

REVEREND CHIKAI YOSEMORI

Reverend Chikai Yosemite —the 14th bishop of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii and the first of Okinawan ancestry (his grandparents are from Kumejima Island) — retired earlier this year after 11 years of leading the largest Buddhist sect in Hawai'i.

The Waipahu-born Yosemite spent his formative years in Tokyo, Japan. He graduated from Tachikawa High School and attended Keio University, where he earned bachelor's degrees in both Japanese literature and law. He then attended Ryukoku University in Kyoto where he earned a master's degree in Shin Buddhism.

Yosemite returned to Hawai'i and was assigned to Maui's Pai'a Hongwanji, which was forced to close when the sugar plantation shut down.

With a new temple needed, Yosemite, alongside the congregation of the Makawao Hongwanji, literally built a new church. They spent the next two years hammering, sawing, sanding and painting until their spiritual home in Upcountry Maui was completed.

In 1981, Yosemite was reassigned to O'ahu's Jikoen Hongwanji — the temple which his father Rev. Chiro Yosemite established in 1938.

Although life in urban Honolulu was different from the plantation lifestyle of Maui, Yosemite and his congregation still faced challenges. When they learned that the lease rent for the land under their temple would soar from \$5,000 per year to \$5,000 per month, an ambitious three-and-a-half-year effort to raise \$1,080,000 was underway. With the support of temple members and the community, the Jikoen Hongwanji was able to purchase the temple land in fee.

In the mid-1990s, the Hawaii Kyodan — the statewide Honpa Hongwanji mission — began looking for a new bishop. Yosemite's past accomplishments did not go unnoticed and he was named the 14th bishop of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii in 1996.

As bishop, he oversaw the establishment of the Pacific Buddhist Academy, America's first Buddhist high school, which graduated its first class this past May. During his tenure as bishop, he's also participated in the centennial celebrations of several temples — many of which are tied to Hawai'i's sugar and pineapple history. Although these aging congregations are small and struggling, Yosemite has been heart-warmed by their dedication in keeping their respective temples open.

Post-retirement, Yosemite is anything but retired. He has already been invited to join several temple yard-cleaning groups and will dedicate most of his time to strengthening the foundation of the Pacific Buddhist Academy, as well as support the Hongwanji Mission School, which accepts students from pre-school to grade eight.

A long term goal, one that the administration hopes to be realized within the next decade, is to merge the HMS and PBA into one school.

Reverend Yosemite and his wife Chihoko, have two children: JoAnn (Grant Ito) and Eric (Dawn) and have two granddaughters: Kayla and Sydnie.



四海兄弟

沖繩移民五周年記念之碑