



# The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

## FEBRUARY

## 2020

### IN THIS ISSUE

REVISITING THE MEANING OF LIFE.....	1
PRISON DHARMA .....	4
We take refuge in the sangha! .....	5
Temple News December 2019 .....	6
Up And Coming Events .....	6
Affiliated Groups .....	6
Thank You!.....	6
Mission Statement.....	7
Faces of The BTC .....	7
BTC Bulletin .....	7
February 2020 Calendar .....	8



## WELCOMING A NEW YEAR

**RING OUT THE OLD 108 DEFILEMENTS  
RING IN THE NEW 108 DEFILEMENTS  
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU**

*--WHAT I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER*



### REVISITING THE MEANING OF LIFE

**Rev. Patti Nakai**  
Resident Minister

**W**hat does the word “discover” mean to you? At the December 2019 retreat at Higashi Honganji in Kyoto for kaikyoshi (overseas ministers), I spoke up about the use of the word “discover” in the theme for the celebration in 2023. The celebration is for Shinran’s 850<sup>th</sup> birthday but also for the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “the establishment of Shin Buddhism” (the date is from Shinran writing about Jodo Shinshu around his age 50). The theme is “Namu Amida Butsu: To Discover the Meaning of Being Born as Human Beings,” which is quite a mouthful but during the retreat, our lecturer Rev. Shinsho Kusunoki broke it down into segments and explained why the theme committee chose those particular expressions.

(Continued on next page)



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# Voices of the BTC



## REVISITING THE MEANING OF LIFE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE. BY REV PATTI NAKAI)

I asked why the official English translation uses the word “discover” when the Japanese says *imi otazunete ikou*, literally, “go ask/visit the meaning.” I said that “discover” in English implies that one finds something and that’s the end of the story, like Columbus supposedly “discovering” America (when actually there were people already living here). I couldn’t offer up any better suggestion in English but I commented that English doesn’t have the richness of the Japanese expressions. *Tazunete* can mean to ask questions or to visit someone; somehow those meanings are related in that to visit someone is to inquire about their health and seek their advice. In English we don’t have a smooth way to translate *ikou*—a sense of ongoing “going,” something that continues instead of being “one and done.”

Now I’m thinking maybe a good way to translate *imi o tazunete ikou* is “Go to revisit the meaning.” The 2023 Higashi Honganji theme implies that one is not just seeking the meaning of one’s own life but of all human lives and we do that seeking together with others, not by ourselves. It is a reminder to me of why the Buddhist Temple of Chicago exists and why we hope it continues in some form or another. We don’t just come to the temple once a year (or “once in a blue moon”) but we need to come to the temple as often as we can to keep revisiting the meaning of our lives. It seems most people have already figured it all out and that’s why I don’t see many coming to the temple very often, but I wish they would come to share their wisdom with us instead of giving it only to their families. Each of you is a part of the “Amida Butsu” that we “*Namu*” (bow down) to—when we quiet our know-it-all minds to find out new ways of seeing and nurturing life from other people. The words of the Buddha that we listen to every Sunday have a way of telling us: “Being alive means the ongoing learning and sharing life with all lives. To close ourselves off from that is to become dead matter.”

The “rightness” of the eight aspects of the eightfold path must be in relation to the *nembutsu*, to *Namu Amida Butsu*. Shinran’s teacher Honen was famous for letting people in all kinds of professions, whether judged by society as legitimate or criminal, know that their work was “Right Livelihood” if they are able to resonate with *Namu Amida Butsu* in the course of their duties. For example, one of Honen’s devoted students was a known

thief, but in hearing Namu Amida Butsu he had to confront his desire for material goods and see the suffering caused to others by his actions.

“Wrong Livelihood” would be any job that never gives you the chance to see your limitations and appreciate what others have done for you. In his talks, Rev. Ken reminded me that the Buddha in the Pure Land texts was clarifying for everyone that all his teachings were about the path of self-reflection and not about becoming a big bear that can beat out the little bears for Nirvana biscuits. The “Pure Land, Here and Now” is the awakening to the reality of Oneness, the awakening that is already being shared with us in Namu Amida Butsu.

I hear too much talk of gratitude as a dead-end strategy—you just have to be a robot repeating “thank you” to the people you choose to encounter. I would rather acknowledge my entrenchment in gratitude and let it be my motivation to learn more about how other lives affect my life, even if those other lives are far away or in direct conflict with me. And revisiting the meaning of our lives together also means getting outside the temple walls and going to places I never thought of going to and meeting people I normally wouldn’t meet as a privileged elderly American. For me there’s so much to learn from Shinran—a guy who blew the lid off of the religious institutions of his time that were using Buddhism for building up the egos of men in power and justifying elitism. Shinran writes poignantly about feeling solidarity with those who are being oppressed and despised, but he doesn’t speak as their leader but as someone who wants to learn and practice the Dharma side-by-side with them. In our Chicago area there are dozens if not hundreds of places to go to for exploring different kinds of Buddhism, but as the people at the ministers’ retreat told me, our temple is a unique place for listening to Shinran’s teachings through the modern perspective of teachers such as Manshi Kiyozawa and Haya Akegarasu. If this is the place where you want to keep revisiting the meaning of life, your participation and support is important.

