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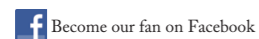
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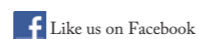
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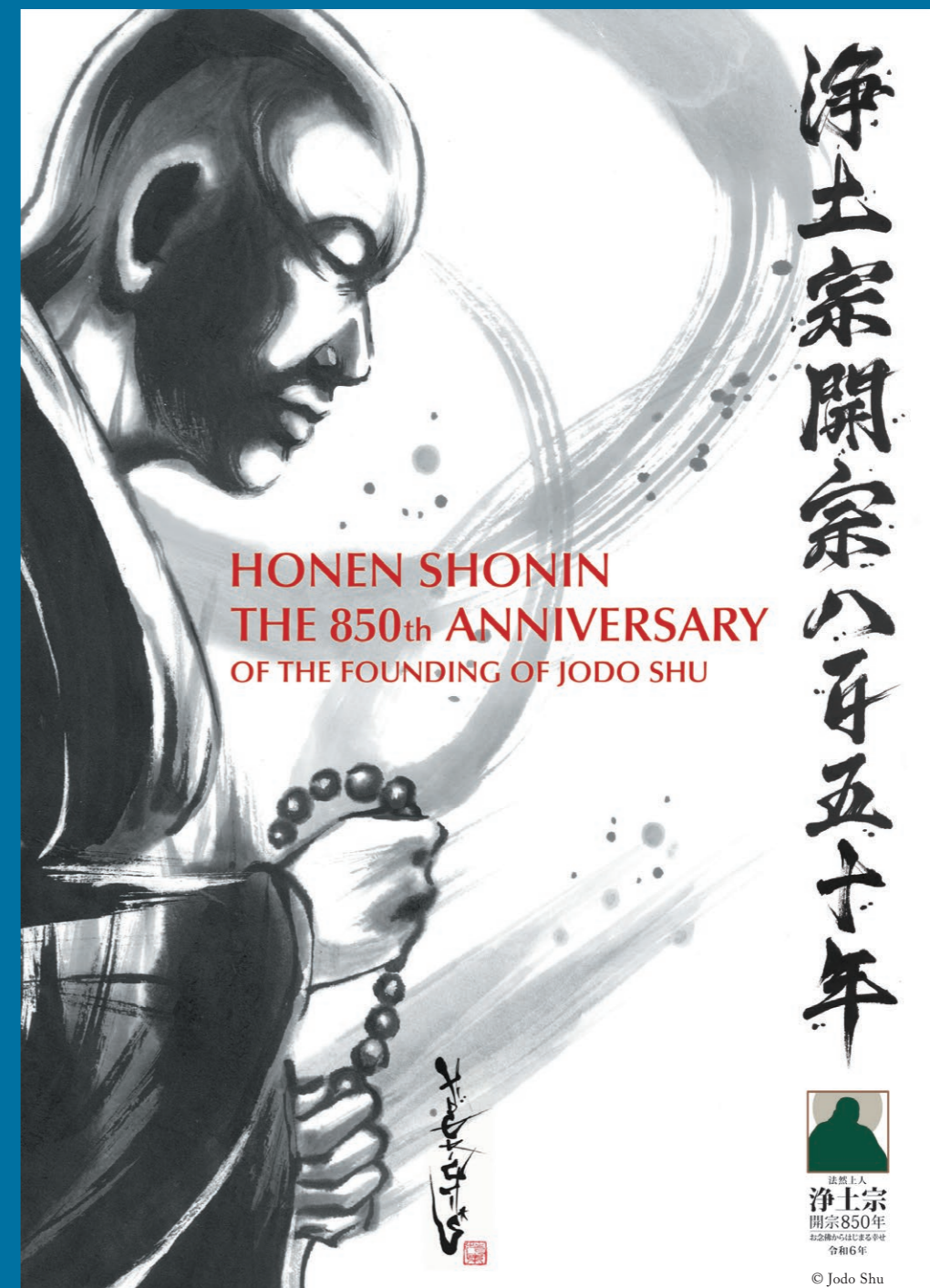
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Front Cover: Jodo Shu Honen Shonin The 850th Anniversary Poster

