



Ohigan Message  
 “Reflect and appreciate the Buddha dharma”

# Jushin

# 樹心

Volume 10 Issue 5  
 October – November 2020

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Bishop K. Kawawata

Autumn Ohigan at the Kaneohe Higashi Hongwanji this year was much different from “normal” because of the health situation faced by all of Hawaii. Due to governmental pandemic protocols our September 27, 2020 services were limited; we do not yet have a minister in residence and while the Hawaii Betsuin has shifted to online services and events, Bishop Kenjun Kawawata agreed to travel to Kaneohe to deliver our Ohigan service in person with his family.

In his dharma message, Bishop Kawawata addressed the reality of it all from a Shin Buddhist’s view. His twenty-plus-minute dharma message from our podium touched upon social history, democracy and capitalism as theories in action, European and Hawaii geopolitical history, economics, discrimination, and current affairs. “And we noticed that all problems begin with our own ego and pride. The eyes to see the truth is to see the world through Buddha’s teachings (and) Dharma.”

Bishop spoke about the realities of the Covid-19 pandemic still affecting us then focused all his topics together through the lens of Buddhism and Nenbutsu. “If we realize we are illuminated by the light of Buddha dharma (and) wisdom, we find out that we are so small, stupid (bombu, foolish) and trapped by our own ego. ...Buddhism is the teaching to know (our) own self, to know self is to know the world, the truth.”

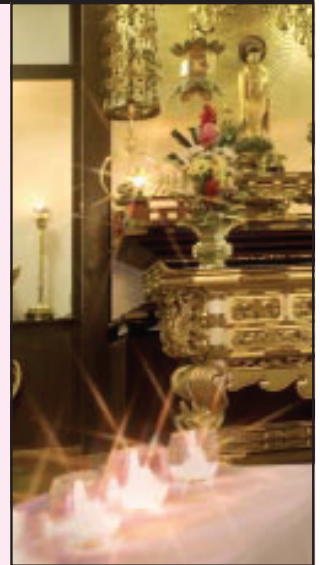
To get the temple’s altar set up for Ohigan, Bishop came on the Friday before the service to properly set up the altar and display the brocade skirtings. The Kaneohe Higashi Hongwanji thanks Bishop Kawawata for his support of our temple.

*Related article on page 3.*

## Chairperson's Message A Prisoner's "Death Row" Sentence Becomes Karma to Help Others

*Aloha Kaneohe Sangha,*

*I hope our Jushin finds each of you and your loved ones safe. Especially during these times of uncertainty where we often find ourselves at home frequently watching or obsessing over the news, I'd like to instead share a bit of uplifting writing, and an invitation for you to immerse yourself in reading something positive and uplifting.*



A book club to which I belong recently read the book, "The Buddhist on Death Row, how one man found light in a darkest place," written by David Sheff. This is a non-fiction account of Jarvis Jay Masters who was convicted of a crime that occurred over 30 years ago and has been appealing to have his case over-turned for wrongful incarceration, which has been unsuccessful to date. *(Please bear in mind that this chronology in prison takes place over a span of 30 years, a fact that makes this book, his story, even more remarkable.)*

Beginning from his youth, Master's life had been riddled with abuse and crime (car theft, armed robbery), which resulted in juvenile detention and ultimately to San Quentin for murder. While in solitary confinement he was torn by rage, anxiety, headaches, seizures and panic attacks. Through a criminal investigator and efforts from people advocating criminal reform he is introduced to Tibetan meditation. Though extremely difficult at first as memories of his early life kept surfacing which he could not face, he eventually mastered its reflective benefit. As he was moved from Death Row to other levels of incarceration he was able to

communicate and engage with other inmates. He was successful in counseling others on avoiding violence, averting explosive situations, and he protected a gay inmate from what may go on in such prison situations. He even helped a prison guard face his inner demons and guided him out of the path to suicide.

Masters' selfless actions in prison catches the attention of a renown lama, Chagdud Tulku Rinponche, who tells Masters that it is his karma to be in this facility for it is an opportunity to see and

experience the worse sufferings of Man; that it is an opportunity to treat the suffering with compassion. Rinponche tells Masters that he feels that Masters is an enlightened teacher and that Rinponche would like to perform an empowerment ceremony. In participating in this ceremony Masters would take refuge in the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and "become a Buddhist."

Masters is flummoxed. He never considered himself enlightened much less a teacher. He agonizes thinking, "A Buddhist is supposed to work to end suffering, but what about the

*"A Buddhist is supposed to work to end suffering, but what about the suffering I caused? Rinponche doesn't understand how violent I've been... I don't think I'm worthy."*

**Jarvis Jay Masters  
Inmate on Death Row**

*Continued on page 4.*

## Hoonko service 10am October 25, streamed live

Each year, the most important service observed by the world-wide Higashi Hongwanji organization and millions of Jodo Shinshu followers is the Hoonko service. Hoonko, held in late November, is the annual memorial service for our founder Shinran Shonin who died on November 28, 1226, in Kyoto.

