline of **March 31, 2025**. The dues remain at \$60.

If you missed the 2024 dues deadline, you can still reactivate your membership by paying your 2024 dues along with any outstanding fees from previous years.

Please send your membership dues in the form of a check or money order made payable to Hamakua Jodo Mission to:

**Hamakua Jodo Mission  
Attn: Membership  
P.O. Box 7  
Honokaa, HI 96727**

If you are unsure of your membership status or want more information on how to become a member, you can reach us at (808) 775-0965 or by email: [contact@hamakuajodomission.org](mailto:contact@hamakuajodomission.org)

### DID YOU KNOW?

In the 1970s, Hawaii's news stations experienced a transformative shift, marking significant milestones in the representation of diverse voices.

Women reporters, who were rarely seen in the newsroom at the time, began to appear on newscasts. Pioneers such as Linda Coble and Barbara Tanabe not only broke barriers but became household names, co-anchoring the evening news. Alongside this shift, local ethnic minorities were also finding a place on the airwaves.

KITV 4 News, in particular, made history in 1975 when it introduced a dynamic, diverse news team that included Japanese, Hawaiian, Filipino, Caucasian, and Chinese professionals

that represented the true melting pot of Hawai'i's cultural landscape.

Among those who contributed to this groundbreaking era was Eugene "Gene" Okamoto, Sr., a member of our temple.



Photo: AJ McWhorther/Honolulu Star Advertiser  
Gene Okamoto is in the front row, second from the left.

Gene, born and raised in Honokaa, played a pivotal role as co-anchor of KITV's NewsCenter 4. His involvement in such a historic moment in Hawai'i's media industry is a point of great pride for us.

Gene's connection to our temple runs deep. His grandfather, Kiichiro Okamoto, was a founding member of the temple and served as the construction foreman when our *konpono* (temple) was built in 1918.

It seems that a legacy of breaking barriers is embedded in the Okamoto family's DNA. In 2023, Gene's daughter, Crystal, and granddaughter, Kihana, made HJM history as part of our temple's first all-women Executive Team (Board of Directors), continuing the tradition of leadership and progress.

Gene's mother, Beatrice Okamoto, was a successful seamstress in Honokaa, and known for her award winning lemon meringue pie!

We are proud to have Gene as an active member and honored that his family's



contributions continue to make an impact both in Hawaii's history and within HJM.

## SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES



Photo: Wilson's Snack Shack Instagram

Craving specialty flavors like parmesan garlic or truffle fries, mouthwatering sandwiches, and tasty finger foods? Look no further than Wilson's Snack Shack!

Owned by Wilson Paloma, this popular food truck serves up deliciousness throughout Hawi, Kailua-Kona, Waikoloa, and Waimea. They were a hit at our Obon celebration last year, and one bite of their menu offerings will show you why!

For fast, friendly service and a satisfying meal, make sure to check them out at the Kamuela Farmers Market at Pukalani Stables on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



This month's question is one that we get asked from time to time.

*"Why doesn't the Hamakua Jodo Mission host more events open to the community like other temples do?" - J.K.*

For many decades, there has been minimal to no effort to organize community-oriented events open to the public, aside from the annual Obon celebration.

With a shrinking membership and an aging congregation, the lack of manpower has made it difficult to plan such events in the past. As a result, HJM remained relatively unknown to many, including some kamaaina born and raised on the Big Island.

Some locals have even shared that, while they were aware of the temple, they assumed our bon dance was not open to the public. Additionally, past social media posts by uninformed members of the public have mistakenly suggested that HJM had been shut down or was no longer in existence.

The HJM Executive Team has been working diligently to change this perception by becoming more community focused and welcoming assistance from those willing to help.



Photo credit: Pickens Kehrer  
Katsu Goto Legacy Week Memoria Event  
, September 23, 2023

While finding new volunteers remains a challenge, the Executive Team has slowly gained the support of a few dedicated individuals who are stepping up to ensure HJM's success.

With a new generation of members actively involved, there is a renewed commitment to putting the temple in the spotlight. This shift in mindset acknowledges that embracing change is crucial for survival.

Looking ahead, as more help is gathered, HJM hopes to host a variety of events, including

lectures, speaking engagements featuring researchers, cultural classes, and other community gatherings to honor traditions and engage the public.

The future is bright, and with the continued support of the community, HJM is poised for a revitalization that will better connect with people near and far!



Photo credit: Sarah Anderson

## APRIL 2025 NENKI MEMORIAL SERVICES

DATE	NAME	YEAR
4/14	Sadao Nakagawa	23rd
4/21	Usa Takamine	33rd

Please contact the HJM Executive Team at [hamakuajodoexecteam@gmail.com](mailto:hamakuajodoexecteam@gmail.com) or call (808) 775-0965 if you would like to schedule a memorial service.

*If you come across any errors, please inform us so we can update our records accordingly. Mahalo!*

## FLASHBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH

As we observe Women's History Month, it is only fitting that we take a moment to reflect on the remarkable contributions of two women who left an indelible mark at our temple.

This month, we honor the memory of Tomoe "Violet" Oketani and Tomiko Fujitani, longtime members of our temple HJM who both passed away in 2022. Their lives were marked by a

profound commitment to service, generosity, and kindness - values that continue to inspire all who knew them.



L-R: Tomoe "Violet" Oketani & Tomiko Fujitani

Mrs. Oketani and Mrs. Fujitani were more than just devoted members of HJM; they were pillars of our temple community. Their dedication to our temple was unwavering, and their contributions were vast and varied.

They faithfully attended every service, represented HJM at numerous conventions, and were active participants in both the Fujinkai and Goeika Club. Whether cooking meals, cleaning the temple, or offering their help in any way possible, they were always ready to serve.