Pure Land Life

The Pure Land Buddhism of Honen Shonin



HONEN SHONIN
THE 850th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDING OF JODO SHU



2024 No. 37

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2023 International Kaikyo-ku Report

Hawaii



2023 Hawaii Jodo Shu Report

by Bishop Kosen Ishikawa
Jodo Mission of Hawaii

The activities of the Hawaii Jodo Shu this year were planned in conjunction with the 850th anniversary of the founding of Jodo Shu and for the pre-event called “Omachi-uke” for the year 2024. Omachi-uke is the term to mean “pre-event” as we await the celebration. Since this anniversary is held once in 50 years which is considered to be “once in a lifetime,” many pre-events were held this year in addition to the commemorative events next year. As we welcomed this anniversary, Hawaii Jodo Shu had planned the following events as commemorative projects for the upcoming 850th anniversary.

1. Dharma Light Relay Service at Jodo Mission on May 20, 2023
2. Translation and exhibition of the illustrated biography of Honen Shonin
3. 850th Anniversary pilgrimage tour to Chion-in and Japan trip from October 5 to 13, 2023
4. Publication of a collection of words of prayers
5. Publication of a collection of Dharma Talks by ministers
6. 850th Anniversary Celebration and 130th Anniversary since the first Jodo Shu ministers’ arrival to Hawaii.

Among them, we have completed two projects this year. The first successful event was the Dharma Light Relay Service which marked a kick-off for the 850th anniversary celebration on May 9, 2023. This first took place at Seiryuji temple in Mount Hiei which has been well-known as the place where Honen Shonin encountered the verse by the Chinese Pure Land Master Shandao. This verse made Honen Shonin decide to found Jodo Shu in 1175. Then Honen Shonin descended to the city and later stayed at Yoshimizu (currently Chionin Temple) where he dedicated himself to the spread of Nenbutsu teachings. Thus, Nenbutsu spread gradually and was transmitted from person to person from generation to generation. We call this transmission of Nenbutsu as transmission of “Dharma Light.” In recognition of Honen Shonin’s initial transmission of Dharma Light from Seiryuji Temple, young Jodo Shu ministers carried a lit candle on foot from Seiryuji to Chionin Temple where many representatives from various districts got to-



Dharma Light Relay Service at the Jodo Mission of Hawaii on May 20, 2023



Dharma Light was passed to each representative from four islands

gether to receive this light. As I was able to attend this service and receive this Dharma Light, we observed the Dharma Light Relay Ceremony at the Jodo Mission of Hawaii on May 20, 2023, to pass this light to other temples and members in

Hawaii. During the service, members received candles of “Namu Amida Butsu.”

At the same time, we established karmic connections with Amida Buddha by writing down “Namu Amida Butsu” after reciting the Nenbutsu. This is called the “Kechien-Ky-omyo registry” or “karmic connection registry” of Nenbutsu devotees. This registry was started with Honen Shonin’s foremost disciple Genchi Shonin who expressed his devotion to his master by having a standing statue of Amida Buddha carved in his memory on a certain one-year memorial service. Inside the carving were discovered sheets of paper on which were written as many as 46,000 names of devotees who were karmically connected to the statue. This registry attests that many people who wished to be born in the Pure Land created a strong bond with Honen Shonin’s teachings and recited Nenbutsu with deep appreciation. We’d like to continue to encourage people to participate in the Reiwa Edition Registry until next June 2024.

