

Resolution

No. 22-256

CONGRATULATING PUUNENE NICHIREN MISSION ON ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

WHEREAS, commencing around 1915, Reverend Gyoum Takagi was the first overseas minister tasked to spread Nichiren Buddhism on Maui; and

WHEREAS, Mr. and Mrs. Gempachi Sakata, along with Reverend Gen'yu Oba, helped to establish a temporary location in 1920, to spread the Lotus Sutra in the town of Wailuku; and

WHEREAS, Mr. William McGerrow, the chief accountant for the Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company announced he would offer a parcel of land next to a public cemetery free of charge to any Japanese Buddhist temple, and Reverend Oba immediately applied for such land, despite its remote location; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Oba and other devoted members embarked on an island-wide mission to raise funds to build the temple; and

WHEREAS, on November 5, 1922, the completion of the Puunene Nichiren Mission was celebrated in its current location, with founding Reverend Oba; and

WHEREAS, in March 1957, after World War II, Reverend Taimyo Shinkai was installed as the resident minister, revived the temple as a social and religious gathering place; and organized the first Young Buddhists Association on Maui, teaching judo and kendo classes to attract younger members; and

WHEREAS, in April 1963, Reverend Shinkai passed away unexpectedly at the age of 38, leaving behind his wife and three young children; and

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WHEREAS, Mrs. Shinkai rose to the challenge, studied in Japan, and returned to Maui as Reverend Myocho Shinkai, the first woman to become a minister in the Nichiren sect on Maui; and

WHEREAS, in March 1975, a fire consumed the temple, and most artifacts were lost; however, at great danger to herself, Reverend Shinkai saved some artifacts and urns housed in the temple; and

WHEREAS, with the dedicated, though small, membership, funds were raised to reconstruct the temple in September 1975, ahead of schedule; and

WHEREAS, in June 1988, through the tireless efforts of Reverend and Mrs. Kaiju Kumazawa and board officials Iwao Sato and Bill Azeka, a separate columbarium was dedicated, with bishops and other representatives from Japan and throughout Hawai'i and mission congregants participating; and

WHEREAS, through the next 30-plus years, the temple continued, and continues today, often without a resident minister, to provide services, comfort, and socialization to its membership, including several Japanese dance academies; and

WHEREAS, the Puunene Nichiren Mission continues to honor and revere William McGerrow and his wife, Lucy, by caring for their graves located on the site of the temple; and

WHEREAS, the exceptional dedication, conduct, and commitment of the members of the Puunene Nichiren Mission have brought pride and honor to the residents of Maui County; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the County of Maui:

1. That it congratulates the Puunene Nichiren Mission on its 100th anniversary; and
2. That certified copies of this resolution be transmitted to Bishop Shokai Kanai, Nichiren Mission of Hawai'i, and Yaeko Yamamoto, President, Puunene Nichiren Mission.

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INTRODUCED BY:

Yuki Lei K. Sugimura
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