

SOTO MISSION OF AIEA  
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# TAIHEIJI BULLETIN



JULY & AUGUST 2025

## Taiheiji Bon Dance is returning!

Friday, August 8  
Saturday, August 9

After a one-year hiatus, the Soto Mission of Aiea is delighted to announce the return of its annual Bon Dance festival. Mark your calendars—this year's Bon Dance will be held on **Friday, August 8**, and **Saturday, August 9**, 2025, on the temple grounds.

The Bon Dance was regrettably canceled in 2024 due to delays in the construction of the new **Soto Mission of Aiea Activity Center**, which also impacted essential infrastructure projects, including the repaving of the temple parking lot. With construction now back on track and major improvements nearing completion, Taiheiji will be ready to welcome the community to one of its most cherished and festive traditions.

"We are so happy to bring Bon Dance back to Taiheiji," said Bishop Shuji Komagata, resident minister of the Soto Mission of Aiea. "The cancellation last year was disappointing, but the improvements being made will serve our community for generations to come. This year's Bon Dance will be a meaningful celebration of resilience, renewal, and gratitude."

Schedule for August 8 and August 9

6:00 p.m. Taiko Performances by Somei Taiko

6:30 p.m. Bon Dance begins

8:00 p.m. Okinawan Bon Dance

As always, the festival will feature two joyful evenings of traditional Bon dancing around the yagura, with spirited taiko drumming, delicious food for hungry guests, and opportunities for fellowship under the summer sky. The newly paved parking lot will make access easier and safer for all attendees.

The Bon Dance is a time to honor and remember our ancestors while coming together in joyful unity. Whether you are a longtime dancer or joining for the first time, all are welcome to participate in this vibrant expression of culture and community.

Read on to learn more about the 2025 Bon Dance Plant and Flower Sale and well as Bon Dance practice.



# Plant and Flower Sale at Bon Dance!

As the community gathers once again to celebrate Bon Dance at Taiheiji, another favorite tradition will also be making its return—the annual **Plant and Flower Sale**. Held on **Friday, August 8**, and **Saturday, August 9**, the sale will take place during both evenings of the Bon Dance, offering a colorful and vibrant selection of plants and flowers for attendees to browse and purchase.



The Plant and Flower Sale has become a popular attraction, drawing in plant lovers, home gardeners, and casual browsers alike. A wide variety of healthy and beautiful plants will be available, including potted ornamentals, flowering plants, succulents, and more. Whether you're looking to brighten your home, find a thoughtful gift, or simply enjoy the beauty of nature, there will be something for everyone.

In preparation for the event, Taiheiji is kindly asking for **donations of plants and flowers** from members and friends of the temple. Potted plants, rooted cuttings, flowering arrangements, and garden-ready greenery are all welcome. Every contribution will help make the sale a success and support Taiheiji's ongoing activities.

All proceeds from the sale will go toward supporting the temple and the construction of the Soto Mission of Aiea Activity Center. This is a wonderful opportunity to support the community while sharing in the beauty and joy that plants bring to our lives.



For more information about the Plant and Flower Sale or to coordinate donations, please contact **Corinne Gytoku** at 808-223-5735.

Let's make this year's Bon Dance a celebration filled with not only music and movement, but also the natural beauty and spirit of generosity that plants and flowers so perfectly represent.

## Bon Dance Practice at Taiheiji

As the excitement builds for this summer's Bon Dance, Taiheiji will host a community-wide **Bon Dance practice on Tuesday, August 5, at 6:00 p.m.** in the temple's social hall. All are warmly invited to attend this evening of dancing, learning, and fellowship.

The practice session is a great opportunity for newcomers to learn the basic steps and for returning dancers to refresh their memories before the Bon Dance weekend. Under the guidance of knowledgeable instructors, participants will be walked through the movements of each dance in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

The goal is not perfection, but participation—everyone is encouraged to join in and have fun.

Bon Dance practices have long been a treasured tradition at Taiheiji, helping to foster a sense of connection and unity among temple members and the broader community. Practicing together allows everyone to enter the festival weekend with confidence and shared joy.

Please wear comfortable clothing and footwear suitable for dancing. No special attire is necessary, and there is no need to register in advance—just come ready to move and enjoy the evening.

