



The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

BULLETIN



Volume 69, Number 2  November 2012 (2556 B.E.)

November Calendar of Events

Call 773-334-4661

Also visit www.budtempchi.org

Regular Sunday Services

Dharma Sunday School – 2nd & 4th Sundays (Nov 11 & 25), 11am

Religious Service (in English) – Sundays, 11am

Shotsuki Hoyo Monthly Memorial Service – Sunday, Nov 4, 11am (English), 1pm (Japanese)

❁ Special Services & Events ❁

Shinran Shonin 750th Memorial Goenki – Nov 17 & 18 at Higashi Honganji Los Angeles Betsuin, see article page 3

Ho-on-ko – Sunday, Nov 25, 11am – Memorial for Shinran Shonin (see article)

Education & Meditation

Intro to Buddhism – Call 773-334-4661 or visit budtempchi.org for schedule

Buddhism Study Class – Open to all, Wednesdays, 7pm

Meditation Sessions – Thursday evenings 7:30pm, Sunday mornings 9am

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

Meetings & Socials

Asoka Society – 3rd Saturdays, 1pm

BTC Board – Sun, Nov 18, 12:30pm

☀ Culture ☀

Calligraphy – Brush writing, 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 7pm

Chinese Movement – Qigong, Tuesdays, 11am to noon, call Dennis Chan 773-465-6422 for information & to register

Crafts – 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 10am to noon

Japanese Fencing – Intro to Kendo, Dojo sessions, Tuesdays, 8 to 10pm at Bethany United Church, call Bob Kumaki, 847-853-1187 for information

Japanese Language (children or adults) Saturdays, 10am, call temple to register

Japanese Swordsmanship – Iaido, Mondays 7 to 9pm

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

Ah! This Is Autumn

By Rev. Yukei Ashikaga

Years ago, I once traveled to Florida. When we were headed for Key West, I noticed the beautiful blue sky and admired it. My companion, who was driving the car, said, “You don’t have to come all the way down to Florida to admire the color of the sky. You can admire the blue sky in Chicago.”

He was absolutely right. I would have been better off admiring something unique in Florida. I suddenly remembered a saying of Goethe (1749-1832). “You don’t need to travel around the world in order to find that the sky is blue.” It is important to remember that the sky is blue here and now rather than going around the world just to see it.

Try looking up at the sky. For long periods, we often forget to look up at the sky, don’t we? Don’t we forget that there is a broad, clear blue sky over our heads? We live day and night with anxiety and frustration. In the midst of busy living, we should look up at the sky and settle down once. Then something we had forgotten will come back.

The nembutsu, *Namu Amidabutsu*, has the power of leading one from a restless and anxious life to a joyous and peaceful life. Shinran Shonin teaches that we are able to attain the state of Nirvana without cutting off our blind passions because of the Infinite, the *Tariki*, or the power beyond self. This is exactly what Rev. Manshi Kiyozawa meant when he used the word *Rakuzai*, which is found in his diary called *December Fan*. *Rakuzai* means your settling down at the bottom. He writes, “Our true life is nothing but this: Committing our total existence to the wondrous working of the Infinite, then setting down just as we are in our present situation.” Our present situation means the reality of our own selves, living here and now. Those who bow their heads deeply and live in the reality of their own selves are called, “The ones who are settling down just as they are – as foolish ordinary persons.”

One of my favorite modern poets, Tempei Kusano, writes:

Ah! This is Autumn
Nobody is around the temple yard
Ginko leaves are falling

Here in Chicago, autumn is far advanced. It is not necessary to travel great distances in order to admire the beauty of autumn color. If you stand outside, you will see the blue sky above that enhances the beauty of nature.

Namu Amidabutsu.

