



# The Buddhist Temple of Chicago BULLETIN

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## Non-Stop to Nirvana

*Let us look within our breasts [mune, inner essence] and ask ourselves quietly what is the significance of [Shinran's] screams of liberation in the present life, non-retrogression in this life, that shinjin [awakened mind] is fundamental, and other power merit transference. Can't these screams be summarized in the single sentence, "The Tathagata is within my breast!"? Divorced from my breast, what meaning do sufferings, evil, liberation and liberator have?—Soga Ryojin, Tariki wa mune yori waku (translated by Michael Conway)*

You don't have to understand all the technical concepts and terms in the above quote of the great modern teacher Soga Ryojin (1875-1971), but I hope you are struck like I was, during the four-day ministers' seminar I attended in Los Angeles in February, by his insistence that Shinran is *screaming* at us.

As Soga realized along with his early 20<sup>th</sup> century contemporaries – Kiyozawa, Akegarasu, Kaneko Daiei, et. al.—is that Shinran's 13<sup>th</sup> century clarification of the Buddhist teachings had been distorted in the intervening centuries into a belief system

## Remember the Jay-Bees!

### Part 1

With his "Memories" published in **The BTC Bulletin** (Oct., 2016), fellow Buddhist Temple of Chicago board-member Ed Horiuchi caused me to recall those at BTC to whom I owe a debt of gratitude.

Of course, our temple's ministers are at the top of my list—Reverends Gyomay Kubose, Gyoko Saito, Yukei Ashikaga and Patti Nakai. And Richard Brandon, who began our temple meditation group. But just after them is Mr. Art Hayashi. He started our temple's high school youth group.

I remember exactly when this youth group began. It was the summer of '64, the first Sunday after summer vacation began.

Mr. Hayashi gathered together several dozen teenagers, including a great many of us new, elementary school graduates, to "the Boy Scout Room," a corner of our old, dilapidated temple's basement. Mr. Hayashi told us the temple was forming a new youth group, a social club for us high-schoolers. We would have socials and parties and outings and sponsor public dances. We would help out at the temple, for example, at the O-Bon street



**Rev. Patti Nakai**  
Resident Minister

For more writings  
by Rev. Nakai,  
visit her blog,  
*Taste of Chicago  
Buddhism*, at:  
[tinyurl.com/chibud](http://tinyurl.com/chibud)

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**Darryl Shishido**  
BTC Bulletin Editor

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at column 1.

## APRIL 2017 Temple Events & Activities Guide

- See Calendar (page 8) for specific dates.
- Up-to-date details/last-minute changes are available on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/budtempchi](http://www.facebook.com/budtempchi)
- **ALL EVENTS ARE FREE, OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, and held at the Temple (unless otherwise noted).**

### ➤➤➤ Special Temple Services and Events <<<

- April 9—**Hanamatsuri**—**Buddha's birthday.**

#### Regular Temple Services

- **Religious Service** (in English)—Sundays, 11 am.
- **Lay Speaker Sunday**—Usually 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday every month, 11 am.

#### Temple Meetings & Community Service

- **Bulletin mailing**—2<sup>nd</sup> to last Friday every month, 10 am; volunteers welcome. This month: April 21.
- **Bulletin submissions**—Deadline for notices and articles: every month, 6 pm, the Thursday 15 days prior to mailing. This month: April 6.
- **Temple Board Meeting**—Once a month, Sunday, 12:30 pm. This month: April 30.
- **Upaya Helpers** (refreshment service, community outreach, ping pong, etc.) Call Candy Minx for info: 312-618-0880.
- **Cook It Forward** (feeding unhoused persons)—Mary Harvey <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CookItForward/>

#### Meditation & Buddhist Education

- **Buddhism Study Class**—Wednesdays, 7 to 8:30 pm.

- **Introduction to Buddhism**—offered periodically throughout the year. E-mail Rev. Nakai at [rev.eshin.patti23@gmail.com](mailto:rev.eshin.patti23@gmail.com).
- **Meditation**—Sundays, 9:00 am and Thursdays, 7:30 pm. First-timers: come 10 minutes early for instruction.
- **Sutra Study Class**—2nd or 3rd Sunday of the month, 12:30 to 2 pm. No previous Buddhism study required.

