



The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

BULLETIN

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Volume 68 Number 5 February 2012 (2556 B.E.)

Scheduled Events

Call 773-334-4661 or visit
www.budtempchi.org

Regular Sunday Services

Dharma Sunday School

Sundays, 11am to noon, Feb. 26
(special field trip Feb. 12, see page 4)

Religious Services

Sundays 11am – noon, in English,

Monthly Memorial Service

Shotsuki Hoyo, Sunday, Feb. 5, 11am
in English, 1pm in Japanese

Special Observances & Events

Nirvana Day Service – Sunday, Feb. 12, Memorial for historical Buddha

Pet Memorial – Sunday, Feb. 19, 11am, to honor our pets who have passed. Please bring a photo or artwork of your loved one.

Brotherhood Sunday – Feb. 26

Introduction to Buddhism – Call temple to confirm dates and time

Meditation Sessions – 9am Sundays and 7:30pm Thursdays – use parking lot entrance

Sutra Study Class – Open to All, 3rd Sundays, 12:30pm to 2pm

Study Class – Open to All, Wednesdays, 7pm

Activities & Meetings

Asoka Society – 3rd Saturdays, 1pm

Calligraphy – Japanese brush writing class 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 7pm

Crafts Class – 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 10am to noon, open to all (call temple for confirmation)

Fencing – Introduction to Kendo, Dojo sessions, Tuesdays, 8pm to 10pm at Bethany United Church (call Bob Kumaki, 847-853-1187)

Japanese Language Class – Saturdays, 10am to noon, children or adults, call 773-334-4661 to register

Japanese Swordsmanship – Iaido, Mondays 7pm to 9pm

Middle Way – 1st Sundays, noon

Taiko Drums – BTC Kokyo Taiko Drum Troupe, Fridays, 7pm to 9pm

Nirvana Day

By Rev. Patti Nakai

Nirvana Day is the commemoration of the passing of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni. Is this an occasion to celebrate as we do the Buddha's birth (Hanamatsuri in April) and awakening (Bodhi Day in December)? The answer is yes.

Joseph Campbell and others who explore spiritual traditions of the world speculate that what we call "religion" grew out of early humans dealing with the fact of death. When someone dies we cannot deny the reality that their physical form no longer functions, yet we feel somehow that they are not totally gone from existence. We also want to feel that we ourselves will not be completely extinguished at our body's death. So very early in human history, beliefs developed from the notion of a realm of "spirits," the essences that continue to exist after physical death.

In the historical Buddha's time and place, there was already an established religion (Brahmanism, the forerunner of Hinduism) and a variety of alternative beliefs and philosophies. Shakyamuni spent years exploring and experimenting with these various approaches, hoping to find that essence that is not affected by old age, sickness, and death. In his contemplation under the Bodhi tree he found that the cause of his suffering was not external conditions but rather the delusion of an essential self that has to be preserved and enhanced even beyond death. When the Buddha examined his sense of self and found it to be an ever-shifting conglomerate of sensations, thoughts, feelings, etc., he realized there was nothing fixed that he should and could cling to. In letting go of the boxed-in category of "self," he awakened to the freedom of being with all of life. In the word "nirvana," there is the joyful sense of being released from the fetters of self-attachment.

At the Buddha's death, it is said he achieved "pari-nirvana" – the final, ultimate release. As free as he was in his mind, he still had a body with its needs. But what was left of him after he died? Nothing – there was nothing fixed of his particular self to survive. But what was there for his followers then and now is the memory of what he did during his life – conveying the teachings of wisdom to us.

What we can celebrate on Nirvana Day is the fact that the historical Buddha was a mortal human being, showing the way for each of us to overcome the anxiety in facing our own mortality. It is not death that we strive to overcome, but the strangling self-attachment that keeps us from living a more fulfilled and fluid life, in deep appreciation of the lives around us. In the Buddha's passing, we hear Namu Amida Butsu – die to self-attachment (Namu) and be born in the world of freedom and equality (Amida Butsu).

**Our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of:
Mr. Fred Babbín | Mr. Tom Ito | Mr. Robert Tanaka
Please see Temple News for details**

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Feedback & Submissions

Comments,
corrections,
questions, and
suggestions are
encouraged.

