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Resident Minister

Rev. Patti Nakai

President

Bill Bohlman

Seven Steps to One's True Life

In the legend of the Buddha's birth, he is said to have taken seven steps as a newborn baby, then pointing one hand up and one hand down, he declares, "Above the heavens, below the heavens, only I alone am noble!" In this brief account are layers and layers of allegorical meaning. Instead of going into a bunch of explanations of those meanings here, I would like to look to Rev. Gyoko Saito for the manifestation of those meanings.

In the article I wrote for last month's bulletin, I quoted from Rev. Saito's article "The True Birthplace of Humanity," but that quote was left out of the published version for editorial reasons. So this month, I would like his whole article to be read. [see page 7] The first part of the article is about the person reborn in the path of enlightenment stepping away from his ego-centered life. Rev. Saito realizes that in leading a tour group from the temple to Japan that he won't see the Japan of his childhood. He is the one who left that Japan behind in order to follow the calling of the Buddhist teachings, to share them with Americans in English.

In the second part of the article, he turns away from his biological birthplace and sees humanity as a whole being born in Africa, a place reminding the so-called "civilized" world of our fundamental interconnection to all beings. Rev. Saito's joy is felt in this description of his learning from other people. One must "step away" from our ego-centered fixations and find our heart/minds made open and flexible by going forth to listen and learn from the teachers around us. Then like the Buddha, we awaken to the reality of our precious life ("only I alone") as fully engaged with the Unbounded Life, rich with diversity and fresh experiences ("am noble").

What It Means

Hanamatsuri [Japanese: "Flower Festival"] holds a special significance for me; it was on this day, years ago, that I started to think that BTC was the right place for me. I had attended service sporadically for a while, unsure of whether this was the path for me. The pivotal moment came during Rev. Ashikaga's talk.

Rev. Ashikaga told the story of the birth of the Buddha; how his mother was visited in a dream by the white elephant, how she gave birth in a garden as birds sang and a sweet rain fell, the baby Buddha emerging from her side, taking seven steps and proclaiming, "Above the heavens and below the heavens, I alone am most noble."

(continued on page 6, column 2)



Rev. Patti Nakai
Resident Minister

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



Bill Bohlman
BTC President

Contact Bill at
budtempchi@aol.com
or find him most
Sundays after
service at the
information desk
& bookstore

Special FLOWER FESTIVAL issue !

APRIL 2018 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
- **ALL EVENTS ARE FREE, OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, and held at the Temple (unless otherwise noted).**

➤➤➤ Special Temple Services and Events ◀◀◀

Regular Temple Services

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

Temple Meetings & Community Service

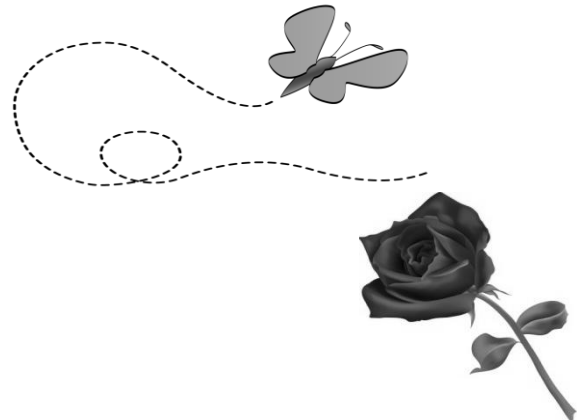
- **Bulletin mailing**—2nd to last Friday every month, 10 am; volunteers welcome. This month: April 20.
- **Bulletin submissions**—Deadline for notices and articles: every month, 6 pm, the Thursday 15 days prior to mailing. This month: April 5.
- **Temple Board Meeting**—Once a month, Sunday, 12:30 pm. This month: April 29.
- **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 Nancey Epperson: at naepperson14@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