## December 2019 Ministers Retreat at Higashi Honganji Temple in Kyoto, Japan



### Back row (L to R)

Rev. Suwa (Int’l Dept.),  
Rev. Matsumoto (Brazil),  
Rev. Sawada (Hawaii),  
Rev. Miyoshi (in training),  
Rev. Asakura (Group Advisor)

### Front row (L to R)

Rev. Abe (Brazil),  
Rev. Nakai  
Rev. Kusunoki (Lecturer)  
Rev. Osa (Berkeley)  
Rev. Izuhara (Brazil)  
Rev. Uranishi (Brazil)

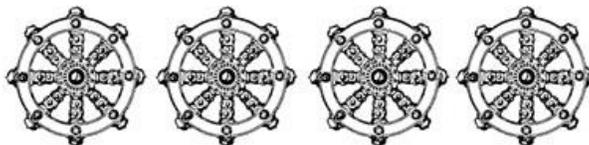


“All we are is the result of what we have thought. It is founded on our thoughts; it is made up of our thoughts.” “He abused me. He defeated me. He robbed me. Brood on such thoughts and you live in hate. ”These excerpts from the first teaching of the Dhammapada emphasize the importance of our thoughts. Our perception of the world is based on our thoughts. Our perception of the world is the basis of our actions. When we change our thoughts, we change our actions.

A growing trend in America is the formation of meditation groups in prison. The initial hesitation on the part of prison officials is beginning to change as the success of these programs becomes apparent. Being unfamiliar with Buddhism, many officials were reluctant to allow these groups. A fear often expressed was that prisoners who participated in meditation would be seen as weak by other inmates and would be subject to attacks. Much to their surprise, when meditation groups were allowed, the inmates participating in meditation were often less subject to attack. Rather than being perceived as weak, they were perceived as less threatening; this in turn led to fewer violent incidents.

Buddhism stresses self responsibility. The First Noble Truth in Buddhism is that all life has suffering; things don't always go as we wish. This inevitability of mental discomfort places the responsibility of how we will react squarely on our shoulders. As such, it is important to be “in the moment”; in other words to focus on what we need to do now without the noise of the past or future clouding our judgment. The result of the actions we take should be the lessening of suffering for ourselves and others. Thru meditation, a level of clarity can be attained; our actions will be less driven by the emotion of the moment. One of the benefits of a meditation practice is that one gains the ability to take this focus “off the cushion”; in other words, to make it part of everyday life. In the stressful environment of incarceration this focus leads to a calmer demeanor.

Studies have shown that prisoners who become Buddhist practitioners have a lower level of recidivism after release. They have developed a deeper understanding of how their past actions led to their imprisonment. An understanding of the Buddha-dharma leads one to the realization that the difficulties faced are no different than those faced by others. If others have been able to overcome these difficulties, then everyone is capable of a similar success. Just as the Buddha realized while sitting under the Bodhi tree, our personal demons are ours to control. We can surrender to them and lead a life of suffering, or we can deny them and lead an awakened life. This is true for those in prison and for those of us who are imprisoned by our greed, anger and ignorance. Our liberation from suffering is up to us.



**Bill Bohlman**  
BTC President

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Find him most Sundays  
after service at the  
information desk &  
bookstore.

# The Dharma Kid's Corner



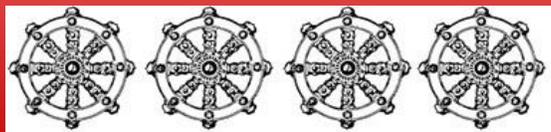
## WE TAKE REFUGE IN THE SANGHA!

This is a common thread in our discussions and activities with the kids as they often wonder why we come to services and to Dharma School.

I like to tell the kids we need to be reminded of what we already know. We already know to do no harm to living beings. We already know about The Four Noble Truths. We already know about the Eightfold Path. Though these notions are not necessarily complicated, as humans, we very easily lose sight of them in the course of our daily lives.

When we gather as a sangha, a community practicing the Dharma together, we are reminded of our oneness. We are reminded of how awareness and understanding lead to acceptance, harmony and love. We hear Rev. Patti's beautiful Dharma talks and her explanation of Namu Amida Butsu at services. We gather as friends at Dharma School to have fun and to be reminded of what we already know.

**Hopefully we can then extend our sangha and our practice to our larger world.**





- **12/01** Monthly Memorial Service
- **12/07** Rev. Patti Nakai conducted memorial service for Betty Yoshioka. She is survived by daughters Jane Morishige, Julia Beregsasy, Jean Lindsay and sons Ronald and Russell.
- **12/08** Bodhi Day Service and Dharma School service.
- **12/11-13** Rev. Patti Nakai attended ministers retreat at Higashi Honganji in Kyoto, Japan.
- **12/12** Albert Gonzalez attended ONE Northside meeting at North Shore Baptist Church.
- **12/15** Lay speaker Sunday service. Speaker was Wendy Fawcett.
- **12/20** January bulletin and 2020 calendar mailed.
- **12/21** Asoka Society met.
- **12/22** Regular service. \*\*\*Rev. Patti Nakai conducted 7th year memorial service for Kenji Tademoto.
- **12/29** Year-end Service and mochi-tsuki.