Submitted material
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TEMPLE NEWS, DECEMBER 2011

- ❖ 12/01 The Funeral/Memorial Service for Robert Tanaka was conducted at Lakeview Funeral Home. The late Mr. Tanaka, 64, passed away on November 24, 2011. He is survived by wife Nora, son Keith, and daughters Amy and Victoria.
- ❖ 12/03 Rev. Ashikaga visited Fred Babbin at the Presbyterian Homes in Evanston.
- ❖ 12/04 Shotsuki Hoyo (Monthly Memorial Service) was observed. * * * The Cremation Service of the late Mr. Tom Ito was conducted at Lakeview Funeral Home.
- ❖ 12/09 Rev. and Mrs. Ashikaga attended the birthday celebration of the Emperor of Japan at the Consulate General of Japan.
- ❖ 12/10 The Funeral/Memorial Service for Tom Ito was conducted at the Temple. The late Mr. Ito, 84, passed away on December 2, 2011. He is survived by wife Haru, daughters Gail (Tom Heidtke), Kerry and Wendy (Bud Hum), and son Lane (Rose Kipper) Ito. He is also survived by sister Mary Ota and brother Henry Ito.
- ❖ 12/11 Bodhi Day Service was observed. Elaine Siegel gave the Dharma School talk and Rev. Patti Nakai delivered the Dharma message.
- ❖ 12/17 Japanese School fall quarter ended. * * * Asoka Society met. Election of new officers was held, followed by installation ceremony conducted by Rev. Ashikaga.
- ❖ 12/18 Regular Sunday Service was observed. * * * Annual Mochitsuki was held. All who attended the traditional event enjoyed participating, as well as partaking of the O-mochi.
- ❖ 12/20 The Funeral/Memorial Service for Fred Babbin was conducted at the Temple. The late Mr. Babbin, 86, passed away on December 9, 2011. He is survived by wife Ruth, daughter Helen, and son Jonathan Babbin.
- ❖ 12/23 January issue of the Temple Bulletin and the new Temple calendar were mailed.
- ❖ 12/25 Year-end Sunday Service was observed. Rev. Patti Nakai delivered Dharma message.
- ❖ 12/30 Isshin Taiko Group cleaned up the floors of the open halls and storage room.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

**Understanding the Nembutsu
through recognizing the
Paramitas in others.
Send in your recognitions!**

- ❖ Sunday Service Participants: Bill Bohlman, Glenn Fujiura, Anna Idol, Leroy Wiley, Amy Williams, Justin Woodward, Wayne Yamanaka, and Mrs. Hisayo Ashikaga, our pianist
- ❖ Sunday Refreshments: Bill Bohlman, Jackie Denofrio, Rodel De Ocampo, Noreen Enkoji, Anna Idol, Haru Ito, Michio Iwao, Janet Lipner and Middle Way Group, Tademoto and Tsurusaki families
- ❖ Temple Bulletin and Calendar Mailing: Rev. Ashikaga, Karen Baier, Sue Balsam, Dennis Chan, Antoinette d'Vencets, Noreen Enkoji, Evelyn Inamine, Haru Ito, Chuck Izui, Adam Kellman, Mike Kudo, Joe Korner, Michele Mulcahy, Masa Nakata, Rev. Nakai, Gary Nakai, Kiyo Omachi, Kay Schroeter, Mary Shimomura, Usha Surebhi, Harky Tademoto, Tomio Tademoto, and Tak and Tommi Tomiyama
- ❖ Maintaining and updating the Temple website and computer: Shawn Lyte
- ❖ Taking care of the Temple inside and out: Tomio Tademoto
- ❖ Cleaning the entire Temple every week: Harky Tademoto
- ❖ Manning the Temple office every Thursday: Tak Tomiyama
- ❖ Emptying the trash bins, filling them with new bags and putting them out for disposal: Adam Kellman, April Kellman, Shawn Lyte, Rev. Patti Nakai

Mochitsuki

By William T. Shehan, IV

Mochitsuki

Bells ring, mallets rise and fall
Yearly renewal

Whistling wind

Announcing its arrival
Year of the Dragon

New year or Old year
does it really matter—
live in here and now!

The Buddha teaches
Do your own exploration
No blind acceptance

Adam Kellman helps pound
hot rice to make mochi
Photo by Shawn Lyte



Sweetened azuki bean filling
Photo by Shawn Lyte



Mochi rice, steaming
Photo by William T. Shehan, IV



Volunteers weigh, shape, and fill fresh mochi
Photo by Shawn Lyte

Art of Gaman Departs for Atlanta

The Special exhibition, *The Art of Gaman: Arts & Crafts from the Japanese-American Internment Camps 1942-1946*, has left the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie and is moving to the Breman Museum located at 1440 Spring St. NW, Atlanta, Georgia.