- **Aikido** (“cooperation, not competition”)—Sundays, 5-7 pm. Email DJ Lortie djaikibudo@gmail.com.
 - **Asoka Society** (refreshment service, social club, outings, etc.)—3rd Saturday every month, 1 pm.
 - **Iaido** (Japanese Swordsmanship)—Mondays, 7-9 pm.
 - **Kumihimo** (Japanese braiding). April 21. Email Nancey Epperson: naepperson14@gmail.com.
 - **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 to confirm. **Children**, 1st, 3rd, and 5th Sundays at 11. Email 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 will be reviewed for suitability and space availability. Anonymous submissions will not be published, but author’s names may be withheld from publication upon request.

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

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- ❁ 2/04 February memorial service. *** Chanting class met.
- ❁ 2/07 Gary Nakai represented Buddhist Federation at meeting held at Japanese Consul General's residence to discuss the Japanese American community relations.
- ❁ 2/11 Nirvana Day and Dharma School service. *** Dharma School held bake sale.
- ❁ 2/18 Pet Memorial service. *** Sutra study class met.
- ❁ 2/23 March bulletin mailing.
- ❁ 2/25 Interfaith Sunday service chaired by Dharma School. Dharma School provided Dharma lesson and guest speaker was Susan Pudelek, Coordinator of Interreligious Affairs for the Archdiocese of Chicago. *** Board of Directors met.



Organizing Neighborhoods for Equality ONE Northside Community Convention

Our 2018 Community Convention is a gathering of North Side community members to build our collective power and advance our bold, progressive vision for our city, state, and country. It is also about celebrating the victories we win when our community works together. At our 2018 Convention, we're using community power to create solutions to the problems our neighborhoods face. This year's convention will be on Sunday, May 6th, at the American Islamic College (640 W. Irving Park Rd, Chicago, IL 60613) from 2:30pm-4:30pm (doors open at 2:00PM).

Free transportation is available for those who register in advance. Childcare and translation provided.

Want to know more? Call or text: 312.566.8385

REGISTER: <http://bit.ly/ONSConvention18>

THANK YOU!

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

Service & Hospitality

- **Sunday Service Participants:** Antoinette d'Vencets, Sue Balsam, Miriam Solon, Drea Galaga, Sandra Adams, Jackie Denofrio, Peter Mizuki, Lynn Maruyama, Nancey Epperson, Dharma School students
- **Lay Leaders:** Bill Bohlman, Nancey Epperson, Wendy Fawcett, Lynnell S. Long, Darryl Shishido, Ann Yi
- **Audio Controls:** Wendy and Jacob Fawcett, Gary T. Nakai
- **Bulletin Mailing:** Nancey Epperson, Noreen Enkoji, Haru Ito, Amy Kawamoto, Ed Horiuchi, Sadie Kasamoto, Ruby Tsuji, Mary Samson, Dennis Chan, Masa Nakata
- **Sunday Service Refreshments:** Elaine Siegel, Jan Saiki, Jane Fujiyoshi, Linda Tademoto, Jan Shigihara, Peggy Sasamoto, Jackie Denofrio, Upaya Group

Temple Keepers

- **Maintaining Temple inside and out:** Tomio Tademoto
- **Cleaning Hondo & Nokotsudo:** Michael Yasukawa
- **Cleaning washrooms:** Ann Yi, John Kelly, DJ and family
- **Emptying trash, putting it out for disposal:** Adam Kellman, Upaya Group
- **Sweeping and mopping:** John Sagami
- **Restocking paper towels and toilet paper:** Miriam Solon
- **Watering plants:** Alice Murata
- **Kitchen cleaning:** Wendy Fawcett
- **Cleaning minister's residence:** Diana Schoendorff, Miriam Solon
- **Administrative Office Volunteers:** Ruth Abbinanti, Nancey Epperson, April Kellman, Mary Samson, Darryl Shishido
- **Maintaining and updating Temple website:** Ann Yi
- **Maintaining and updating Temple computer:** John Kelly, Gary T. Nakai
- **Setting up and taking down chairs & tables:** Too many to thank—thanks to all!