The other major event was the Hawaii Jodo Shu Pilgrimage Tour which took place in October 2023. Originally, we planned to attend the grand opening ceremony of Chionin after completion of the reroofing in 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from traveling for three years. Thus, we were overjoyed and excited whilst planning this trip. By having many meetings with Kintetsu and participants, we finalized our schedule based on our participants’ interests. 25 members including 3 ministers participated in the tour which included staying in Kyoto for 7 nights. Also, four other members including HCJM President Leonard Chow partially joined. The highlight of the tour was attending both the 850th commemorative service officiated by Chief Abbot Yuishin Ito and the World Honen Meeting 850 for which ministers, members, and supporters from aboard and Japan got together. I was so grateful for these rare opportunities and moved around to meet some people for the first time because they were very familiar as I had met them online many times but I had never met them in person.

This 850th commemoration event gave us a great opportunity to strengthen our connection with our Dharma friends in the world including our former ministers of Hawaii and current officers and ministers of Jodo Shu. I’d like to express my sincerest appreciation to Jodo Shu and Jodo Shu Kaikyo Shinko Kyokai (Association for the Promotion of Jodo Shu) for sponsoring the world conference. At the same time, I’d like to thank the ministers and participants for making this trip very special and memorable. It is my hope through my sermons and messages in the future to share very interesting parts of the tour and the depth



Visited Fushimi Inari Taisha after one day tour to Nara



All the participants from Hawaii with Jodo Shu dignitaries during the Honen World Meeting 850

of Buddhist history one by one. At the same time, I’d like to plan another tour for our members to have interesting opportunities for temple experiences in Japan in the future.

North America



Our 2023 temple activities

By Rev. Kodo Tanaka
Jodoshu North America Buddhist Missions

Since its ground-up construction at 442 E. 3rd Street in Los Angeles, Jodoshu North America has been providing religious services for thirty years in the Little Tokyo area. However, the building’s location at the edge of Skid Row meant security of the temple and its congregation was always of utmost concern. Unfortunately, as the nearby homeless population increased at a rapid rate, our temple’s surrounding neighborhood has been deteriorating year by year. We remain sympathetic to the needs of the unhoused community, however, drug use, sanitation concerns, graffiti, vandalism—and even fires and the potential for arson—are a daily reality for our temple. As a result, guaranteeing the safety of the building and our congregants has become a great challenge. In response to these issues, we have been working with some of our worshippers on a plan to relocate the temple to a safe location in the South Bay where the majority of our congregation resides.

This spring, our temple took a long-awaited first step in this regard. In appreciation of the sanctuary where we united in our Pure Land practice of reciting “Namu Amida Butsu” together for the past 30 years, we observed Spring Higan Service with about 60 congregants on Sunday, March 26th as the last service at the Little Tokyo location. After Spring Higan Service in March 2023, we vacated the property at 442 E. 3rd Street, Los Angeles, at the end of April and moved to a temporary office in Torrance. While trying to locate a new site for our temple, we have held two regular temple services, Obon in July and Autumn Higan in September, at Torrance Cultural Arts Center. For individual services, such as memorial anniversary services, rituals, and blessings, we have been visiting our members’ houses to hold them.

In the Jodo Shu Buddhist sangha, we encourage people to practice the daily recitation of Nenbutsu. It is to say “Namu Amida Bu” ten times with the palms of our hands put together. It is simple. Although very simple, it is not easy to encourage others to feel like doing so. It would be easier to understand why if I put myself in others’ shoes and walk a mile. For instance, would I listen to advice like “Tidy up your room!” given by one who is always messing up his room? No. Even though the content of his message is right, I would not accept it, “You are the last person who could say that!” When it comes to learning a lesson, it matters who says it much more than what is said. When applying this, I should humbly recite Nenbutsu first to encourage others to do so.

We all have a purpose in buying food and clothes, like “This is highly nutritious and good for my body” or “This would suit me very well.” When you find they are not, you will return them. This is the user’s perspective on



Bon Segaki Service at Torrance Cultural Arts Center

merchandise. If you look for a purpose in reciting Nenbutsu, you would want to know its effect and to bear this question in



Spring High-Last Service at Little Tokyo Temple

mind, “What happens if you recite Namu Amida Butsu?” Honen Shonin is said to have told his disciples frequently, “While living, the merit of daily Nenbutsu accumulates. When death knocks, I will attain birth in the Pure Land owing to Amida Buddha’s compassion. To me, there are no worries about life and death.” This message never fails to make me question my resolution to recommend Nenbutsu to others.