#### Social & Cultural Activities

- **Asoka Society** (refreshment service, social club, outings, etc.)—3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday every month, 1 pm. April 15.
- **Book Club** – One night a month. This month: *The Third Chimpanzee*, date not yet determined, 6:30 pm.
- **Iaido** (Japanese Swordsmanship)—Mondays, 7-9 pm.
- **Kumihimo** (Japanese braiding). April 1, 15, 29. Email Nancey Epperson: [naepperson14@gmail.com](mailto:naepperson14@gmail.com).
- **Movie Night**—One Tuesday night a month. This month: *Zootopia*, date not yet determined, 6:30 pm.
- **Qigong** (Chinese Movement)—Tuesdays, 11-12:30pm. Call Dennis Chan 312-771-6087 for info.
- **Taiko** (BTC Kokyo Taiko Drum Troupe)—**Adults**, Fridays, 7-9 pm. Email [kokyotaiko@yahoo.com](mailto:kokyotaiko@yahoo.com) to confirm. **Children**, Usually, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays, 11 am. Email [sanghacomod@yahoo.com](mailto:sanghacomod@yahoo.com) for appointments.

### MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in 1944 as an administratively independent temple, The Buddhist Temple of Chicago aspires to the following:

- To present and explore the Three Treasures of Buddhism – the Buddha (teacher), the Dharma (teachings), and the Sangha (community).
- To be guided and inspired by the historical Buddha, Gautama Shakyamuni, and the teachers who have followed – Shinran Shonin, Manshi Kiyozawa, and Haya Akegarasu.
- To present the Buddha-Dharma in a language and manner relevant and understandable in contemporary America.
- To welcome all who seek the Dharma without any exceptions.
- To be a positive presence in our local community working to enhance the vitality of our neighborhood.
- To honor and continue the traditions of our founding members.
- To always live the Nembutsu – Namu Amida Butsu.

### BTC BULLETIN

**Team** Rev. Patti Nakai, Darryl Shishido (Editor), Nancey Epperson, Ann Yi

**Feedback & Submissions** Questions & comments, corrections & suggestions are welcome. Submissions are encouraged—articles, essays, book reviews, photos, poetry, news items, announcements, drawings, etc. Submissions are reviewed for suitability and space availability. Anonymous submissions will not be published, but author's name may be withheld from publication upon request.

**Contact** E-mail [BTCbuledtr@hotmail.com](mailto:BTCbuledtr@hotmail.com) or speak with anyone on the BTC Team

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- ☸ 2/04 Rev. Nakai conducted one-year memorial for Stanley Shigihara at the home of Brendan and Sara Cooperkawa in Naperville.
- ☸ 2/05 February memorial service. \*\*\* Chanting class met.
- ☸ 2/12 Nirvana Day and Dharma School service. \*\*\* Sutra study class met.
- ☸ 2/14 Rev. Nakai attended monthly Uptown clergy lunch.
- ☸ 2/17 March bulletin prepared for mailing (mailed out on Feb. 21). \*\*\* Rev. Nakai attended Buddhist-Catholic dialogue meeting at the Midwest Buddhist Temple.
- ☸ 2/18 Rev. Nakai attended Treasures of Uptown's monthly interfaith discussion at Everybody's Coffee.
- ☸ 2/18 Pet Memorial service.
- ☸ 2/21-24 Rev. Nakai attended ministers' seminar at Higashi Honganji Los Angeles Betsuin.
- ☸ 2/23 Nancey Epperson attended Buddhist Council of the Midwest meeting at Soka Gakkai International center.
- ☸ 2/26 Interfaith Sunday service with guest speaker Dr. Shabana Mir from the American Islamic College. \*\*\* Board of Directors met.
- ☸ 2/28 Movie night.

**2017 Eastern Buddhist League Conference**  
**Midwest Buddhist Temple**  
**Labor Day Weekend, September 1-3, 2017**

***'North American Buddhism:  
A Path Forward'***

Our Keynote Speaker will be **Rev. Kurt Rye** from Placer Buddhist Church in Penryn, California. Given today's social conscience, Rev. Rye's seminars may be particularly poignant and we eagerly anticipate hearing his words of wisdom.