We look forward to seeing you at the Bon Dance practice on August 5, as we prepare to dance together in celebration and remembrance.



# 2025 Bon Otoba Services at Taiheiji

By Bishop Shuji Komagata

The **Bon Otoba Services** at Taiheiji were held on **June 19, 21, and 22**, bringing our sangha together in solemn remembrance of loved ones who have passed. Over the course of three meaningful days, members gathered to offer incense, place otoba memorial markers, and chant sutras in honor of their ancestors. The spirit of reverence, gratitude, and community was deeply felt throughout each ceremony.



We were fortunate to be joined by **Rev. Ryohei Ishii, Rev. Hirosato Yoshida, Rev. Masataka Hoshino, Rev. Shoryu Fukagawa, and Reigen Komagata**, who generously gave their time and support to help officiate the services. Their presence and guidance brought an added sense of harmony and spiritual depth to our observances.

This Bon season carried special meaning for me personally, as it marked just over one year since the passing of my father, the late Bishop Shugen Komagata, on June 7, 2024. As many of you know, my father served this community for many years with quiet dedication and deep faith. With my mother, Faye, having passed in 2018, this past year has been a time of adjusting to life without the physical presence of either of my parents.

And yet, this past year has also taught me that our loved ones never truly leave us. While we may no longer see them or hear their voices, their presence remains—within our hearts, our thoughts, and the way we choose to live. The values they lived by—their kindness, their humility, their strength—become part of us. In that way, they continue to guide us.

**During this time of Bon**, we should all be mindful of the ways in which our ancestors continue to influence our lives. When we place the otoba, offer incense, and recite the sutras, we are not only remembering the past—we are acknowledging the ongoing connection we have with those who came before us. Their love, their sacrifices, and their example have helped shape who we are today.

As I reflect on my own parents and grandparents, I see in them qualities I aspire to live by. They faced life with quiet dignity and gave of themselves without asking for anything in return. Their lives remind me—and all of us—that we can honor our departed not only through ritual, but by striving each day to be a little more compassionate, a little more selfless, a little more mindful.

Let us carry that spirit forward throughout this Bon season and beyond. May we walk our paths with gratitude in our hearts, humility in our actions, and with the steady presence of our ancestors beside us. In remembering them, we become more fully ourselves.



# A Bon Dance Journey to Italy: Sharing Tradition Across the Globe

*By Bishop Shuji Komagata*

After completing the Soto Mission of Aiea's own Bon Services on Sunday, June 22, my wife Jaymie and I, along with three members of Somei Taiko, embarked on an extraordinary journey—one that would take us halfway around the world to share a treasured Japanese and Hawaiian tradition with new friends in Europe.

With stopovers in Vancouver and Frankfurt, we finally arrived in Italy on the afternoon of Tuesday, June 24. Our destination: *Fudenji*, a Soto Zen temple nestled in the countryside of Salsomaggiore Terme, near Parma. After 42 years in existence, Fudenji was about to hold its very first Bon Dance celebration, and we were honored to be a part of it.

The event was inspired by the vibrant Bon Dance festivals of Japan and Hawai'i—celebrations that blend remembrance, joy, and community spirit. The sangha at Fudenji, moved by this spirit, hoped to bring the same warmth and meaning to their community in Italy. I was asked to officiate a special Bon service honoring the late Rev. Tom Shuichi Kurai, the beloved former resident minister of Sozenji Temple in Montebello, California. Rev. Kurai was not only a spiritual leader but also the founding director of Fuden Daiko, Fudenji's resident taiko group. Before his passing, he asked me to carry on the legacy of Fuden Daiko—a request I accepted with deep gratitude and humility.

The days leading up to the Bon celebration were full and joyful. We rehearsed ceremonies, practiced taiko, taught Bon dances, and shared our knowledge to help decorate the *yagura* (Bon Dance tower) and string up festive *chochin* lanterns. Despite the language differences and cultural distances, there was a palpable sense of unity—of Isshin, "one heart."

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On the evening of the celebration, more than 200 temple members and guests gathered at Fudenji. The Bon Service was followed by a beautiful Bon Dance under the summer sky, and drums echoing through the hills of Parma. It was a moment of shared humanity, bridging continents and cultures through tradition, remembrance, and joy.