Our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of:

Mr. Yuji Tamura

Please see Temple News for details

*oak maple locust
leaves fall to the ground-
equality in death*

- William Shehan, fiercebuddhist.org



Temple News September 2012

- ☸ 9/01 Funeral/Memorial Service for the late Yuji Tamura was conducted at Grove Memorial Chapel in Elk Grove Village. The late Mr. Tamura, 29, passed away on August 29. He is survived by parents Kazuaki and Fusako Tamura and brother Haruomi (Mamiko) Tamura.
- ☸ 9/01 to 9/02 Rev. Patti Nakai and several BTC members attended the Eastern Buddhist League conference hosted by the Twin Cities Buddhist Association (see article in October bulletin)
- ☸ 9/08 Fall Quarter of the Japanese Language School began.
- ☸ 9/09 Shotsuki Hoyo (Monthly Memorial Service) was observed. Rev. Ashikaga delivered Dharma message and Rev. Patti Nakai gave Dharma School message. Glenn Fujiura was Service Chairperson.
- ☸ 9/15 Combined 49th Day Memorial Service and Ashes Burial Service of the late Martin Hoover was conducted at Montrose Cemetery. * * * Asoka Society's monthly meeting was held.
- ☸ 9/16 Regular Sunday Service was observed. Lay speaker was Bill Bohlman and Justin Woodward was Service Chairperson.
- ☸ 9/21 October issue of the Temple Bulletin was mailed. * * *
- * Katie Reid and Philip Erickson visited Temple for their wedding consultation.
- ☸ 9/23 Fall O-Higan Special Service was observed. Rev. Patti Nakai delivered Dharma message and Rev. Ashikaga spoke in Japanese. Bill Bohlman was Service Chairman. O-Higan special luncheon was prepared by Asoka members.
- ☸ 9/25 Jon Hidaka visited Temple for funeral arrangement for his father, George Hidaka.
- ☸ 9/29 Funeral/Memorial Service for the late George Hidaka was conducted at Lakeview Funeral Home. The late Mr. Hidaka, 83, passed away on September 23. He is survived by sons Bill (Terri) Hidaka, Victor Hidaka, James (Anna) Hidaka and Jon Hidaka, and Jo Ann (Alan) Nowak.
- ☸ 9/30 Regular Sunday Service was observed. Rev. Patti Nakai gave the Dharma talk. * * * Temple Board of Directors met.

Right: On August 26, the Temple conducted a Ti-Sarana ceremony for Dennis Chan and Hatsumairi ceremonies for his grandsons.

Pictured on left side: Rev. Patti Nakai. Clockwise, starting from right side: Rev. Yukei Ashikaga, Brayden, Lindsey, Everett, Eric, and Dennis Chan.

**THANK YOU! THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!**

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

Special thanks to everyone who bought bulbs for the Flower Power sale. Enjoy!
- The Middle Way

- ☸ Watering outdoor temple plants during the drought: Sue Balsam, Michele Mulcahy
- ☸ Sunday Service Participants: Rev. Ashikaga, Bill Bohlman, Glenn Fujiura, Anna Idol, Justin Lack, Alice Murata, Rev. Patti Nakai, Kay Schroeter, Leroy Wiley, Justin Woodward, and Mrs. Hisayo Ashikaga, our pianist
- ☸ Sunday Service Refreshments: Thank you everyone who helped in the month of September
- ☸ Temple Bulletin Mailing: Rev. Ashikaga, Antoinette d'Vencets, Haru Ito, Chuck Izui, Joe Korner, Michele Mulcahy, Rev. Patti and Gary Nakai, Masa Nakata, Mary Shimomura, Tommi and Tak Tomiyama
- ☸ Taking care of the Temple inside and out: Tomio Tademoto
- ☸ Cleaning the entire Temple every week: Justin & Alison Woodward
- ☸ Manning the Temple office every Thursday: Tak Tomiyama
- ☸ Maintaining and updating the temple website and computer: Shawn Lyte
- ☸ Emptying the trash bins, filling them with new bags and putting them out for disposal: Adam Kellman, April Kellman, Rev. Patti Nakai



Go-enki Seminar & Ceremony in Los Angeles, November 17-18

Last year several temple members and both ministers were signed up for the World Dobo (“fellow learner”) Gathering scheduled to take place in Japan that included the Go-enki (750th memorial for Shinran Shonin) ceremony at the Higashi Honganji temple in Kyoto. Due to the earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan and the subsequent problems with radiation from the damaged nuclear power plants, the Higashi Honganji headquarters decided to cancel the international gathering. This year, the North America District is hosting a special Go-enki weekend for November 17 and 18 to observe the Shinran Shonin 750th memorial. Our temple will be represented at the event by Revs. Ashikaga and Nakai and Temple president Gary Nakai.