This year's conference will be different from past years, with all services, seminars, luncheons and closing 'banquet' taking place within 'the friendly confines of MBT.' This should create a conference with easy access and will hopefully be more cost efficient for all attendees.

Whether you are single, a couple or a family, we hope you will be able to attend this year's EBL conference. There will be something for everyone. It will be informative (religious services, seminars and Dharma school programs), fun (sightseeing tours, Taiko and Minyo workshops) and palate pleasing (daily luncheons and our closing 'banquet' with the famous MBT chicken teriyaki)!

Details will follow. Registration forms will be available, online and at your local temple. Official online site: <http://mbtchicago.org/eb12017>.

*James Chikaraishi*

Midwest Buddhist Temple EBL Conference Chairman

**THANK YOU**

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

- **Sunday Service Participants:** Bill Bohlman, Carrie Breitbach, Antoinette d'Vencets, Nancey Epperson, Glenn T. Fujiura, Alec Hudson, Candy Minx, Elaine Siegel, Roxanne Shimizu, Leroy Wiley
- **Music/Accompanists:** Drea Gallaga, Ellen Goode, Ann Yi
- **Audio Controls:** Wendy and Jacob Fawcett, Gary T. Nakai
- **Sunday Service Refreshments:** Rodel DeOcampo, Jacki Denofrio, Noreen Enkoji, Haru Ito, Kuse Family, Nicholas Family, Sasamoto Family, Shigihara Family, Tademoto Family, Ruby Tsuji, Upaya
- **Bulletin Mailing:** Dennis Chan, Antoinette d'Vencets, Noreen Enkoji, Nancey Epperson, Candy Minx, Alice Murata, Masa Nakata, Seichi & Sharon Shiraiwa, Ruby Tsuji, Mr. Yeng
- **Cleaning Temple washrooms:** Anonymous
- **Taking care of the Temple inside and out:** Tomio Tademoto
- **Maintaining and updating the Temple computer:** John Kelly, Gary T. Nakai
- **Maintaining and updating the Temple website:** Ann Yi, Wendy Fawcett
- **Emptying the trash bins, filling them with new bags and putting them out for disposal:** Sue Balsam, Adam Kellman, Candy Minx, Nancey Epperson, Ruby Tsuji
- **Cleaning Hondo and Nokotsudo:** Michael Yasukawa
- **Administrative Office Volunteers:** Ruth Abbinanti, Darryl Shishido, Nancey Epperson

Our apologies to anyone we have failed to include on this list.

**Ukulele Group News**  
by Ruth Abbinanti

The Ukulele Group has been learning together since the fall with the goal of providing musical support for services as well as playing a variety of music that reflects the many interests of the group. We will be making our Sunday Service premiere this spring.

We welcome new members with or without musical experience to join us. Don't have a ukelele? Due to generous donations, we have an instrument you can borrow to give it a try.

For more information contact Ruth Abbinanti at [fabbianti@sbcglobal.net](mailto:fabbianti@sbcglobal.net).



## Do We Need Water on the Path to Enlightenment?

by Wendy Fawcett

Sometime last summer, I started paying a lot of attention to the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. Early on, it was a fight to protect sacred land and to prevent the pipeline from going under the river, fearing an eventual spill into the river destroying clean water. As more tribes became involved in the fight, and eventually an international solidarity movement, the protest became less about sacred land and more about protecting water and fighting big oil.

By late fall, the movement had been calling me to go to Cannonball, North Dakota to see the gathering of nations for myself. My husband Jacob was supportive and we started to collect donations from temple members and others as we planned a quick weekend trip. We drove up with a trunk full of cold weather coats, hats and gloves, donations requested from the camps, such as paint and phone chargers. We also had monetary and gift card donations. While there, we spent our time volunteering, sorting donations and helping campers find items they needed, such as clothes, camping items, etc.