Our trip reminded us that the spirit of Bon—the honoring of those who came before us and the celebration of life—knows no borders. We returned home with full hearts, grateful for the opportunity to plant the seeds of Bon Dance in Italian soil.



# What is Bon?

*The following is reprinted from Soto Zen literature published by the Soto-Shu Shumicho (Soto-Shu headquarters in Tokyo, Japan.)*

The memorial services held at Obon have two meanings. One is to honor the Buddha and show reverence for one's ancestors and others who have died. The other is to express gratitude to all people to whom we are indebted, including people who are alive such as our parents, relatives, and friends.

The full expression for Obon is Urabon-e which is derived from "Ullabana," an old Indian word. According to the Bussetsu Urabon Sutra, the origin of this tradition goes back to a ceremony performed by Shakyamuni Buddha for the deceased mother of Maudgalyayana, one of the Buddha's immediate disciples. Ullabana means "hanging upside down" and it was by means of this ceremony that the suffering of that world in which she lived (the suffering was so intense it was like hanging upside down) was removed.

These days, people think that this ceremony will prolong the life of parents and remove all suffering and anguish. This is also one of the traditional holiday periods in Japan when people exchange gifts. The other traditional time is over New Years. Obon is a ceremony to respectfully honor the spirits of the ancestors; it is also to ask for the long life of our parents. In preparation for meeting the spirits, it is customary to thoroughly clean our house and put ourselves in order as if meeting guests.

## Now Accepting Items to be Included in the Upcoming Online Auction

The Soto Mission of Aiea is now accepting your donations of items that can be listed in the 4th Annual Online Auction Fundraiser! The online event is scheduled for October 2025. In years past, the auction helped raise thousands of dollars for the Soto Mission of Aiea Activity Center.

Please consider donating interesting and usable new items, collectables, and antique items to the auction. Donations of services and non tangible items—massages, hotel stays, tickets to events, or gift certificates to name a few—are also welcome!

Please contact Corinne Gytoku at 808-223-5735 to discuss whether your donation can be used in our auction. Thank you for your kokua!!!

## Dollar a Day Donation Drive

The recent facelift of the Taiheiji's website has really given the temple a broader readership and made online giving an alternative, yet effective way to contribute to Taiheiji. Please visit the temple website to learn more about Taiheiji, and participate in the new "Dollar a Day Donation Drive." Donating to the Dollar a Day Drive is a positive expression of dana (selfless giving) and helps Taiheiji look optimistically to the future in sharing the Buddha-Dharma. This tax-deductible gift is collected monthly (\$30.00). Donors will be recognized in the Taiheiji Bulletin when they sign up to participate in the Dollar a Day Donation Drive. Donors will also be recognized on the Taiheiji website, [www.sotomission.com](http://www.sotomission.com).

**Instructions:** Please enter **\$30.00** (or more if you choose) as your donation amount. This amount will be charged to your credit card each month. Please contact Bishop Shuji Komagata at 808-488-6794 for more information.

# Acknowledgement of Generous Donations Received

Aiko Karaoke School	Donation to Temple
Wendy Nagano	Funeral Service for the late Leslie Nakashima
Joe and Gertrude Nishida	New Building Construction Fund
Jude Tome	1 Year Memorial Service for the late Kazuo Ishikawa
Edwin Oka	New Building Construction Fund
Elbert Saito	New Building Construction Fund in Loving Memory of Kyohei & Haru Saito
Bruce Behnke & Steven Leong	New Building Construction Fund
Randy & Lei Kawamura	New Building Construction Fund
Diane Kazama	Donation in Loving Memory of the late Wallace Kazama
Verna Rabacal	New Building Construction Fund
Stella Uno	New Building Construction Fund
Robin & Linda Fujikawa	New Building Construction Fund in Memory of the late Leslie Nakashima
Sandra Tanaka	Memorial Services for the late Hideo & Elaine Tanaka
Wayne Komamura	Memorial Services for the late Yasushi & Shizue Komamura
Keiko Akamine	3rd Year Memorial for the late Yasu Akamine
Mae Suzuki	New Building Construction Fund
Aiea Taiheiji Kendo Club	Donation to Temple
Fukiya	Donation to Temple
Gerilyn Higa	3rd Year Memorial Service for the late Raymond Higa
Karen Maruoka	New Building Construction Fund
Waipahu Seibukan Kendo Club	Donation to Temple