In November, Temple member Michio Iwao demonstrated his skill of carving birds at the museum in Skokie. He learned the art in camp as a young man and continued it as a hobby. Though his birds were not in the Skokie exhibit (several are for sale in the book store), Mr. Iwao was asked if he could carve more birds for Atlanta. We hope they will be on display. At this time, we do not have the full 2012 show schedule, but the exhibition is scheduled for Japan in 2013.

We congratulate Mr. Iwao that his talent and love of birds will be enjoyed both in the United States and Japan.



Gold Finch carved by Michio Iwao
Photo by Dennis Chan

New Year's Day Service

This year, New Year's Day fell on a Sunday. More people attended the service than usual, perhaps 50, including quite a few first-time visitors who were surprised at the feast after the service.

Rev. Ashikaga spoke of the great losses in 2011, particularly those from natural disasters – earthquakes, floods, tsunamis – and of the terrible consequences of the damaged Dai Ichi nuclear plant in Fukushima. He spoke of “kizuna,” the word that the Japanese people chose last year as their theme, a word that stands for the importance of connections among family and community and the significance people have upon one another in society. In other words, everyone is in this together – and that sentiment was felt throughout Japan.

Rev. Nakai spoke of the loss of our members and how important they were to us. Still, with all the sadness, the service was one of good feeling, cheer, and even laughter. Chairman Bill Bohlman, began by wishing everyone a happy New Year in Japanese and expressed hope that the “Mayans were wrong.” (Some people believe that the Mayan calendar predicts that the world will end in 2012.)

Temple president, Gary Nakai, spoke about the strength of the temple now. We have new members, the Dharma School has been growing, and sansei are returning to the temple of their parents.

And, of course, the food was terrific. All the special items that we see only on this day were prepared, including Michio Iwao's beautiful whole red snapper. In all, it was a beautiful experience at the temple. The New Year's Day service is one that I look forward to each year – it's about my favorite. I am grateful to all the people who worked so hard to carry on Japanese traditions and to make it such a fine celebration.

Gassho,
Anna Idol



Kagami Mochi and a statuette representing the year of the dragon - Photo by Stan Oda

BTC Children's Dharma School Field Trip

On Sunday, February 12, the BTC Children's Dharma School is planning to visit the Miller Family Youth Exhibition at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, located at 9603 Woods Drive in Skokie, Illinois. The exhibition is aimed mainly at children ages 8-12. We'll likely introduce the topics of the visit during our regular Jan. 22 class.

If you'd like to participate, please contact Dave Leshuk at 847-656-5071 or at dleshuk@solartwister.com. Note: The field trip is in lieu of regular Dharma School class at the temple on Feb. 12.

More information on the museum and exhibition are available at: www.ILHolocaustMuseum.org



Rev. Ashikaga accepts celebratory sake on New Year's Day
Photo by William T. Shehan, IV

King Asoka and BTC Asoka Society

By Dennis Chan

According to the archives, the following is an account of our namesake: King Asoka (304-232 B.C.) is considered to be ancient India's greatest ruler. He was the third and last emperor of the Mauryan empire and became a patron of Buddhism. After his bloody conquest of Kalinga in the eighth year of his reign, he renounced military aggression and resolved to live according to the Dharma. He spoke of Buddhism only to fellow Buddhists and adopted a policy of tolerance for other religions. He spread Buddhist teachings through inscriptions known as Rock Edicts and Pillar Edicts. Asoka is reported to have built over 8,000 temples and more than 1,000 stupas or tombs in honor of Buddha. He enjoined officials to be aware of the needs of common people and to dispense justice impartially; dharma ministers were appointed to relieve suffering and look to the special needs of other religions, women, outlying regions, and neighboring peoples.

To bring his precepts into harmony with his personal practice, Asoka gave up hunting, royal luxuries, and the use of meat in the royal kitchen. He established and endowed hospitals for men and animals. On the highways, Banyan trees were planted for shade, mango groves were laid to provide fruit, wells were dug, watering places were constructed, and rest houses were established to comfort men and animals. He sent missionaries throughout India as far as Syria, Greece, and Egypt. His own son (or by some accounts, his brother) was sent to Sri Lanka.

Asoka is most celebrated for his elevation of Buddhism from an Indian sect to a world religion. After The Buddhist Temple of Chicago was founded by Reverend Kubose, the Asoka Society was organized for social activities and named in King Asoka's honor.