As we were sorting, there was a sacred fire about a hundred feet away, where elders would tell stories or teachings over a loudspeaker. During the hours we would listen and work, I would think often about my grandmother and listen for her voice. She was not the "environmentalist" type you see in videos of water protectors, but she was the first person who taught me simply to respect our environment and to listen to nature.

Listening to the teachings of the Buddha has prompted me to return to that lesson that my grandmother taught. As I followed the Standing Rock Sioux's fight I became aware that I had to meditate on water and examine my relationship with water. I started searching for Buddhist teachings specific to water when I found Rev. Kubose's essay in his book *Everyday Suchness*. There, Rev. Kubose wrote, "Water is the source of all life," which echoes the water protectors' battle cry, "Mni Wiconi" or "Water is Life." Rev. Kubose wrote on water's ability to purify, to adapt, yet has the power to break walls or devastate villages. He wrote that we can meditate on water and learn many lessons from it.

**"Water is the source of all life."**

Reverend Gyomay Kubose  
*Everyday Suchness*

When Rev. Patti asked me to give the Dharma school message on Bodhi Day, I knew I wanted to incorporate a lesson on water. I wasn't sure how to tie in the story of how Shakyamuni became enlightened by sitting under the Bodhi tree with a lesson on water. The (very) short version of that story is that, after trying many different practices that didn't work for him, Shakyamuni sat under the tree and meditated. There, he encountered many dark thoughts until finally he reached enlightenment. Practically, what does it mean to be enlightened?

I think it means: to live in oneness. Simply put, to live in harmony with all sentient beings, all living things. *We focus much of our practice on living in oneness with other people. But what about our environment? Do we really practice living in harmony with the trees and grasses and flowers?*

Since becoming aware of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe's fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline, I've thought a lot about my relationship with water. Water is something that all living things need. I began to wonder if water was considered a sentient being? I asked Rev. Patti, but I expected she would not give me a straightforward answer. Instead, she told me what I already read, which is that some groups *do* consider water to be a sentient being.

We can at least agree that water is a building block of life.

The human body is made up of more than 60 percent water. The planet earth is made up of more than three-fourths water. When babies are born, their weight is about 80 percent water. During pregnancy, babies are surrounded by a protective sac of water (and other nutrients).

On average, each American uses 176 gallons of water every day. Think about how often we use water. We take showers, we brush our teeth. Every time we use the restroom, we flush the toilet and then wash our hands. We use water to clean our food and also to cook our food. We use water to clean our clothes. We use water to help mop the floors and perform other cleaning chores. That doesn't even include how water is used by businesses and cities.

If water is not a sentient being, we can at least agree that all living things depend on water. All of the four-legged creatures, people, trees and grasses and flowers all need water to survive. But in our practice of oneness, how do we treat water?

Thinking about how often I used water, I realized that I could make small changes to help protect water. I quit drinking bottled water and instead use a refillable water bottle. I focused on recycling more to help eliminate waste. So often waste makes it into the water supply and can cause harm to other creatures. Instead of relying on stores to provide me with plastic bags, I made it a habit to carry a reuseable bag. Plastic is infesting our oceans and lakes. Fish

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## Do We Need Water on the Path to Enlightenment?

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sometimes mistake plastic for food and eat it. By cutting down on using plastic we can help protect water and the creatures that live in water.

On Bodhi day, I gave the Dharma School message (and a short lay talk) similar to what I have written here. I was so happy when talking with the children to hear how they thought we could protect water. They were already living with a clean water mentality. While I still think a lot about whether or not water is a sentient being, I decided that it would be best for me to live as though it were, and to pass on that lesson to my son.

### Interfaith Sunday Speaker by Candy Minx

Dr. Shabana Mir was the guest speaker at The Buddhist Temple of Chicago's Interfaith Sunday Service. Dr. Mir teaches at the American Islamic College and shared her experience of being Muslim in America.