Buddhist sutras teach us that encountering Buddhism is as rare as a piece of driftwood suddenly appearing before a blind turtle drowning in the ocean. Imagine you are drowning alone and desperately trying to float on the waves. A small boat appears before you and the sailor finds you drowning. He throws a rope to you. What would you do? Would you ask him, “Hey, is this rope, OK? Looks very old!” or “Do you have another that is thicker and more durable?” No, you would just cling to that rope with all your might.

We can neither overcome the sufferings of aging, illness, and death nor time-travel to the past to fix wrong conduct that caused ongoing regrets. In addition, we may suffer from economic challenges, complex family or social relationships, and so forth. It seems these worries become bigger as we grow older. If so, living this life is like carrying a load of worries on our backs, which keep getting heavier. It feels that Honen Shonin’s message tells us not only about how meritorious Nenbutsu is but also how important it is to internalize faith in Nenbutsu, and thereby, gain the strength and relief to live this life with all its worries. The teachings of Hōnen are not confined to a room or building. Indeed, we continue to believe that our faith has a home in the warm, vibrant, and resolute hearts of our congregation.

Brazil



News from South America

By Bishop Ryoho Sasaki
Jodo Shu South America Missions

When we think about and reflect upon our Jodoshu missionary work in South America, we instinctively take a deep breath and remembering our past, look upon today’s changes and the steps needed to be taken towards the future. Amid all this, we are driven to think about happiness: what it is and what it means. The answer obviously doesn’t come simply and easily in a few brief words. If one looks around, the risks and concerns of the COVID pandemic simply disappeared, being shifted by the news of conflicts and war arising in many parts of the world, not to mention those incidents unreported or simply ignored. Climate changes have already become tragic, affecting so many in the



ground-breaking ceremony

world and unfortunately, the response towards the problem is not based upon a spirit of solidarity. Given all this, one could say that's impossible to deal with all these issues and there's nothing we can do about it. Au contraire, there's a lot we can do, and we can start with things within our reach.

Generational changes naturally force traditional habits and costumes to adapt to new times. It always generates discussions in the community on what ought to change and what ought to be preserved. To the more traditionalists of the bunch, there is relief in knowing that respect and gratitude for ancestors along with reverence for religious precepts stay unchanged. Those who are more inclined towards change have taken steps in the way these traditions have adapted within the family and community for the sake of their own viability. Either way, we encounter a belief which we trust a lot: a community and its leaders must know themselves and what they're doing. If they stay concerned only with preserving, there will come a moment when they have no idea what they are preserving for.

The celebrations of the Jodoshu Denomination 850th anniversary, along with the 70th years of missionary works in South America have already started. Recently, a Brazilian delegation was in Japan taking part in ceremonies and conferences to mark the event, to which we express our gratitude to the participants, organizers and especially the former missionaries who made exceptional efforts for the event to proceed smoothly. The program included a pilgrimage which whilst reciting the Nenbutsu, the name of the Buddha Amida, passed through various historical sites that held religious relevance and influenced the cultural character of Buddhist teachings.

These events certainly brought a strong incentive for reflection by both individual and collective realms on issues of ethnic origins, way of thinking and changes for the modern times. To realign the cultural and religious legacy for new generations, the doctrine of the Buddhist teachings should become a less ethnic centered tradition in order to shape itself into a world religion again. Therefore, philosophical and religious teachings should continue to support the precepts of the tradition and maintain respect and appreciation for our ancestors. The institutional posture will naturally support modern debate on issues of environment, medical ethics, gender



ground-breaking ceremony

equality, cultural minorities, and longevity, among others.

