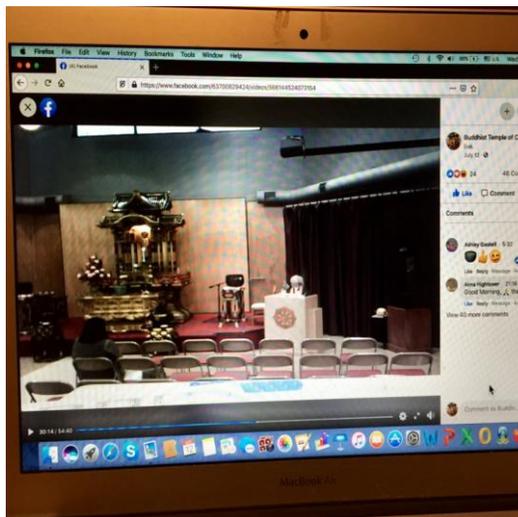




# The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

## September 2020



Sunday  
service on  
Facebook  
Live

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Minister's message**  
By Rev. Patti Nakai.....1
- President's message**  
By Bill Bohlman.....3
- Acknowledgments.....4**
- Monthly Memorial.....5**
- Calendar.....6**



## Joining the Online Sangha

Introduction by Rev. Patti Nakai

Since mid-March we have had to conduct temple services and discussions online and I haven't seen many of our temple "regulars" in-person for over five months. However the temple has gained some new followers from our Facebook Live services and Zoom meetings. Here is an article by one of them:

### By New BTC Member – Terry Koch

When I landed at O'Hare on March 1, the words "livestream" and "Zoom" were mysteries to me, while "pandemic" and "COVID-19" were troubling storm clouds rumbling on the horizon. Four months later all four words were intertwined, stitched into the national vocabulary, a daily part of the language.

I'd arrived in Chicago, my hometown, after a fifty-year absence in rural Upstate New York, where I worked and spent Phase One of my retirement years. Now came Phase Two. I'd arrived with a grand plan. Part of that plan was to start a walkable and public transit-based urban life. I sold my car with that in mind.

Another was to overcome social anxiety and a tendency to self-isolate, traits that started showing up during an earlier stage of retirement. The crowds, noise, and rush of the city, went my reasoning, would give this "senior citizen" the jump-start he needed. I'd walk and use public transit to re-explore my native town. Now and then I'd hop a plane for a short flight to see my son and his wife in New York City.

The third part of this plan was to attend services at the Buddhist Temple of Chicago. As a "bookshelf Buddhist" since 1989 with no official sangha, I was fortunate to have come across Rev. Gyomay Kubose's book, *The Center Within*, and kept it at hand to return to repeatedly. I was taken by its plain, down-to-earth tone and its profound simplicity, and I imagined visiting the temple one day. And, maybe, even join. My beliefs were shifting tentatively toward Mahayana in any case, after I'd gotten bogged down in years of insight meditation with little outside guidance except for popular how-to manuals.

Living here in Chicago, just a half-hour away from BTC on the Red Line, I was looking forward to becoming a member and making Buddhism more real and less theoretical. I was nervous about the prospect because of the annoying social anxiety, but excited, too.

Continued on next page



**ADDRESS**  
**1151 W. Leland Ave**  
**Chicago, IL 60640-5043**  
**TELEPHONE**  
**(773) 334-4661**  
**ONLINE**  
**BuddhistTempleChicago.org**

Then reality intervened. A virus and the lockdown emptied Chicago streets as well as shops, restaurants, and most religious centers, including BTC. The social distancing I often practiced voluntarily during my retirement years in rural Upstate New York suddenly became mandatory. Not only was the temple closed, but even when it opened it would involve what would now be a risky ride on the “L.” Now some of us had to climb the learning curve to order meals and groceries online, while reading and watching the news with a mix of dread, sadness and anger.

The first exposure to Zoom came when my son in Brooklyn suggested we use that or FaceTime to keep in touch from our respective lockdowns. I’d tried Skype once or twice in the past, so the general idea of virtual meetings was familiar. I downloaded the Zoom app, but worried there’d be too much to learn. Not long after, I dropped in at the BTC Facebook page and discovered that the temple was offering live video transmissions of its services. Service was followed by a social gathering on Zoom. The Sunday service was days away, so I had ample time to become anxious about tackling Zoom and meeting new people.

That Sunday I watched a service live. Rev. Patti officiated from her home as Gary kept things rolling by placing Service Book text on the screen for the online participants. Sunday socializing was next. Gary put up the Zoom ID and password and, once connected, I watched as images of some members of BTC popped up at the top of the screen. Soon this newcomer was meeting them for the first time.