HANAMASURI

("Flower Festival")

April 8, 2018

The World of the Flowers

by Rev. Haya Akegarasu

translated by Rev. Gyoko Saito and Joan Sweany

[Editor's note: *Don't make the mistake I made when I first whispered this poem quietly to myself, as if it were recited by Basho to himself on the narrow road to the interior. Shout it aloud to an audience, as if it were written by Allen Ginsberg to Jack Kerouac on fast highways to the coast. Add your own ellipses, dashes and exclamation marks. Then, recite it in wonderment! In amazement! In ecstasy!*]



Such a solemn world of flowers!
Such a spectacle, this rich world
Of the flowers! All beings are living
Brightness fulfilled with brightness
On the earth, under the heavens.

There is no gap between matter and man,
Between sentient and non-sentient being:
All are living, all are dancing—
Trees and grasses are whispering,
Dust and trash are shouting.

People are born out of the earth,
The world appears in the pores of each
Person's skin.
Gods appear from all beings.
Unimaginable light shines out!
Out of one pore appears
Ten thousand times ten thousand
Worlds.
At the very point of this moment is
A bursting-forth of the Eternal Buddha.
One Buddha has the world, holds all worlds,
And each world holds
Ten thousand times ten thousand
Worlds.

The world is a flower. Gods are flowers.
Enlightened ones are flowers.
All phenomena are flowers.
Red flowers, white flowers, green
Flowers, yellow flowers, black flower—
All the different kinds and colors of
Flowers, all the different kinds of
Love shining forth.
Life unfolds from life
And returns into life.
Such an immense universe—

(continued on next column)

The World of the Flowers

(continued from previous column)

Oh, many lives!
Flowers of gratitude
Flowers of sorrow
Flowers of suffering
Flowers of joy
Laughter's flowers
Heaven's flowers
Hell's flowers
Anger's flowers—
Each flowing into the others, each
Making the others grow.

When our real mind's eye opens this world of flowers,
All beings shine, music echoes through mountains
And oceans. One's world becomes
The world of millions. The individual becomes
The human race. Society becomes
The individual—
Billions of mirrors all reflecting each other.
There is death and life,
There is no death or life,
There is changing life, there is unchanging life,
There is Nirvana, there is Samsara.
Clouds change into multitudinous forms.
Water changes form as it wishes
By taking the shape of its container.
Flowers change color, moment by moment.
Such a vivid world! Such a bright I!
Flowers shining out of love, flowers
Reflecting all lives.

I was born out of these flowers,
I gave birth to these flowers.
I have no beginning and no ending,
I am bottomless and limitless,
As also I am infinitesimal dust.
The loftiest I, the deepest I,
I embrace all, I am embraced by all,
I sit in the petals of the flower
I ride the clouds
I ride the waves
I dance with love.
This flower shines forth
Meeting with Buddhas.

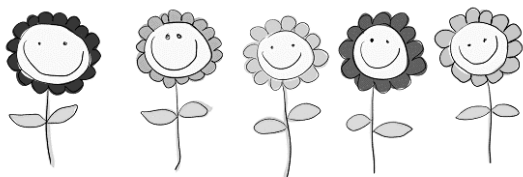


The World of the Flowers

(continued from page 4)



I become man and embrace all women,
I become woman and embrace all men,
I am love
I am the flower.
All beings shine, out of their uniqueness;
All melt into the oneness of colors.
I am one, I am many. Only one moment, only
One unique place, only the unique I.
Beside me there is nothing:
I dance, appearing in all.



Sitting in silence, dancing in gratitude, dancing
Like the huge waves, moving like the white clouds,
I see I, I see the I who sees I,
With gratitude I see, with gratitude am seen:
The world as I, I as I. I as actor. I as audience.
I as subject. I as object. I am free. I am not free.
I am *not* not free. I came from nowhere.
I remain nowhere. I am attached nowhere. I occupy
Everything. I occupy nothing.
I am the becoming of indescribable change.
I am love. I am the flower.