Where is the happiness mentioned earlier? It won't be there if one excludes some to privilege others. The only way to truly find it is to think about including everything and everyone. The teachings of the Buddha demonstrate this point. Reciting His Name, practicing the Nenbutsu provides us with the harmony necessary to realize that such happiness was always there, and is actually right there, right in front of us.

Australia



Selflessness

By Rev. Tetsuya Wilson
Jodo Shu Buddhism Community of Australia

Next year will mark 20 years of my missionary work in Australia. During this time, I have carried out many activities to spread the teachings of Honen. And, in doing so, I have come to realize that I have gained much in the way of human understanding. In particular, the ceremonies that I carry out at the Japanese Cemeteries of Cowra and Thursday Island have shown me the value of selflessness.

Against the brutal backdrop of World War 2, I gained a new understanding of the motives of the Japanese Prisoners of War who were held captive in Cowra, New South Wales. For the past two years, at the request of the Cowra Breakout Association, I have been conducting the memorial service for the Japanese Prisoners of War buried in the Japanese Cemetery in Cowra. Seventy-nine years ago, Cowra was the site of a prisoner of war camp. One thousand Japanese soldiers were imprisoned there. At midnight on the fourth of August 1944, they staged the largest escape attempt by prisoners of



Ambassador Yamagami Shingo explaining the motives for the POW breakout



Plaques engraved with the names of the POWs in the Japanese Cemetery

The "people were suffering calamitous food shortages, with malnutrition and starvation an ever-present problem" (Yamagami). The young Japanese POWs would have been distressed at the plight of their families and haunted by the fact that they were well fed and well looked after by the Australian army. These young sons wanted to return to Japan to protect their loved ones. Their duty to their families rather than a national fanaticism was the motive behind the breakout according to Yamagami.

I was heartened by Yamagami's explanation. Now, when I face the many graves of those young soldiers and intone the sacred Buddhist prayers and recite the Nenbutsu, I imagine the happy faces of ordinary young men surrounded by the love



Ceremony at the Japanese Cemetery at Cowra

war in modern history. Within hours, 234 Japanese prisoners had been killed by machine gun fire. Four Australian guards had also been killed. It was a tragic event. Historians had always maintained that despite knowing that such an attempt would be futile, the Japanese were driven on by a national fanaticism, a sense of shame in being captured. However, at a reception held after the ceremony, the former Japanese Ambassador, Mr Yamagami Shingo challenged this long held perception. His view was that by 1944, Japan was in dire straits. Air raids were dropping bombs all over Japan and defeat was imminent.



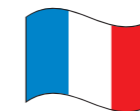
Reciting sacred Buddhist prayers and Nenbutsu at Japanese Cemetery on Thursday Island

of their families. Families to whom they were so desperate to return to.

One week after the mid-winter ceremony in Cowra, I perform an Obon Ceremony in the tropical heat of the Japanese Cemetery on Thursday Island. There are 700 graves here. Here too, almost all of them are the graves of young Japanese men. Similar to the young POWs in Cowra, these young men also never returned to their families in Japan. However, it was not war that brought them to the shores of Australia, it was the lure of the pearling industry which began in the late 19th century. As pearl divers they hoped to earn enough money to send back to their families. However, diving in deep waters in those days was a very dangerous occupation. Cyclones and the bends claimed the lives of hundreds of divers. Yet despite this, they were undeterred in their resolve to better the lives of their families in the villages back home.

They say that we should learn from the past. When we look at the actions of the POWs and the pearl divers, we cannot help but recognise their selflessness. Their selflessness gave them the courage to sacrifice their own lives for others. We in the present should learn from them and continually do that which is selfless.

France



Activities of Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center in the year 2023

By Rev. Koryu Koso
Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center

In Europe, when engaging in our activities of spreading the teachings of the Buddha and the teachings of the Nenbutsu by Honen Shonin, the founder of Jodo Shu, our Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center usually faces a basic problem: to make people aware of the fundamental questions "What is Buddhism?" and "What is Nenbutsu?"