This year the Kaneohe Higashi Hongwanji will be observing the service at 10 AM Hawaii Standard Time, October 25, and it will be broadcast live on the Facebook platform. You won't need a Facebook account, just search for <https://www.facebook.com/HigashiHongwanjiMission>.

Members are very welcome to attend although capacity will be limited as we must observe all health protocols including face masks, required social separation, seating demarcation, and, hand sanitizing.



Shinran Shonin (1173 – 1263)

Because Hoonko is a special ceremony, the Hawaii District plans to officiate this Kaneohe service with all of Oahu's Higashi ministers chanting together in unison and harmony.

It will be a special time for us to express gratitude and listen to Shinran's teachings. In the traditional Jodo calendar of events, Hoonko marks the end of a year and the start of a new year.

In the printed Jushin, we have included an envelope for readers' consideration. Gojikai members and the larger community depend upon our temple. The temple relies on its Gojikai and community for support year-round.

We will appreciate any contribution large or small, to keep sharing the Buddha's wisdom. Arigato in gassho.



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Hoonko

### “Reflect and appreciate the Buddha dharma”

**At the traditional start of the Ohigan service, Bishop Kenjun Kawawata began with the recitation of a Hyobyaku (aspiration) below in front of the Amida image and altar.**

“May the infinite light of wisdom and compassion so shine within us so that the errors and vanities of self may be dispelled; so shall we understand the changing nature of existence and awaken into spiritual peace.

Today, we respectfully decorate our altar that enshrines Amida Buddha and gather together to observe the Kaneohe Higashi Hongwanji's Fall Ohigan Service. We are still in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic and have many inconveniences in our daily lives but we are fortunate to have the opportunity to observe Fall Ohigan on this day. Ohigan, meaning Other Shore, is a symbol of the state of Buddha's peace of mind. On this occasion, we express our gratitude to the people who handed down the Buddha Dharma so that we are able to hear it here and now. It's a very important and rare occasion to re-encounter and hear the teaching of Sakyamuni Buddha and Shinran Shonin. May we take this opportunity to reflect and appreciate the Buddha dharma in order to enjoy meaningful and peaceful lives.

Let us be reminded that our effort to understand the teachings must be never-ending.

On this occasion, may we reconfirm our commitment to listen ever more diligently to the teaching of Buddha and Shinran Shonin.

Respectfully in Gassho,

Shaku Kenjun  
Kenjun Kawawata

## “Death Row” Sentence Becomes Karma to Help Others

*Continued from page 2.*

suffering I caused? Rinponche doesn't understand how violent I've been...I don't think I'm worthy.”

When the day of the empowerment ceremony takes place and he is escorted to the visitation room, his mind “tricks” his sense of reality and he suddenly imagines that he is walking to his death. His mind returns to reality and surmises that by becoming a Buddhist, he has essentially experienced the death of his past and experienced a rebirth of sorts.

**I pause now in this story to ask each of us, “What is it to be a Buddhist? Do you consider yourself a Buddhist?”**

My thoughts are that the term Buddhist is a term of convenience, to categorize those who believe and live by Buddhist precepts and practices. Buddhism is not a religion but rather, is a philosophy of life. It is never absolute, judgmental or punishing. It is neither magical, surreal nor requires one to take a leap of faith to explain unexplainable phenomena. It is realistic, intelligent and kind. It is said that the Buddha himself stated as he lay dying, that one should not trust all that he says as the Truth and if his followers should discover a new truth, to follow it.

There are only four basic tenets, which define what Buddha taught. These four teachings or truths are what is common to all Buddhist sects and schools of thought. These are:

### **1. All things are impermanent.**

All things are constantly changing. That is because the existence of all things originates from other existences or phenomenon, which is called “dependent origination.” Understanding, awakening to, and accepting impermanence is essential to understanding the Dharma.

### **2. All things are devoid of independent existence.**

Because of the truth of dependent origination, all things are empty of substance including such things as permanent self or ego.

### **3. Everything causes suffering.**

Because of the impermanent nature of all things and phenomena, nothing can be held onto in this world. In this sense, everything is the cause of our sufferings.

### **4. Nirvana is peace.**

Buddhism encourages us to accept the truth of life while dealing with sufferings, which will lead us to attain Nirvana. This is the declaration that Nirvana exists as the state in which the afflictions in our mind are overcome. To come to a true awakening of the first two is to arrive at Nirvana.

This is an inspirational story of a man who is engaged in helping his fellow inmates in understanding themselves, others, and make sense of their plight in Life. Masters also continues to live with his pain, disappointments and reality (including the reality of the legal system).

He is truly an admirable “Buddhist.”

**Namu Amida  
Butsu**

**Mary Matsuda**

*Editor's Note:*  
“The Buddhist on Death Row, How One Man Found Light in a Darkest Place” was written by David Sheff. Released in May 2020 by publisher Simon & Shuster, it should be available at local bookstores or online.

Jushin publication is published  
bi-monthly by the  
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