One story she told was about an uncle of hers who moved to South Carolina from Pakistan in the 1950's. Her uncle, whom everyone called "Mo," was a tennis player and everyone knew him as the "brown guy who played tennis". Uncle Mo became interested in a woman and wanted to date her. To be respectful, he went to the girl's parents first and asked permission to date their daughter. When Mo spoke with the girl's mother, she asked, "What religion are you?" and Mo answered, "Muslim." The mother then asked, "What's that?" so Mo explained his faith briefly. When the mother said, "So you're not Catholic?" Mo answered "No." The mother said, "Well then, okay," the mother said, "you can date my daughter." The point to this story was to demonstrate how fluid religion is and how relationships and attitudes to religion change, depending not only on religion or faith, but also on culture and cultural beliefs.

Later, in an email, Dr. Mir wrote to us:

*I spoke about Islam as submission to One God, and the attributes of God in Islam as reflected in the Names—most importantly, “the Compassionate” and “the Merciful”—which we are expected to embody in our lives. I also mentioned the Five Pillars of religious practice—faith, prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage—which support a Muslim's religious and spiritual life. I spoke of my personal religious shift when I met a Sufi [a sect of Islam] teacher, and allowed my religiosity to grow inward, focusing on Love—a Love that is reflected in such interfaith meetings as my visit to the Buddhist Temple of Chicago.*

Link to Dr. Shabana Mir's blog:

<http://koonjblog.wordpress.com/2017/02/27/speaking-at-the-buddhist-temple-of-chicago>

## BTC Needs Your Help! Three Things You Can Do Now.

### 1. Join the Upaya Group!

Upaya helps out with projects throughout the year, but our main duty is to host refreshments once a month. We:

- Set up refreshments & make tea
- Set up chairs & tables (if able)
- Help serve the disabled
- Serve and check on refreshments
- Keep main room clean
- Clean kitchen & dishes
- Tear down chairs & tables
- Empty all trash, take out trash

You are not obligated to help every time, of course, but you should get on the mailing list so that you can get the upcoming dates. Send an email to Candy Minx at [candyminx@hotmail.com](mailto:candyminx@hotmail.com) and join us!

### 2. Apply For An Exciting Career In Volunteering!

BTC's desperately needs non-managerial volunteers for weekday coverage at the temple.

#### Duties:

- Answer phone and answer questions
- Accept temple deliveries
- Perform clerical and computer work
- Empty wastebaskets, tidy and organize office
- Do other tasks as needed so that minister can visit the sick, run errands, attend memorials, etc.

#### Qualifications:

- Friendly, polite phone demeanor
- Dependable, willing to take direction
- Knowledgeable with Windows
- Word and/or Excel proficiency a big plus

#### Salary & Benefits:

- Bottomless cup of green tea
- Enlightenment (individual results may vary)

See Rev. Patti or e-mail Candy Minx

[atcandyminx@hotmail.com](mailto:atcandyminx@hotmail.com).

### 3. Become A Temple Member or Friend; Consider Extra Donations

Please help us maintain this vibrant temple and ensure that it will to serve sanghas of today and into the future. You will ensure the health and lifeblood of one of only a tiny handful of Jodo Shinshu temples in the Midwest. If you are not able to join as a Member, please consider joining as a Friend. If you are already a Member or Friend, please consider us for additional donations. Any and all contributions are greatly appreciated.



## Remember *The Jay-Bees!*

(continued from page 1)

dance, at the temple carnival, and at the temple picnic at Calumet Park on the South Side of the city. But the most important point he made was *no one would be required to read about or even discuss Buddhism or any religion if they didn't want to, and in fact, our non-Buddhist friends were welcome to join us in our activities without pressure to become Buddhist.* We would elect our own officers and run our own meetings and plan our own events, the down-to-earth, ever-popular Reverend Saito would be our religious advisor (if we needed one), several parents had already volunteered to be our adult advisors, chaperones and chauffeurs, and Mr. Hayashi himself would be our leader until we elected officers.

Controversy erupted when Mr. Hayashi suggested we call ourselves “Junior Bussei.” Bussei” was a Japanese term meaning “Buddhist young people.” “Naw, man, that's old-fashioned, that's *square*,” one of the South Siders objected and everyone agreed. When someone suggested, “Instead of Junior Bussei, how 'bout just *Jay-Bees?*” everyone smiled and nodded their heads in agreement. “Yeah, man, that's *cool!*” “Cool” and “square” were still new slang terms, but we understood what was meant. Now we were each a BTC *Jay-Bee*, man! Now we were all in with an In Crowd!