I believe that, when explaining to European people the teachings of the Buddha and of the Nenbutsu, we should do it in an easy way to make people understand that they are an important foundation for our lives as human beings, and we should strive to put them into practice and apply them in our daily life.

In fact, this basic question about Buddhism and Nenbutsu has been occupying my mind since I was a child, as I was born and raised in a Buddhist temple.

I have been entrusted with the mission of teaching in Europe by Jodo Shu, which makes me feel a strange connection and gratitude. Thanks to you, I am seriously confronting such issues every day. Along with this, a deep thought of self-reflection and repentance arose.

The fact that the Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center was established in this way and has been able to continue for more than ten years is thanks not only to the understanding and support of Jodo Shu and its temples, but also to the heartfelt trust and



Attendees of the Thursday Island Obon Ceremony



Obon

cooperation of the late Ven. Narita Aritsune, the late Ven. Mano Ryukai, the late General Superintendent of the Brazilian Church, Ven. Sasaki Yomei and the members of our European Center.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of you.

I don't have enough language skills which are indispensable for teaching abroad, and it is still difficult for me to convey what I want to convey. I feel that it is a weak point. However, at present I am grateful to have an assistant priest who is German, has a strong linguistic ability and is a deep believer in Buddhism and Honen Shonin, so I have hope for the development of further activities to spread Nenbutsu and Buddhist teaching in Europe in the future.

Our association holds a meeting called "Buddhist Gathering" once a month. There are not many people from Jodo Shu, but there are people from various Buddhist traditions. We are open to anyone who wants to come into contact with the teachings of Buddha and Nenbutsu.

Now, I would like to introduce our "Buddhist Gathering" activities in 2022.

In January, we held the annual New Year's ceremony for the first time in the New Year, where people drink "o-toso" (Japanese sake with herbs) in the Japanese style.

The Nehan-e (Nirvana ceremony) in February had to be cancelled due to ill health.

In March, we celebrated O-Higan by reciting Nenbutsu in memory of our ancestors and those who have passed away. Members from Germany also participated via Zoom.



Hanamatsuri (Flower Festival)

In April, we enjoyed the Hanamatsuri (Flower Festival): unlike other events, it has a gorgeous and joyful atmosphere. Participants celebrated by pouring sweet tea on the statue of a little Buddha in the flower hall. The flower festival can also be considered to be the birthday

of each single one of us. This year, my daughter and her husband participated with their young child.

In May, we participated in the nonstop-one-hour Nenbutsu meeting "Fudan Nenbutsu". In June, the gathering was also cancelled due to illness.

In July, for the first time after three or four years, we held a social BBQ at our Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center. Everyone had great fun chatting.

In August, we held the O-Bon ceremony and celebration to honor the merits of our ancestors.

In September, we held the autumn O-Higan meeting with a study session.

In October, we took part in the nonstop-Nenbutsu-recitation and held a Juya- ceremony. We closed the year in December by holding a memorial service to reflect on the passing year and express our gratitude. Recently, I have been using PowerPoint for presentations, which is useful.

The Nenbutsu of each participant has a goal and can be felt physically. It is fantastic. I would like to have such a "Buddhist Gathering" not only in Paris but also in other cities. Thank you for your continued support.



Nenbutsu meeting

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

HAWAII

Sueichi Kawashima

Member of Hamakua Jodo Mission of Hawaii

At 95 years young, Sueichi Kawashima is the oldest member at Hamakua Jodo Mission and remains one of the most dedicated members in our congregation. After serving in the Army, he spent his career as a truck driver, before becoming a carpenter for the State of Hawaii, all while tending to his family's taro farm in Waipio Valley. He still found extra time to be an aikido and judo instructor, too!

Mr. Kawashima served on the temple's Board of Directors for many years. He recently decided to "retire"

and not run for re-election to spend more time taking care of his wife Betty (they were married at the temple in 1950), and to pursue his hobbies such as gardening that keep him active and sharp as a tack.