Today, Rev. Ashikaga, Rev. Nakai, and all Asoka members invite you to join. Our group meets on the 3rd Saturday of the month from 1 to 3 pm (we do not meet in July and August). Annual membership is only \$15.00, and this fee includes delicious refreshments after our short business meetings. Sometimes we enjoy homemade Japanese dishes!

At the meetings we also decide our social activities. In 2011, for instance, we played bingo for special prizes and we watched films like *Travels in*

(Continued in next column at bottom)

Internet Interaction

By Rev. Patti Nakai

In last month's Bulletin, the temple's website and Facebook page were mentioned. Our temple's on-line presence is being further enhanced by a new Wikipedia entry and my blog. Wikipedia is the on-line encyclopedia which is continually written and revised by the public. Anyone is free to edit the content, but Wikipedia prefers that all information have a cited source (book, article etc.). To expand the Wikipedia entry for The Buddhist Temple of Chicago, please let me know of any published materials mentioning events in our temple's history. Look us up on wikipedia.org or go to <http://bit.ly/wMMgUF>.

The word "blog" is an abbreviation of "web log," that is, a journal kept on the Internet instead of in a bound volume. I started my blog "Taste of Chicago Buddhism" in October 2011 to discuss some of my activities and people at the temple. Mostly I have been writing about the weekly study group, but I've found the blog a place to talk about things that are too momentary (e.g., Steve Jobs' death, Penn State scandal) or provocative for Bulletin articles. My readership jumped from single-digits to double-digits when the international blog "Angry Asian Buddhist" noted my criticism of a Chicago high school that was using Hermann Hesse's novel *Siddhartha* as a Buddhist "sacred text." My blog can be found at: www.tasteofchicagobuddhism.blogspot.com

As with the website and Facebook page, I would appreciate your help in improving the content of the blog and Wikipedia entry. Make comments on-line, if you will, and spread the word about the Buddhist Temple of Chicago with your own internet reviews.

... King Asoka

(Continued from previous column)

Europe and the *Art of Gaman*. In December, we celebrated the holidays with prizes and gifts after our luncheon. For 2012, we have planned a DVD viewing of Kodo, Japan's premier Taiko drum troupe. This year they will not be touring the U.S. because they will be touring in Europe and Japan.

We are happy to announce our 2012 officers: President Mary Shimomura, Vice President Mas Maruyama, Corresponding Secretary Taketo (Tak) Tomiyama, Recording Secretary Dennis Chan, and Treasurer Amy Kawamoto.

Come and join us for good food and a great time!

BTC, No Island Unto Itself

All temples, including The Buddhist Temple of Chicago, would agree to the fundamental purpose of helping seekers of the truth realize the here and now. This general agreement also suggests a universal approach, one that complements BTC's stance of administrative independence from any head temple in Japan. But that doesn't mean we "make it up as we go" either. The fact that our minister lineage is steeped in the Higashi Honganji tradition doesn't curb their openness to recognizing the Dharma in everyday life situations, as a result of the Kiyozawa Manshi and Akegarasu Haya influence on our founding minister, Rev. Gyomay Kubose.

Over the years, BTC has been fortunate to have developed a reputation as a Sangha that studies. This is primarily due to our ministers, who have distinguished themselves as learned, engaging teachers in the Dharma, often exercising professional development in international symposiums and seminars. It is not that every member indeed attends classes, but we have ministers who have challenged us to open our minds and provoked us to leave our comfort zones through lively discussion, only to achieve clarity in our understanding of the ego self. To those who attended Rev. Gyoko Saito's study classes, memories of these lively discussions are cherished to this day. Furthermore, our ministers invite outside speakers in many fields other than Jodo Shinshu to provide practical guidance to the Teachings in everyday life.

Our ministers have actively encouraged us to take advantage of the kind invitations to participate in the programs offered by the North American District office of Higashi Honganji and the Nishi Honganji organization, the Buddhist Churches of America. These programs are the Hoshidan conferences held at Shinshu Honbyo in Kyoto, Japan and the Eastern Buddhist League conferences, respectively. These activities effectively broaden the sangha experience by exposing participants to different regional groups and cultural diversity. Every participant of the above has expressed positive fellowship experiences which have brought them deeper understandings for the Teachings. For those BTC members who would like to know more about opportunities to participate in such programs, please see our ministers.