Balancing full-time jobs and family life, both women still found the time and energy to volunteer their time and talents at HJM. Many of you may remember that Mrs. Oketani worked at Ben Franklin Crafts in Waimea, while Mrs. Fujitani worked in the cafeteria at Honokaa High School. Yet, despite their busy careers, they made the temple a priority in their lives. They embodied the spirit of selflessness and dedication that has always been central to our temple.

At a time when many women of their generation did not drive, both knew how to get behind the wheel and navigate the roads. When it came time for the Paauhau women to clean the temple, Mrs. Oketani would graciously load up the women into her car and drive them to HJM, ensuring that no one was left behind. It was just one of the many ways she demonstrated her generosity and leadership.

As they reached retirement, both women continued to pour their energy into HJM. They regularly attended the Hauoli Senior Center in Honokaa and found even more ways to support the temple, always staying active and engaged. Their commitment never wavered, and even as they entered their golden years, they remained devoted to serving others.

Mrs. Fujitani was known for her no-nonsense attitude and her determination to get things done. Her strong will was complemented by her nurturing ways. She would often bring freshly cut anthuriums from her garden and adorn the temple with them, and outside by Rev. Okabe's statue. This simple but beautiful gesture was a reflection of her care and thoughtfulness.

Perhaps one of the most enduring memories we have of them is the way they sang in the Goeika Club. When they joined their voices in song, you could see the depth of their devotion in their faces. Their expressions told the story of women who sang for the love of the temple and the people they held dear.

In their later years, both women relocated to Oahu to be closer to their children. Even though they were living off-island, their hearts remained with HJM. They kept tabs on what was happening at the temple, a testament to how much HJM meant to them.

Mrs. Oketani and Mrs. Fujitani will forever be remembered as dynamic, caring women whose contributions to our temple were endless. Their legacy of service, love, and unwavering support will continue to inspire all of us who were fortunate enough to know them.

As we reflect on their lives this Women's History Month, we honor their memory and celebrate the incredible impact they had on HJM. We will always cherish the memories and the example they set for us all.

May we honor them by carrying forward the lessons they imparted through their actions, kindness, and dedication.

## UPCOMING EVENTS & SERVICES SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>TIME</u>
3/23/25	Beautification Work Day	8:00am - 10:30am
4/27/25	2025 Annual Membership Meeting*	10:00am

These are events and services that have been confirmed by HJM's Executive Team. If you have made arrangements for a service or event and do not see it listed, please leave a message at (808) 775-0965 or send an email to: [hamakuajodoexecteam@gmail.com](mailto:hamakuajodoexecteam@gmail.com)

For the booking of future events, services, and facilities, please feel free to reach out to the Executive Team at the contact info listed above.

*This calendar is being provided to avoid visitors from stopping by during private functions/services, and to prevent double bookings.*

*\*2025 Annual Membership Meeting will be held at our temple's dining hall for those planning to attend in person. Members who are unable to attend in person may attend virtually via Zoom.*



## IN APPRECIATION

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





















Mr. & Mrs. Ross Stephenson, Melody Ross, Evangeline Barney, and Craig Hirayama.



Membership dues received:

Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Lowe, Maren Lambeth, Sandy Takahashi, Mr. & Mrs. Destry Matsui, Melody Ross, Evangeline Barney, Austin Kehrer, A.A. Yoshikatsu Kehrer, and Craig Hirayama.

### CONTACT INFORMATION REQUEST

    	NAME
    	ADDRESS
    	PHONE
    	EMAIL

If you have recently moved, changed your phone number or updated your email address, we kindly request that you provide us with your new contact information, particularly if you are a member or if your loved one's final resting place is at our cemetery or their urn is stored in our hondo.

We have discovered that we lack contact information for many of the deceased, making it challenging to reach their descendants regarding the upkeep of their gravesites or urns.

Please reach out to us by leaving a voicemail message at (808) 775-0965 or via sending an email to: [contact@hamakuajodominion.org](mailto:contact@hamakuajodominion.org)

### CONTRIBUTIONS & SUBMISSIONS

We welcome your articles, photos, and ideas for our newsletter! Whether you have an interesting story, a memorable photo, or a unique idea you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you.

Please submit your materials in Word, PDF, JPEG, or PNG formats by the 15th of each month. Send your contributions to:

[contact@hamakuajodominion.org](mailto:contact@hamakuajodominion.org). If you don't have access to the internet, feel free to send them via USPS to us, too!

### VOLUNTEERS WANTED

If you are interested in volunteering at HJM, please reach out to us at (808) 775-0965 or by emailing: [contact@hamakuajodominion.org](mailto:contact@hamakuajodominion.org)

Membership is not required to be a volunteer! A positive attitude and a good work ethic is all you need. Together we can make a difference!

### SAVE THE DATE: OBON 2025

Mark your calendars! Our Obon celebration will be held on **Saturday, August 9, 2025!** We will be having a gravesite service starting at 5pm, an indoor service at 6pm, followed by our bon dance at 7pm.

We have started organizing this much beloved event and want you to help us! If you're dependable and ready to dedicate extra hours to help make this event another great success, we'd love to hear from you!

Please feel free to send us an email to: [contact@hamakuajodominion.org](mailto:contact@hamakuajodominion.org) or call us at (808) 775-0965.

*Mahalo for reading & your continued support!*

*- The Hamakua Jodo Mission  
Newsletter Committee*

*"The future belongs to those who believe in the  
beauty of their dreams." - Eleanor Roosevelt*

*For those of you that have email addresses but receive  
our newsletters via USPS, please consider saving a tree  
and a stamp by receiving them electronically. Sign up by  
sending an email to: [contact@hamakuajodominion.org](mailto:contact@hamakuajodominion.org)*

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