Plants are singing, minerals dancing,
Gods conversing with men, animals

(continued on next column)

The World of the Flowers

(continued from previous column)

O white lotus, O pink rose,
O peony and begonia,
O palm tree, O cherry, violet and orchid—
Men's love and women's love,
Young men's love, young women's love,
One-petalled flower,
Eight-petalled flower,
Thousand-petalled flower,
Simple love or complex love—

I blossom into all the flowers,
I burn with all loves,
I manifest glory in all love.

I am a stone
I am a pine tree, canary,
A sea-slug, a lion, ameba,
I am all,
I am I, I am the flower.

I am the solemn flowers,
I am the flowers with their bright faces,
All things shining, all beings singing!

Look quietly, by closing your eyes.
Listen quietly, closing your ears:
Fragrance of the flowers,
Sobbing of the flowers.

Their foreheads, their cheeks—
Every changing face of flower, voice of flower—
How great a flower I am—
Glorious flower!



Oh, world of the flowers,
I am the flower—
O flowers
 flowers
 flowers





February 25, Interfaith Sunday service guest speaker Susan Pudelek, Coordinator of Interreligious Affairs for the Archdiocese of Chicago (photo: Rev. Patti)



Left to right: Susan Pudelek, Rev. Patti, Susan Thomas, also of Archdiocese of Chicago (photo: Rev. Patti)



The Ukulele Group provided the musical accompaniment to the Interfaith Sunday service. (photo: Rev. Patti)

What it Means

(continued from page 1)

Having left a religion of miracles and divine acts, all I could think was, “Here we go again.” But then, Rev. Ashikaga said something I had never heard in church; he said, “Of course it didn’t happen that way, but here is what it means.” Here is what it means.

A few years passed during which I attended more regularly. However, I became confused by the concept of Amida, cycles of life and death and the Pure Land. Had I simply traded one God and Heaven for another? Once again, my questions were answered. First, in a seminar by Dr Haneda, in which he explained the cycles of life and death as metaphors. Second, in a seminar by Rev. Unno, in which he told the story of his mother’s passing. On her deathbed, her sister told her she would soon be in the Pure Land with her loved ones; his mother replied, “No such place.” In both cases these teachers showed what it means.

What is the nembutsu; is it a prayer, a mantra, a pleading cry for help? Or, is it much more than that? Why do we say it? To those new to Jodo Shinshu these can be daunting questions. To address this concern, Rev. Patti explains the nembutsu after almost every minister’s talk she gives. Namu is the act of bowing down to all of life. Amida is the unboundedness of reality; the infinite light and life in which we live. Butsu is the awakened nature of this unbounded life. In effect we bow down to the awakened nature of reality. When we say the nembutsu we remind ourselves of this unbounded awakened life; we express our innermost aspiration to awaken to this unbounded life. The mystery is removed for now we understand what it means.

Jodo Shinshu is not a practice of blind acceptance. Rather, it is the understanding of the teachings in a way that is meaningful to our lives. To achieve this goal it is important to know what it means. Namu Amida Butsu.

The True Birthplace of Humanity

by Rev. Gyoko Saito

Since the moment I started to think about organizing a tour group to Japan, my mind has been occupied with many memories of Japan. The following 31-syllable poem of Takuboku Ishikawa well describes my state of mind ever since I came to America fifteen years ago: “When I look at / My native mountains, / I have no words. / Mountains of home – / Indescribable!”

Closing my eyes I seem to see the mountains and rivers where I used to play with my little friends. Those who have already visited Japan tell me that when their parents are there, Japan is their native country, but without their parents this is not so. I really feel it is true.