This year BTC will observe Goenki, the 750th Memorial of Shinran Shonin, through Dharma talks and

(Continued in next column)

seminars integrated with normal Jodo Shinshu observances. As depicted in the BTC 2012 calendar as highlights of the Goenki theme, our ministers will no doubt talk of the gratitude that Shinran had for his teacher Honen Shonin and the other Pure Land masters before him. Just as Shinran praised the seven Pure Land masters for the basis of his understanding of the teachings of Shakyamuni in a universal sense, so we are grateful for our temple's teaching lineage of Kiyozawa and Akegarasu transmitted to us by Reverends Kubose and Saito.

Despite our administrative independence, BTC is not alone out there as an island unto itself. On the contrary, BTC finds itself in the good company of all Shin Buddhists, finding it refreshing to discover more clarity in what is traditionally chanted in the sutras.

Gassho,
Gary T. Nakai,
President

SAVE THE DATE!
EBL 2012
 September 1-3, 2012
 Minneapolis, MN

**MANY PATHS
 ONE PATH**

Please join the
 Twin Cities Buddhist Assn.
 as we welcome our
 hometown ministers
 Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto
 Rev. Henry Adams
 Rev. Patti Nakai

All events will take place at the Best
 Western Bloomington Hotel adjacent
 to the Mall of America.

Find us on Facebook:
 Eastern Buddhist League

In Memory of Fred Babbin

By Rev. Patti Nakai

On December 20, 2011 a memorial service for Fred Babbin was held at the temple. About eighty or so people attended, but they represented a fraction of the hundreds of men and women whose lives were touched by Fred as their high school science teacher, volunteer English tutor, or instructor in basic Buddhism.

Fred joined our temple in the 1980s and found Buddhism a great help in dealing with his personal suffering over losing his wife Florence to cancer. But unlike those “nightstand Buddhists,” the converts who read books and meditate in private, Fred became very active at our temple and with the Chicago-area Buddhist community.

As an educator, Fred knew how important it was to provide information, so he became involved in the Buddhist Educational Center, conducting a weekly book discussion class and teaching the “Introduction to Buddhism” class for many years. He also helped giving lectures to youth and adult groups when they visited the temple or requested a speaker to come to their classrooms. As the temple board’s vice president of religious affairs, one project he started was producing a new service book when the 1984 version books were getting ragged and scarcer in numbers.

Rev. Ashikaga remembers that Fred told him of attending one of the inter-sectarian celebrations of Buddha’s birthday that Rev. Gyomay Kubose helped organize in the 1950s. Working with the Buddhist Council of the Midwest, Fred helped to bring back that annual celebration called “Visakha.” Fred also volunteered his time to assist refugees from Tibet and Cambodia, tutoring English and providing resources. In his late-60s he even contributed physical labor in the interior construction work on the Zen Buddhist Temple on Cornelia when it was first established by Korean master Samu Sumin.

When the daughter of Fred’s second wife Ruth died tragically a few years ago, Fred told me there was going to be a memorial gathering in the Jewish tradition but he wanted to say some words from Buddhism. I helped him find the account of Buddha’s wordless transmission to his disciple Kasyapa. To Fred, the scene of Buddha smiling while holding up a beautiful cut flower was evocative of how he felt about his step-daughter’s life, cut short by illness yet full of wondrous value.

Although I had a few disagreements with Fred (he could be quite the feisty adversary), I will always appreciate the inspiration he gave me. One time he was giving me a ride home from the temple and said, “All these religions keep talking about love, love, love. But love is an easy practice. The hard thing to do in life is to have courage.” I could see Fred’s courage in action as he kept coming out to help the temple despite his increasing physical difficulties and the demands of caring for Ruth. Old age, sickness and death were not fearsome to Fred because he was so grounded in the truth of impermanence.

Fred had written over 200 poems that you can find on Poemhunter.com. I chose the following poem as a testament to Fred’s courage and appreciation of life.

We Live in the Eternal Now

By Fred Babbin

Father Time says
we are old.
But we have many stories to tell—
of pain, of sorrow,
of joy, of happiness,
of life—
if we can remember them.

we are like the ocean
on a good day.
We are like Whitman,
we contain multitudes

Unvoiced
in the eternal now,
in this instant of life
that goes on forever
in our awareness..

We live and so
we are aware
of this eternal instant,
O lovely instant
which will go on forever
until we are not aware.



Fred Babbin
July 16, 1925 – December 9, 2011



The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

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Rev. Patti Nakai, Associate Minister
Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose (1905–2000), Founding Minister

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