He was recently featured in the documentary film "Echoes of Waipio Valley Taro Farmers" that premiered at the historic Honokaa People's Theatre. His wisdom, cheerful disposition, and volunteerism represents what members of all ages should aspire to be and what makes Hamakua Jodo Mission so special!



SOUTH AMERICA

Inagaki Family, from Matelandia, Parana

Please meet Mr. Hiroyuki Inagaki, his wife Mrs. Luisa and their kids, who live in Matelandia, near the world famous Iguazu Falls. His family is a old member of the Maringa Nippakuji Temple since early days of the missionary work at the state. Very shyly he mentions that his late father Mr Yasuo and his brothers donated the Peroba woodwork used to build the temple. It became a touristic and cultural landmark, using an ancient technique that used no nails in its joints.

His grandfather Mr. Shoichi and his wife Mrs. Kimiko, arrived in Brazil in 1938, coming from Okayama, Japan. They all settled in Matelandia in 1958 where the whole family dedicated to agriculture and poltry. The eldest son Yasuo, along with his wife Mrs. Sumiko, became

a community leader and they are dearly remembered to this day by his friends.

A ceremony for the 50th year of passing of his grandfather will be held next year at the very altar that shelter the Buddha Amida, built with the same wood that brings found memories of his childhood, that mingles with his family history. That involves so many other pioneering families of Parana state. We wish the pioneering spirit bless the future generations with wisdom and compassion.

A Long Journey Forward.



NORTH AMERICA

Nancy Doiuchi

Member of Jodo Shu North America Buddhist Missions

My name is Nancy Doiuchi and I am a member of Jodoshu North America Buddhist Missions. My father was a longtime member going back to the 1960's when the temple was on Jefferson Blvd. As a young child, I was not aware of my father's temple activities but later learned that he served on the board at one time and even received a certificate of appreciation from Jodo Shu which I framed to hang on my wall. In my darkest days when I was losing my father and mother, I knew only to turn to Amida Buddha and His compassion to help me

with my grief. After receiving much spiritual guidance and support, I wanted to become active in temple activities as a way of honoring my parents and expressing gratitude to the Jodo Shu ministers. Touching memories and experiences of Goju Soden and the 800th Anniversary will stay with me forever. My future desire is to follow in my parents' footsteps and journey to the Pure Land. With my Buddhist faith and reciting "Namu Amida Butsu," I know I will get there.



FRANCE

Ishihara Chihoko

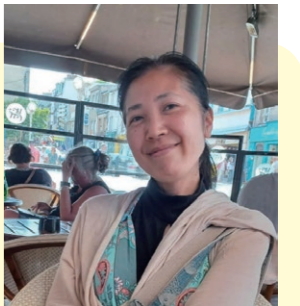
Member of Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center

Nice to meet you, my name is Chihoko Ishihara.

I learned about the presence of Jodo Shinshu in Paris through an encounter with Koso-san during a friend's housewarming celebration. In our conversation, I felt that the teachings of Buddhism, combined with the philoso-

phy I was studying at the time, deepened my understanding, sparking an interest in Buddhism. I believe these teachings serve as a good opportunity to broaden one's perspective.

While I am an occasional and sceptic visitor, I look forward to engaging in conversations. Thank you in advance for your welcome.



AUSTRALIA

Ms Noriko Kambe

Member of Jodoshu Buddhist Community of Australia

My family originally belonged to Jodo Shu so when I heard that there was a Jodo Shu temple in Brisbane, I became Interested. But, I couldn't go there easily. However, my father passed away two years ago, and due to the coronavirus pandemic, I was unable to return to Japan and attend his funeral. So, when I was thinking about what

I could do here, I heard that they were copying sutras at Amidaji Temple, so I decided to participate in the copying. After copying the sutras, I felt calm and peaceful. I also became interested in Buddhism. That's why I became a member of Amidaji and enjoy participating in the ceremonies held here.