The Saturday seminar features lectures by Dr. Nobuo Haneda and Dr. Mark L. Blum and a panel discussion with the two speakers and Rev. Nakai. The Sunday service will feature special ritual chanting for Go-enki. If you are living in or planning to visit the Los Angeles area at that time, please consider attending the events at the Higashi Honganji Los Angeles Betsuin in the Little Tokyo area near downtown. For more information, please contact the Higashi Honganji North America District at nadc@higashihonganji.org or (213) 621-4064.

Please note that there will still be regular Sunday service at BTC on November 18 conducted by lay leaders, as both ministers will be in Los Angeles.

First Qigong Class Reviews

Ruth Abbinanti: I have been attending Qigong classes for several years. The classes focus on healing during and after serious illness, so I welcomed the opportunity to join Temple members for another Qigong class. Each teacher and group brings different perspectives for learning, and the group setting stimulates greater concentration during the exercises. I have learned to be more tuned into the changing needs of my body. The work continues to reinforce the practice of quiet inner reflection.

Joe Korner: Good Qigong class and laid-back instructor. In our first class we learned about relaxation and also about how to manage your body’s energy. This very enjoyable class meets on Tuesday at our temple at 11. Come join us!



The inaugural September 18 Qigong class at BTC
Photo by Dennis Chan

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BTC BULLETIN

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Comments, corrections, questions, &
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 articles, essays, book reviews, photos,
 poetry, news items, announcements,
 drawings, etc., strongly encouraged.
 Submissions will be reviewed for
 suitability and space availability.
 Anonymous submissions will not be
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Contact

E-mail BTCbuledtr@hotmail.com or speak
 with anyone on the BTC Team.

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Ho-on-ko Thoughts: Shinran & the Three Dead Ends

By Rev. Patti Nakai

On Sunday, November 25, our temple will have the special Ho-on-ko service to observe the memorial of Shinran Shonin (1173-1263). “Ho-on-ko” literally means “repay indebtedness learning-gathering.” Most Buddhist observances are mere get togethers, *-e* in Japanese meaning to observe and celebrate as in *Jodo-e* (Bodhi Day, “fulfillment of the path gathering”). But the *-ko* in Ho-on-ko refers to a gathering of listeners, such as for a lecture. In true appreciation of Shinran we gather together to listen to the teachings *with* him.

Unfortunately our temple will not be hosting a Ho-on-ko seminar this year. For the past few years Dr. Nobuo Haneda has been visiting for Ho-on-ko, but for health reasons he now avoids the chilly Novembers in Chicago. He will be conducting a seminar for us in the spring for Shinran’s birthday, Tanjo-e. But I hope that in November and throughout the year our gatherings will be in the spirit of Ho-on-ko, listening along with Shinran to the teachings he found so crucial for living his life.

One story that Shinran found central to his understanding of Buddhism is the famous “Two Rivers, White Path” parable told by Shan-tao (613-681) in his commentary on the Contemplation Sutra. Here I want to talk about Shinran’s spiritual journey within the framework of the parable.

As a nine-year-old boy who lost his parents, Shinran felt the sense of wanting to leave “this shore” of sorrows and difficulties for the “other shore” where he could be happily reunited with his family. He became a monk at the Mt. Hiei monastery, and during his twenty years there his conception of the “other shore” became more sophisticated, reflecting his thorough learning of Buddhist scriptures and practices. Like the traveler in the parable, he started out travelling in the right direction, but by age 29 he found himself feeling lost and alone (the “vast wilderness” of the parable), pursued by the demons in his own nature (the “beasts and brigands”).

The two rivers and white path appeared to him when he encountered Honen Shonin (1133-1212), a Mt. Hiei “dropout” who attracted a following among the urbanites of Kyoto, drawing people from low to high socio-economic statuses. In the precept-keeping monastic life, the river of greed and the river of anger were kept far from view, but in Honen’s group of laypeople, including thieves and prostitutes, greed and anger were very much in the picture of their everyday lives.