For at least the next four years, everything went according to Mr. Hayashi's plan. We had monthly socials, parties with our own invited guests in the old temple's wood-paneled, linoleum-tiled, low-ceilinged basement, with the lights turned down low, snacking on potato chips and soda pop. Mostly, we hung out with our closest friends and talked and made new friends. We sometimes danced to 45 rpm records (remember those?) like any American high school gymnasium sock hop, though the basement floor was too cold to dance on in just our socks. Though it was going out of style in the rest of the country, we square danced quite often, with the talented Mr. Kim calling out the steps. Square dancing was my favorite activity because it was boisterous and fun and you got to dance with all the girls with neither the agony of asking a girl to dance nor the embarrassment of getting turned down.

By observing Temple activities, such as traditional Japanese folk dancing and folk singing, and judo and kendo, and by watching Japanese movies and talking to issei (1<sup>st</sup> generation) and nisei (2<sup>nd</sup> generation), we learned something about our ethnic heritage, and by helping out at different Temple activities, we learned different ways Buddhism may be expressed. For example, at the Temple carnival, we saw Tea Ceremony, Flower Arrangement, and Black Ink Painting and Calligraphy. We also resuscitated the traditional Japanese midwinter event “Mochitsuki,” in which sticky rice is pounded and formed into dumplings.

In those days, Japanese-American civic and church groups sponsored several teen dances a year, usually at Viking Hall, on Sheffield Avenue, just north of the Belmont elevated train stop. A couple times a year, BTC also sponsored dances. Kids from the Midwest Buddhist Temple, even kids from the strict, “no dancing allowed” Japanese-American Christian churches, would be there. Through the double-door entrance, we would walk up a flight of steep, worn down wooden stairs, to the dance hall. In front, on the stage, the band performed. At the rear, at an old saloon bar, we drank Old Dutch, an old-fashioned, local brand of soda pop. Along the walls, left and right, were folding chairs. The dance floor was darkened, for amorous effect, and to hide our acne. Though The Beatles were the most popular band in the world, as far as we were concerned their music was listening music, not dancing music. Instead, Every Mother's Sons' “Come On Down To My Boat, Baby,” about teenager enticement, was a common leadoff song, and J. Franklin Wilson's “Last Kiss,” a plaintive teenage tragedy, was always the last song and dance for an evening of furtive flirting and adolescent anguish. Mo-Town, “Little Bit of Soul” and The Doors were included in the Knu-Basics' musical repertoire and help explain why they were the community's favorite band. I usually spent the evening next to the sound system speakers getting my eardrums blasted, envying dancing couples, shyly giving wallflowers a glance out of the corner of my eye from the stag line, but one enchanted evening, in late spring just before the Summer of Love, I met a brown haired sansei girl with deep dimples and round eyes, a sweet smile and a sunny disposition, wearing a bright orange muumuu and a homemade necklace of apple seeds, with braces on her teeth and (self-described) “daikon ashi [Japanese radish-shaped legs]” Her radiant face allowed me to overcome my shyness and ask for a dance.

**(To Be Continued)**



## Non-Stop to Nirvana

(continued from page 1)

deviating far from Buddhism. In Soga's view, it was people's fear and denial of the fact of death that made them fantasize about an afterlife paradise that they could enter if they made themselves deserving of such a reward by doing good acts, achieving death-bed serenity, reciting "Namu Amida Butsu" the required number of times etc.

In his presentation of Soga's writings, Rev. Michael Conway (see description in the March bulletin) drew on the whiteboard the stereotyped version of the Pure Land belief system. In that scheme, we start off in the deluded world but by doing the required task (such as reciting Nembutsu at least ten times with a sincere mind), we get a ticket to ride to the Pure Land after we die. The Pure Land is like a hub airport where we get cleaned up (losing our defilements) before boarding another plane which takes us to Buddhahood. That is the way I understood Pure Land Buddhism before I studied under Dr. Haneda and I'm sure it's the way other Buddhists (such as Stephen Asma) were told how Pure Land works.