It was a bracing mental exercise for this “senior” to learn so many new things at once – the names and faces of BTC members, the protocols for the meetings, and the mechanics of Zoom. Participants had the option of showing their faces on-screen or not, an ideal feature for the socially anxious.

Mindfulness meetings offered on Zoom by Rev. Patti followed on Tuesdays. Faces familiar from Sunday were there. It was beginning to feel more comfortable. Thereafter I was a regular attendee of both, and along the way I became an official member of BTC. I experienced the initial feelings of being part of a community.

In July, BTC opened its doors again under restrictions that included mandatory masks and social distancing. The vulnerable and the elder population, myself included, were cautioned against returning. Services were now broadcast live from the temple itself on Facebook. We stay-at-homes watched as some younger members of BTC showed up to participate in person with Rev. Patti. Service books were now available to online members. Though I had never entered the temple in person, BTC membership was feeling the way I imagined “the real thing” to be.

To reluctant, shy, or wondering newcomers: When the time comes that it’s safe to attend a live service, Zoom meetings will have prepared you. You’ll have gotten to know other members and developed a feel for the community. Thanks to this long, enforced “rehearsal,” I’ve met and become acquainted with some temple members in the safety of a virtual meeting. It’s a good start.

To elders and other vulnerable members: Give it a try. Using Zoom wasn’t as difficult as I’d feared. With some help and some tips and tricks from other BTC members on-screen, I grew comfortable with the basics of “Zooming.” You can be, too.



**Scheduled activities – subject to change** (TBD = to be determined later)

Weekly services – Sundays 11am (RSVP for in-person), online Facebook Live.

Second Sunday is Children’s Dharma School service (no in-person classes Sept. 2020-June 2021)

Mindful midday (meditation and stretching) – Mondays 11am (RSVP for in-person), online Zoom

Qigong (Chinese exercise) – Tuesdays 11am, online Zoom, in-person restricted

Iaido (martial art) – Mondays 6:30pm, in-person restricted

Thursday Meditation - 7:30pm Facebook Live starting 9/10; Sunday Meditation TBD

Aikido TBD

Taiko TBD

For Zoom sign-in information see Event announcements on Facebook or contact Rev. Patti.



## Sangha in Action

By Bill Bohlman, BTC President

Contact Bill at [budtempchi@aol.com](mailto:budtempchi@aol.com)



Although the temple resumed in-person services at the beginning of July, health and travel considerations have kept attendance low. Thankfully, due to the hard work of Rev. Patti Nakai, Gary Nakai and assorted other volunteers the service is available on Facebook Live. Every Sunday, dozens of individuals view the service. Many are those who were regular attendees to service; others are members and friends across the country and beyond, even some from as far away as Sweden. This virtual Sangha gets to share in the Dharma teachings and participate even though they may be far away. But Sangha is more than just the Sunday service.

Although the service can be broadcast, unfortunately, the other temple activities have had to be put on hold. Depending on the conditions at the time, some of these activities may resume in September, but is unlikely that those involving the older members will be able to begin. For many of the older members, the temple is more than a place to hear the Dharma; it is a place to gather with friends. For many of these members, the pandemic has led to increased isolation. Recognizing this, a group of volunteers, led by Jerry and Jane Morishige met at the temple to prepare bento lunches. These lunches were then delivered to Asoka group members who lived within zip codes around the temple. This act of dana brought joy to the recipients and helped to maintain the personal connection needed in this time of turmoil.

The attendance may be small on Sundays, but the maintenance the temple requires continues. The street corner outside the temple is a gathering place for some of the people in the area. Although the temple has always welcomed people to socialize there, not everyone is respectful of the area. As such, in addition to normal maintenance of the garden, a substantial amount of debris accumulates. Once again, temple members and friends have stepped in to maintain this area and the temple grounds in general.

No one can know if or when life will return to a semblance of normal. The unfortunate reality is that the current situation may go on for months to come. I know that many, me included, would like to be able to be there in person to help but our situation does not allow us to do so. The question becomes what can we do financially or emotionally to help the temple and the members of the Sangha? It is times like these in which a Sangha is tested; the Sangha of BTC has always risen to the occasion; we will do so again. Until we can once again gather, stay well. Namu Amida Butsu.

**In Deepest Sympathy  
to the families of:**

Frank Matsumoto	August 5, 2020
Alice Nojiri	August 17, 2020