(Continued on page 7, left column)

The Spirit, The Soul

By Roger Adams

In my backyard the canna lily is blooming. With such broad leaves and five shoots of flowers now reaching a height of over six feet, I cannot help but admire it for the brilliance of its bright red flowers shining in abundance, catching the rays of the late afternoon sun. Even the large leaves of this tropical American plant share their bright greens as they glow in various shades to complement the red color in designs that are altogether quite impressive.

But that was not my first impression. My first impression upon coming out of the basement and into the backyard some weeks ago was suddenly seeing it blooming with its buds of freshly opening flowers. Ah, wow! As I smiled broadly I remembered its history. I planted this flower from a little bulb given to me by a neighbor, fertilized it, and watered it through the long drought and excessive heat that we’ve had this summer in hopes that it would bear beautiful flowers. So when the first flowers erupted, it was like a flash of life that removed whatever else was on my mind at the time.

The flower was like the living Dharma, exposing me to the wondrous world of brightness in the organic sense. “Organicity,” my teacher, Rev. Gyoko Saito, would say when referring to the essence of the Dharma. Indeed, so many things relating to the Buddha-Dharma that take place within the very soul of all life, including ourselves, teach us the value of being true human beings. In a very simple and straightforward way, flowers and so many things we encounter in nature bring us to a realization of this value because the Dharma has opened our eyes to see it. And that applies to all things: even stones, earth, water, as well as all the disasters that the power of nature brings upon this earth.

All of it, along with the universe itself, is composed of this One Soul. And we as humans are made human by this power. It melts the ice of our attached positions, the coldness of our minds deluded by the hardened and fixed positions that we carry around and use to judge others. We become attached to these judgments that are like some floating iceberg. I say floating because there is no stability in this relative world

(Continued on page 7, right column)

The following article was originally published in Action Magazine, Kenosha, WI

Buddhist Prayer

By Bill Bohlman

“Do Buddhists pray to the Buddha?” I have often been asked this question, and my answer is, “No, they do not pray to the Buddha. The Buddha was a human being who died over 2,500 years ago; he no longer exists in any personal form.” Then, I say that there is no prayer in Buddhism. However, a recent lecture I attended has made me rethink this latter statement.

Usually, when we think of prayer, we envision a person asking their God to intercede on their behalf or on the behalf of a loved one. Often, along with the request comes a promise to do some good deed or to try to be a more holy person if the request is granted, as if God were open to making deals. This is known as petitionary prayer. This type of prayer does not exist in Buddhism, as there is no one to pray to. Another form of prayer is more generalized: a wish for the betterment of all sentient beings. It is this form of prayer that has an equivalent in Buddhism, according to Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto of the Berkeley Buddhist Temple.

One definition of prayer, according to Webster’s dictionary is “an earnest request; entreaty; supplication.” In most cases, these are directed to a divine being. However, as there is no divine being in Buddhism, these earnest requests are made in a more

(Continued in next column)

universal manner. The Buddhadharma teaches that our thoughts, words, and deeds have an impact on our lives and the lives of others. Many of the Buddhist sects have practices and recitations that focus on compassion. By performing these acts, one creates a dynamic that has impact beyond one’s own life. This is the basis of the idea of karma: that which we do now, has an effect far beyond our own life. Therefore, when we express our compassion for all, we create the potential for the realization of this wish.

In Jodo Shinshu, the central figure is the Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Wisdom and Compassion. The fundamental practice is the recitation of the name of this Buddha, the phrase *Namu Amida Butsu*. It is important to understand that the Amida Buddha is simply a symbolic representation of the truth of life as it is, and not a real person or being. The recitation of the name is an expression of our desire to awaken to this universal truth and to share the compassion that this truth engenders within us.

Many American Buddhists reject the idea that there is any prayer in Buddhism. I believe that the problem arises because they only think of prayer in its petitionary form. Buddhism teaches that everything is constantly changing, nothing remains static. If this is so, then why not apply it to the definition of prayer? Stripped to its essence, prayer is nothing more than the desire to overcome suffering. This desire is the core of the Buddhadharma. To express this desire through the practice and recitation of the Buddhadharma teachings is our Buddhist prayer.

