



The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

December 2020



The Buddha's birth, renunciation and awakening -
woodcarvings by Harry Koizumi

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



The Error of "Enlightenment"

By Rev. Patti Nakai

Western Buddhists have tended to celebrate Bodhi Day like Columbus Day with a story of an extraordinary man who discovers a new world. I say we should observe Bodhi Day more like Indigenous Peoples Day – a time to appreciate the people who were here before us and together with Shakyamuni Buddha; we awaken to the wisdom and compassion they have shared with us.

Buddhism in its journey from India through Asia and to the West has adapted to different times and cultures in order to speak to new audiences. But in the West and particularly in the U.S. there has been a tendency to impose the Manifest Destiny viewpoint on Buddhism by claiming Buddhism is improved when the "baggage" from Asian cultures and languages is stripped away. One part of that baggage is a sense of community, the expression of the Buddhist principles of interdependency and oneness (see Cristina Moon's article "From 'Just Culture' to a Just Culture" on the Tricycle.org website). Western Buddhists would rather paint the historical Buddha and the great patriarchs as rugged exceptional individuals who deservedly attracted the masses and commanded them.

For Shinran and the teachers of the Pure Land tradition, it was clear from reading the sutras that the Buddha was not an autocrat who claimed authority over others. The Buddha, especially in the Larger Sutra, wanted us to know his spiritual breakthrough known as "enlightenment" was the result of Others' Power, the causes and conditions he received from those of his time and before. The awakening to the reality of oneness was not his achievement to claim but an experience he shared simultaneously with all beings, receiving the wondrous qualities (*kudoku*) they shared with him.

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I'm sure many of you were like me when I started attending this temple – I was only concerned about gaining some peace of mind for myself, thinking that Buddhist enlightenment was a prize I could win by my own striving. I am grateful that teachers and good Dharma friends (*shi-shu chi-shiki*) by their examples and by sharing the words of the Buddha and teachers such as Shinran made me aware that Buddhism is not about achieving one's own personal awakening. To think that way is to be caught up in ego. To open up to the participation in awakened life with all beings is the real path of Buddhism.



BTC Calendar – Mailing Help Needed

The 2021-22 temple calendar will have a new look – printed on glossy paper with color photos. In past years we gathered volunteers at the temple on different days to do various tasks in getting out the calendar mailing. This year we'll bring the work to your home so you can stamp and stuff there. If you live northwest of the temple, around Lincolnwood/Skokie, please contact Rev. Patti about helping with the mailing.



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

Note that in-person activities are subject to COVID-19 restrictions (mask required)

Weekly services – Sundays 11am - in-person (10 limit), 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 - in-person (10 limit), online Zoom
Qigong (Chinese exercise) – Tuesdays 11am, online Zoom, in-person (10 limit)
Iaido (martial art) – Mondays 6:30pm – Cancelled during stay-at-home advisory
Thursday Meditation - 7:15pm online Facebook Live
Sunday Meditation 9:30am - Cancelled during stay-at-home advisory
Aikido – Sundays 5-7pm – no new in-person students accepted at this time
Taiko TBD
For Zoom sign-in information see Event announcements on Facebook or contact Rev. Patti.

Deepest Sympathy

To the family and friends of

Kimie Sugano October 18, 2020



Merry Bodhi Day

By Bill Bohlman, BTC President

Contact Bill at budtempchi@aol.com



During the season when people are saying “Merry Christmas” and “Happy Hanukkah”, wouldn’t it be nice to wish someone “Merry Bodhi Day” and have them understand what you were talking about? Let’s face it; that day will probably never come, so here is my solution.

I am on the board of directors of the humane society in Kenosha, Wisconsin where I live. Awhile back, as I was leaving a pre-Christmas gathering at the shelter, one of the other board members said, “Have a Merry Christmas”. She then quickly said, “I forgot, you are a Buddhist. I hope I haven’t offended you.” My reply was, “No, that’s OK. I celebrate all holidays and accept all blessings.” I then wished her a Merry Christmas.

In the Christian tradition, Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior. He was born into this world so that all could be saved from their sins. The Jewish people celebrate Hanukkah. This commemoration of the victory over oppressors in the second century B.C.E., and the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, centers on a miracle. At the rededication, the menorah was to burn for eight nights, yet there was only enough oil for one night. Miraculously, the menorah burned for eight nights. In Buddhism, Bodhi Day celebrates the awakening of the Buddha to the cause of suffering. Having left the castle behind, and after years of rigorous, ascetic practices, Shakyamuni meditated for seven days under a pipal tree. On the morning of the seventh day, as the sun arose, he awakened to the cause of suffering in our human existence. Three different stories, what do they have in common? The common theme is the idea of light, both in the literal and figurative sense. The story of Christmas speaks of the Star of Bethlehem that guided the Three Wise Men to the baby Jesus. Hanukkah has the light of the menorah. Shakyamuni’s awakening occurred as the sun arose; in Jodo Shinshu, Amida Buddha represents unbounded light. In the literal sense, the symbolism differs; however, in the figurative sense, the symbolism is quite similar.

The commonality is spiritual freedom. The birth of Christ begins the process thru which humankind will be freed from the burden of sin. They will finally be able to emerge from the darkness of sin and experience the joy of eternal salvation. The Jews, having defeated their conquerors, revel in the joy of the freedom to practice their faith. Their temple is restored, their faith renewed. For the followers of the Buddhadharma, the cause of suffering is revealed, and a way to overcome this suffering is presented. The light of wisdom shines upon the darkness of ignorance, revealing the path by which this darkness can be overcome.

Therefore, when someone asks me if I celebrate Christmas, I say, “Yes.” Actually, I am celebrating everything this holiday season represents: awakening, freedom, salvation and joy. In this world of conflict and suffering, these are things we should all celebrate. So, if someone wishes you a Merry Christmas or a Happy Hanukkah simply reply in kind while thinking Merry Bodhi Day. Share the joy.



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December 2020 Calendar						
Events may be canceled or moved: Check www.facebook.com/budtempchi for the most up-to-date changes.						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 11am Qi-Gong	2	3 7:15pm Facebook Live meditation	4	5
6 11am Monthly Memorial 5pm Aikido	7 11am Mindful Midday	8 11am Qi-Gong	9	10 7:15pm Facebook Live meditation	11	12
13 11am Children's Dharma School Service 5pm Aikido	14 11am Mindful Midday	15 11am Qi-Gong	16	17 7:15pm Facebook Live meditation	18	19
20 11am Bodhi Day Service 5pm Aikido	21 11am Mindful Midday	22 11am Qi-Gong	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas	26
27 11am Year-End Service	28 11am Mindful Midday	29	30	31 New Years Eve		