## UP AND COMING EVENTS

**Please Note:** The schedule for Nirvana Day and Pet Memorial has changed.

- **Pet Memorial Service – Sunday, February 9 at 11am**  
Dharma School students and all attendees are invited to bring photos or artwork representing their beloved pets.
- **Seminar with Bishop Noriaki Ito - Saturday February 15 at 2pm** (see insert for details).
- **Nirvana Day Service - Sunday February 16 at 11am**  
Guest speakers Bishop Ito and Rev. Ryoko Osa.
- **Interfaith Sunday Service - February 23 at 11am**  
Speaker TBA.



### “Understanding the Nembutsu through recognizing the Paramitas in others”

Send in your recognitions at [bulletin.btc@gmail.com](mailto:bulletin.btc@gmail.com)

### Service & Hospitality

- **Sunday Service Participants:** Anita Bassiri, Bill Bohlman, Antoinette D’Vencets, Nancey Epperson, Alice Murata, Glenn Fujiura, George Mizuki, Peter Mizuki, Diana Schoendorff, Georgia Shimizu, Dharma school students.
- **Lay Leaders:** Sue Balsam, Bill Bohlman, Nancey Epperson, Wendy Fawcett, Lynnell Long, Gary Nakai, Miriam Solon.
- **Musicians:** Drea Gallaga.
- **Audio Controls:** Wendy and Jacob Fawcett, Gary T. Nakai.
- **Bulletin Mailing:** Dennis Chan, Noreen Enkoji, Arron Guiles, Sadae Kasamoto, April Kellman.
- **Sunday Service Refreshments:** Noreen Enkoji, Drea Gallaga, Haru Ito, Alice Murata, Kiyo Omachi, Debbie Miyashiro, Jan Saiki, Upaya Group.

### Temple Keepers

- **Maintaining Temple inside and out:** Tomio Tademoto
- **Cleaning Hondo and Nokotsudo:** Michael Yasukawa
- **Extensive landscape maintenance:** Tomio Tademoto
- **Cleaning washrooms:** DJ and family
- **Emptying trash, putting it out for disposal:** Adam Kellman, Glenn Fujiura
- **Sweeping, mopping, vacuuming:** Mary Harvey, Michael Yasukawa
- **Restocking paper towels and toilet paper:** Miriam Solon
- **Watering plants, laundering kitchen towels and aprons:** Ruth Abbinanti, Alice Murata
- **Cleaning minister’s residence:** Miriam Solon
- **Administrative Office Volunteers:** April Kellman, Candy Minx
- **Maintaining and updating Temple website:** Wendy Fawcett, Glenn Fujiura
- **Maintaining and updating Temple computer:** Gary T. Nakai
- **Setting up and taking down chairs and tables:** Too many to thank—thanks to all!

## AFFILIATED GROUPS

**Aikido** - Martial art class, [djaikibudo@gmail.com](mailto:djaikibudo@gmail.com)

**Asoka Society** - No meeting in February

**Laido** - Martial art class, [chicagoiaido@gmail.com](mailto:chicagoiaido@gmail.com)

**Qigong** - Exercise class, on break in February

**Taiko** - Music performers,

[kokyotaiko@buddhisttemplechicago.org](mailto:kokyotaiko@buddhisttemplechicago.org)



# 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.

## FACES OF THE BTC

While in Tokyo in December 2019, Gary Nakai visited with our retired minister, Rev Yukei Ashikaga and his wife Hisayo and had dinner together. The Ashikagas are doing well and send their best regards to all the BTC members and friends.



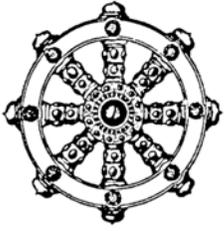
## BTC BULLETIN

**March Bulletin Topic:** Honoring our Teachers - Rev. Kubose and Rev. Saito.  
Article submissions and images by February 3, 2020, please.

**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** [bulletin.btc@gmail.com](mailto:bulletin.btc@gmail.com)

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# The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

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## FEBRUARY 2020 CALENDAR



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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 9 am Meditation 11 am Monthly Memorial 5 pm Aikido	3 7 pm Iaido  Bulletin submission deadline	4	5	6 7:30pm Meditation	7 7 pm Taiko	8
9 9 am Meditation 11 am Regular Service / Dharma School 5pm Aikido	10 7 pm Iaido	11	12	13 7:30pm Meditation	14 7 pm Taiko	15
16 9 am Meditation 11 am Regular Service 12:30 pm Board Meeting 5 pm Aikido	17 7 pm Iaido	18	19	20 7:30pm Meditation	21 10 am Bulletin Mailing  7 pm Taiko	22
23 9 am Meditation 11 am Eitaikyo Service / Dharma School 5 pm Aikido	24 7 pm Iaido	25	26	27 7:30pm Meditation	28	29