But as Soga sees it in the writings of Shinran (which Rev. Mike frequently referenced throughout the seminar), there is no afterlife transit point on the journey of awakening. The path of the Nembutsu takes us non-stop to Nirvana.

What is Nirvana but the liberation from the ego-self which blinds us to the oneness of all life? In the historical Buddha and his followers, people saw how they interacted with and helped others selflessly, that is, without controlling and using them for their self-enhancement. But as Buddhism became institutionalized, people began to wonder how some guys could claim to have attained Nirvana as a prize they won, beating out everyone else. If Nirvana was truly the awakening to non-selfishness, then how could it be any one person's possession? To be in the state of Nirvana would have to mean losing the sense of me versus you, including the sense of "I did this and you didn't, so I won and you lost."

The Pure Land teachings as clarified by Shinran reach the ultimate conclusion of Buddhism as the liberation for all (Mahayana, large vehicle) as opposed to salvation for a select few. As Rev. Mike put it, Shinran realized there is no "my job to do" in order to be deserving of Nirvana because everything is done

and given to us by the Unbounded Life all around us (Amida).

Yet for Soga the question was how this "doing and giving" does for us by the Unbounded Life actually happen. It is not simply a passive single occurrence like opening your front door and finding a big package from Amazon on your doorstep.

Inspired by the concepts of "storehouse-consciousness" from the Yogacara analysis in Buddhism and of "advent" in Christianity, Soga saw the Larger Sutra story of Dharmakara, the seeker who becomes a tathagata (one who comes in suchness, i.e. a buddha) playing out in the depths of our own heart/minds, or as he says in the text we read, coming out from our breast. (The Japanese pronunciation *mune* could refer either to the body part or to the inner essence of our being). In this framework, Soga rediscovers the spirit of Shinran's writings, to the point that he can't help but hear Shinran screaming at him.

In the text, Soga references Shinran's metaphor of the Vow, the deepest wish for the liberation of all beings, as a ship. Soga says too many people think they are flailing about in the ocean, desperately crying to the ship to come rescue them, but actually we are already on board the ship. (At the seminar, I complained that the English translation of *Kyogyoshinsho* misses that distinction by saying we need to "get on board" the ship when Shinran writes that we "are riding.")

As Soga points out, Shinran throws the fantasy notion of an afterlife paradise out the window and instead follows the call of the Nembutsu. This call is telling him to bravely live his limited life while participating in the continual working of Unlimited Life (Amida) to release all beings from the bounds of self-centeredness and awaken them to the wondrous treasures found in the present reality.



Soga Ryojin (left) and Akegarasu Haya



# The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

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## BTC CALENDAR APRIL 2017

See Temple Events & Activities Guide on page 2 for details on events.  
 Events may be canceled or moved after press time due to unforeseen circumstances.  
 Check [www.facebook.com/budtempchi](http://www.facebook.com/budtempchi) for the most up-to-date changes.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 9 am Kumihimo
2 9 am Meditation 11 am Monthly Memorial	3 7 pm laido	4 11 am Qigong	5 7 pm Study Class	6 6 pm <b>Bulletin Submissions Deadline</b> 7:30pm Meditation	7 7 pm Taiko	8
9 9 am Meditation 11 am HanaMatsuri/Dharma School	10 7 pm laido	11 11 am Qigong	12 7 pm Study Class	13 7:30 pm Meditation	14 7 pm Taiko	15 9:00 am Kumihimo 1:00 pm Asoka Society
16 9 am Meditation 11 am Regular Service 12:30 am Sutra Study	17 7 pm laido	18 11 am Qigong	19 7 pm Study Class	20 7:30 pm Meditation	21 10 am <b>Bulletin Mailing</b> 7 pm Taiko	22
23 9 am Meditation 11 am Regular Service Dharma School	24 7 pm laido	25 11 am Qigong	26 7 pm Study Class	27 7:30pm Meditation	28 7 pm Taiko	29 9 am Kumihimo
30 9 am meditation 11 am Regular Service 12:30 pm Board Meeting						