In the Chinese language the word for longing is the same as the word for mother’s bosom. The feeling of longing is the mind of the baby that completely trusts his mother’s breast, sleeping on it, crying against it, growing on it. And I think also of the feeling expressed in a poem by Saisei Murou, who said, “One should remain far away to think of his native country.” Although we are no longer children, our expectation for our native country is like the longing of a child. So our dreams will be broken by reality. The more we expect, the deeper the sorrow we will have. That’s why Saisei said what he did. But if I dig deeper in my understanding of Saisei’s poem, then I can see a really profound meaning in it. When we look for the native country with the mind of a baby, then it is very natural that we have only disappointment and broken dreams.

But the poet’s mind was far too pure to kill the baby mind by disappointment. His mind was too lofty. What he really meant by saying that we “should remain far away” is a voice coming out of the pain of leaving the naïve mind of the baby clinging to the breast. It is the same as that other Japanese saying, “When we think of our parents, it is when our parents are no longer with us.”

Last night for our gathering of young Buddhist groups we had a guest speaker who had majored in educational psychology. He talked about his experiences while he was in Nigeria for two years as a member of the Peace Corps. “When we Americans think of Nigeria from the United States, then Nigeria is

(continued in next column)

The True Birthplace of Humanity

(continued from previous column)

a very backward and culturally undeveloped country, and there is nothing to learn from it. But when I went there I learned the most important thing in my life. One day I went to buy flowers at the market. I asked, ‘May I buy these flowers?’ The Nigerian said, ‘Hello.’ So I asked him again, ‘May I buy these flowers?’ For a second time he said to me, ‘Hello.’ When I asked him a third time, I got back a thunderous answer, ‘HELLO!’ Then I remembered the Nigerian custom that even when we buy something, first we have to exchange ‘Hello’ with each other, that is, we have to communicate with each other as human beings. Then business can follow. I had forgotten the custom completely.”

When we think from the United States, we think of Nigeria as a backward country, but according to this man, the most important human teaching, that is, the dialogue of human beings, is there, strong, in Nigeria. When I realized this, then I thought to myself, the real native country of our life is the country where we have true dialogue between human beings. That is the true native country of humanity.



Sunday March 11 was the annual memorial service for Rev. Gyoko Saito. The Dharma talk was given by Darryl Shishido (left). In attendance were (l-to-r) Roger Adams, Shin Saito (Rev. Saito’s son), and his wife Renee Saito.

(photo: Sandra Adams)



The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

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APRIL 2018 CALENDAR

See page 2 for details on specific events. Events may be canceled or moved .Check www.facebook.com/budtempchi for the most up-to-date changes.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9 am Meditation 11 am Monthly Memorial Service	2 7 pm laido	3 11 am Qigong 1 pm Ukulele	4 7 pm Buddhism Study Class	5 10 am Bulletin Submissions due 7:30 pm Meditation	6 7:00 pm Taiko (tentative)	7
8 9 am Meditation 10 am Children's Taiko 11 am Hana Matsuri / Dharma School 5 pm Aikido	9 7 pm laido	10 11 am Qigong 1 pm Ukulele	11 7 pm Buddhism Study Class	12 7:30 pm Meditation	13 7:00 pm Taiko (tentative)	14
15 9 am Meditation 11 am Regular Service 5 pm Aikido	16 7 pm laido	17 11 am Qigong 1 pm Ukulele	18 7 pm Buddhism Study Class	19 7:30pm Meditation	20 10 am Bulletin Mailing 7:00 pm Taiko (tentative)	21 1pm Asoka Society
22 9 am Meditation 10 am Children's Taiko 11 am Regular Service / Dharma School 5 pm Aikido	23 7 pm laido	24 11 am Qigong 1 pm Ukulele	25 7 pm Buddhism Study Class	26 7:30 pm Meditation	27 7:00 pm Taiko (tentative)	28
29 9 am Meditation 11 am Regular Service 12:30 pm Board Meeting 5pm Aikido	30 7 pm laido					