## Cemetery Plots Available for Purchase

Taiheiji can help you and your family make arrangements for a final resting place in the future. Through the generous donations by temple members and supporters over the years, the Soto Mission of Aiea owns several cemetery plots at Hawaiian Memorial Park Mortuary and the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park that are available to the Taiheiji community. If you are interested in acquiring a plot for you or a loved one, please contact Bishop Shuji at 488-6794. He will be able to send you more information. Additionally, if your family has an available plot they would like to generously donate to Taiheiji, please contact Bishop Shuji. Mahalo! More information can be found at [www.sotomission.com](http://www.sotomission.com)

## Schedule of Events

### July

8	Tue	6:00 a.m.	Zazen
8	Tue	7:00 p.m.	Bon Dance Practice at Wahiawa Ryusenji
10	Thu	7:00 p.m.	Bon Dance Practice at Wahiawa Ryusenji
14	Mon	7:00 p.m.	Bon Dance Practice at Wahiawa Ryusenji
15	Tue	6:00 a.m.	Zazen
16	Wed	7:00 p.m.	Bon Dance Practice at Wahiawa Ryusenji
18	Fri	7:00 p.m.	<b>Wahiawa Ryusenji Bon Dance</b>
19	Sat	7:00 p.m.	<b>Wahiawa Ryusenji Bon Dance</b>
22	Tue	6:00 a.m.	Zazen
27	Sun	8:00 a.m.	Yagura Set up (tentative date)
28	Mon	7:00 p.m.	Bon Dance Practice at Waipahu Taiyoji
29	Tue	6:00 a.m.	Zazen
29	Tue	7:00 p.m.	Bon Dance Practice at Waipahu Taiyoji
30	Wed	7:00 p.m.	Bon Dance Practice at Waipahu Taiyoji

### August

1	Fri	6:00 p.m.	<b>Waipahu Taiyoji Bon Dance</b>
2	Sat	6:00 p.m.	<b>Waipahu Taiyoji Bon Dance</b>
5	Tue	6:00 a.m.	Zazen
5	Tue	12:30 p.m.	Hiroshima Bombing Memorial Service
6	Tue	6:00 p.m.	Bon Dance Practice at Taiheiji
8	Fri	6:00 p.m.	Taiko Performance by Somei Taiko at Aiea Taiheiji Bon Dance
8	Fri	6:30 p.m.	<b>Aiea Taiheiji Bon Dance</b>
9	Sat	6:00 p.m.	Taiko Performance by Somei Taiko at Aiea Taiheiji Bon Dance
9	Sat	6:30 p.m.	<b>Aiea Taiheiji Bon Dance</b>
10	Sun	8:00 a.m.	Yagura Breakdown
12	Tue	7:00 p.m.	Bon Dance Practice at Soto Mission of Hawaii
15	Fri	7:00 p.m.	<b>Soto Mission of Hawaii Bon Dance</b>
16	Sat	7:00 p.m.	<b>Soto Mission of Hawaii Bon Dance</b>
19	Tue	6:00 a.m.	Zazen
26	Tue	6:00 a.m.	Zazen

## 80th Memorial Service for Victims of the Hiroshima Atomic Bombing

On Tuesday, August 5, the United Japanese Society of Hawaii (UJSH) invites the public for a solemn memorial service to honor and reflect upon the lives affected by the atrocities of the Hiroshima atomic bombing. This service, held at the Hiroshima Lantern and Torii Gate Memorial, located at 2055 South Beretania Street, will mark the **80th anniversary** of that fateful day (bomb dropped on August 6, 1945, at 8:15 a.m. Japan time), offering a time for remembrance, contemplation, and a shared commitment to peace. The exact start time of the event is tentative set for 12:30 p.m., centering around 1:15 p.m. (Hawaii time), the exact moment 80 years to the day when it happened. Please open your calendars to remember a day that must never be repeated. The UJSH has asked Bishop Shuji and the Hawaii Buddhist Council to offer a short prayer at the event. Please call Bishop Shuji at 808-488-6794 if you're interested in attending.

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