Wood Carvings Installation 60th Anniversary Retrospective: Buddha’s Awakening

September marked the 60th anniversary of the wood carvings that hang in the temple hondo. The six carvings were crafted by Harry Koizumi. This carving is the third in the chronological life of the Buddha. The accompanying text was taken directly off the metal plate that adorns the carving. We encourage you to take a closer look at all of Mr. Koizumi’s carvings at your first opportunity.



THE PRINCE FINDS
ENLIGHTENMENT UNDER THE
BODHI TREE AND BECOMES
THE BUDDHA.
(FROM PAINTING BY
NOSU, JAPAN)

Photos by Ann Yi



The Dynamics Behind the Here & Now

Beneath the apparent calm of everyday operations lies a magnificent symphony of natural causations feeding off each other. What??? “How are you? Fine, thank you, and you? I feel great, don’t I look it?” Beneath the robust outward appearance of well-being, our bodies are constantly repairing, replenishing, scavenging, eliminating, correcting, or otherwise responding to the environment. A lot of things are happening inside us, for sure. Fortunately, all of the physiology such as blood pressure, state of tissue inflammation, and cardiopulmonary function brought on by chemical reactions from processing the foods we eat and the triggers of our environment occur without us having a clue of what’s really going on! These dynamics take place without our conscious intervention. That’s a good thing. If we were left to our own devices to manage homeostasis, despite our intellect or in spite of our ignorance, we would surely expire in no time.

Organizations both for-profit and not-for-profit have similar dynamics behind the scenes, the entirety for which no one member of that organization can take sole responsibility. Regarding this symphony/cacophony, the health of that organization is dependent upon how well each activity in the face of issues (environment) correlates its goals with the purpose of the organization. Taking care of all the issues moves the organization toward robust health. This road to health, guided by the best intentions and the realistic possibilities before us, takes many paths.

Some of the paths manifest themselves in various pursuits by our members: spiritual, social, educational, service, outreach, culinary, supportive, cultural. As a temple, we are incorporated as a religious organization, but, operationally, BTC is much more than that. There are the Teachings for which we strive to be a Dharma learning center. Through our rich cultural heritage we have remained resilient. Because we are humans, all of our events and activities involve delicious food prepared by some of the most gifted culinary experts around.

So whether people who attend BTC come to socialize, to study, to practice listening, be entertained, and so forth, it doesn’t matter. But it does matter that dedicated Sangha members do the following: make sure that Sunday services get along without a hitch, clean and maintain the facilities, watch over our fiscal health, file reports with the state, organize our special events, make preemptive policy evaluations, adjust our budget,

(Continued on page 7, bottom right)

Tell Us How We’re Doing!

More than a year has passed since the *BTC Bulletin* underwent many changes to its production and distribution. Some of these changes were obvious while others were invisible. Examples include:

- Online versions of current and past issues at <http://www.budtempchi.org/bulletins/> (We hope to keep growing this collection!)
- Digitization of the production process
- Eight spaces indenting each paragraph to remind us of the Eightfold Path (also, eight is the good luck number in much of Asia)
- The addition of the *More Important Dates* section to help readers keep track of deadlines and events
- Numerous layout changes to improve readability
- Graphics, including lotuses and dharma wheel bullet points throughout

Starting this month, we are pleased to add for your convenience:

- A table of contents (entitled “In This Issue”) on page 3, with plans to publish year-end indexes for reference purposes
- A redesigned masthead including Buddha graphic

Change is absolutely necessary in order to meet the fluctuating needs of a diverse readership. With a circulation of approximately 1,000, we know that you must have opinions and ideas of your own. We always welcome feedback in our masthead, but now it is time to make a special request. Please e-mail Ann Yi at BTCbuledtr@hotmail.com with responses to any or all of the following:

- 1) What do you like best about the bulletin?
- 2) What do you like least about the bulletin?
- 3) What are some changes that you’d like to see?
- 4) Any other feedback you’d like to add?

If you do not have e-mail, feel free to send a letter to the temple or approach anyone on the bulletin team. While we can’t implement every suggested change, we promise to carefully consider all comments and suggestions. Your feedback will help us improve the publication to make it more enjoyable to read and to better meet your needs. A summary of received suggestions may be published later.

With your help we hope that one year from now a better issue of the bulletin will arrive in your hands.

Ann Yi
Editor, *BTC Bulletin*

... Shinran & the Three Dead Ends

(Continued from page 4, left column)

Shinran probably wondered if he really wanted to fall in with that crowd and have his own greed and anger continually brought to his awareness. This was the one “dead end” he feared – going into the non-monastic life and being swallowed up by the very forces he thought the Buddha taught us to overcome.

The other “dead end” was to go back to the monastery where he could put on the mask and costume of a learned priest even though it might take him farther and farther away from that “other shore” of transcending his ego-self. The third “dead end” was to do nothing – to just be frozen in limbo and let external and internal forces destroy his spirit of seeking.

Yet in hearing the calling of Namu Amida Butsu through Honen, Shinran saw that there was a narrow white path between the two raging rivers. He heard the encouragement of the Buddhist tradition telling him that Honen’s teachings weren’t so far-fetched and were more true to the spirit of Mahayana (“large vehicle”) than the elitism of the established temple institutions. And he saw there was a future ahead for him if he bravely went forward instead of retreating to the comfort of the status quo. While the monastery taught that one has to train hard to be a perfectly “good” person deserving of enlightenment, Honen told everyone they were fine just as they are. All they had to do was listen to the voice beyond the ego-self (the “other power” buried deep within each life) and go forth into the reality of the ever-changing, interdependent world of all beings.

Once he was on the white path, Shinran found that anger and greed continued to plague him. Getting married and having children was enough to force him to experience the frequently erupting conflicts of life, but he also was working to carry on Honen’s work of spreading the nembutsu teachings, dealing with outside political oppression and internal organizational strife. Though at times he felt swept off the white path, he always picked himself up and got back on when he heard anew the voices of encouragement coming from the written words of the historical Buddha and the Pure Land teachers and from his late teacher Honen speaking in his dreams and memories.

Other paths of Buddhism may work for those who have their inner and outer lives well under control, but for those of us who feel chased around through the “vast wilderness” by the “beasts and brigands” most of the time, we cannot help but be grateful for Shinran reminding us of the narrow white path of Namu Amida Butsu.

... The Spirit, The Soul

(Continued from page 4, right column)

that we live in, and as a result we act in confused ways that reflect our basic ignorance and darkness.

I was illumined by the canna lily flower just as any other human being would be, except for those who are blind and let all the beauty, poetry, and spirituality pass them by because of their distorted and contrived positions. It is within the world of secular concerns where we so often get entrapped.

“How difficult it is to be human” was another statement my teacher made at various times. Here I am living the life of Gyoko Saito – for I realize how difficult it is, and I fully appreciate its essence, not to be passed over and taken for granted, but to let it penetrate all aspects of my being.

Among the difficulties of life, and at times there are many, a simple flower can illumine us. In doing so, this ice of our surface self is removed, if only for a few moments, and our life is immediately opened to the spacious skies of freedom. This, however, requires true humility and passivity brought about by a confession that only I can make, thus the Teaching is for me alone. This is the introspection that I must continuously make to enable me to feel as a true human being. Here the world, which includes all others, and my relationship with it have real substance and meaning as well as stability.

So when I think of it, what an interesting life I have lived: a life that began with my seeking who I am and what is the true essence of my life, questions that no one could answer for me. Then by some unknowable intuition I sought out Buddhism, whereupon I met the teacher who himself is a dedicated student, and by studying with him I could feel totally at one. To bow – this is the essence of the nembutsu.

... Dynamics Behind the Here & Now

(Continued from page 6, left column)

buy supplies, assure the order of our administration, maintain our communications, put out our bulletin, manage our expenses, maintain our insurance, welcome temple visitors, greet service attendees and lead fellowship after service, keep our records, host refreshments, pay the bills, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. This is the storm that makes possible the calm.

Some doers are in need of relief due to their age. So ask not what BTC can do for you!

The above ramblings are my thoughts. You are most welcomed to share yours in these pages!

Gary T. Nakai
President



The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

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

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