



The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

October 2021

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1976 photo of the Asoka Society with Revs. Yukei Ashikaga, Gyoko Saito and Gyomay Kubose in the front row - see our website archives for more old photos.



The “Happy Life” Anniversary by Rev. Patti Nakai

The temple will observe its 77th anniversary at the October 17 Sunday service. One sign of Japanese Americans losing their culture is hardly anyone celebrates the 77th ki-ju or 88th bei-ju birthdays anymore, but there was a time not long ago when many of our Nisei (second generation) members were having such parties.

In the stylized calligraphy, the number 77 can look like the character for happiness, pronounced “ki” or “yorokobi.” Also the number 88 can look like the character for rice, pronounced “bei” or “kome.” Since rice is a symbol of prosperity, the early Japanese immigrants called America “bei-koku” (rice country) instead of “beautiful country” as the Chinese did.

The “ju” in ki-ju is “life” – the same character used for “kotobuki,” meaning the good fortune of having a long life. It is also the character used for the spelling out of “Amitayus” in Chinese characters. In Sanskrit, “Amitayus” means immeasurable life and “Amitabha” is unhindered light and the two words were combined to become “Amida.” So you will hear this “ju” in the opening of Shoshinge: “Ki-myo mu-ryo-ju nyo-rai” – “Return to the immeasurable life of suchness.”

Has our temple been a place of “happy life” during these past 77 years? From its beginning in 1944, it served as a gathering place for the Japanese Americans happy to be released from incarceration even though they couldn’t return to their homes on the West Coast. In the 1950s and -60s for the people who stayed in the Chicago area, BTC was bustling with happy families – elders (first generation Japanese Americans), hard-working volunteers (second generation) and large numbers of baby-boom children (third generation) involved in Dharma School, Japanese language classes, Scouts and athletic teams. In the 1970s and -80s, BTC was one of the few places where young European Americans were happy to explore Buddhism and experience meditation. In the 1990s and -00s, people were happy to find BTC a welcoming place for Asian, African, Latin and Native Americans as well as those who identified as LGBTQIA+.

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Like all of you, I've had my happy memories of BTC, particularly of the times in study classes and seminars, enjoying listening to the Dharma together from wonderful teachers such as Nobuo Haneda and the late Taitetsu Unno. But currently we are struggling with how we see BTC's identity. We continue to offer online and in-person meditation in a low-key, accessible way but we are not just another meditation center like the dozens throughout the Chicago area. We are centered on Jodo Shinshu but we are not the Midwest Buddhist Temple. We have a lineage of teachers (ordained by Higashi Honganji) going back to Manshi Kiyozawa who have been presenting Shinran's teachings in modern language to international audiences since the 1890s.

On this 77th anniversary of the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, let us be grateful for the long history of people past and present listening to the teachings of Namu Amida Butsu. And as we look to the future, let us be humble (Namu) and let go of self-centered agendas and have our hearts opened (Amida) to the changes ahead which will help us awaken (Butsu) the recognition of all beings living together in the Great Life. 🌸



Scheduled activities – subject to change

Weekly services – Sundays 11am - in-person, Facebook Live only October 3 and 17

Second Sunday Children's Dharma School service – on Zoom, no in-person classes

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

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

Thursday Meditation 7:15pm – on Facebook Live only

Sunday Meditation 9:30am – in-person only

Aikido (martial art) – Sundays 3-5pm – in-person only

Asoka Society (social gathering) – Saturday October 16 at 1pm

Kokyo Taiko (drums) – Friday evenings, Sunday afternoons

For more information, see our website or contact BTC

Note for October schedule:

Temple Anniversary will be observed at the Sunday, October 17 service (not the 10th as in the printed calendar). It will be on Facebook Live.

October 10 Sunday Dharma School service is on Zoom. Temple members can request Zoom sign-in information from Rev. Patti or any board member.

Unless local and state restrictions change, BTC will continue to allow in-person attendance (masks are required) at all Sunday services.



Come Back **By Bill Bohlman, BTC President**

Contact Bill at budtempchi@aol.com



This month, as we celebrate the 77th anniversary of BTC, I look back to two years ago. Our 75th anniversary was a joyous occasion with over 150 people attending a special luncheon. Unknown to us, this would be one of the last large gatherings at the temple for awhile. Although we had a decent turnout for New Years Day 2020 service, our usual large gathering for Natsu Matsuri has not occurred for the last two years. As we find ourselves still suffering from the lingering pandemic, the question remains as to when we can have another large event.

For now, regular Sunday services have resumed and the temple is available for memorial services. Some of the temple groups are once again meeting regularly, but attendance at Sunday service has been minimal. I have often heard that it takes 21 days to start a new routine; do something for three weeks and it can become part of your regular routine. For many of us, we were not comfortable about coming to the temple until we were able to be vaccinated. As such, it was about a year that we got out of the routine of coming to the temple. How long will it be before many of us are able to make coming to Sunday service our routine once again?

We have streamed the Sunday service on Facebook Live since the early days of the pandemic. Through the efforts of Rev. Patti and Gary Nakai, and later the help of volunteers, temple members and friends continued to have the Sunday service available to them. Starting now not every Sunday service will be streamed live. Shotsuki Hoyo and special Sundays will be streamed and the second Sunday Dharma School service will be on Zoom. We are doing this so those who are unable to attend in person can still feel part of the Sangha. However, for those who are able to attend in person there is a simple request: please come back.

The Dharma is meant to be shared with others. Although the words are the same when watching from home, the experience lacks the community of seekers. When we all gather we are able to share the Dharma and our personal insights. We each bring our own life experiences and through the Dharma we realize our search is one we share with others.

As long time chairman of the Natsu Matsuri festival I am hopeful that we will be able to gather together again this June to share in this festive event. Until then, the temple is open every Sunday for you to come to hear the teachings. It is our hope that many of you will come back soon.



The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

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October 2021 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 Taiko 7pm	2
3 11am Monthly Memorial 3pm Aikido	4 laido 6:30pm	5 11am Qi-Gong	6	7 Facebook Live Meditation 7:15pm	8 Taiko 7pm	9
10 9:30am Meditation 11am Dharma School Service 3pm Aikido	11 laido 6:30pm	12 11am Qi-Gong	13	14 Facebook Live Meditation 7:15pm	15 Taiko 7pm	16 1:00pm Asoka meeting
17 9:30am Meditation 11am Temple Anniversary Service 3pm Aikido	18 laido 6:30pm	19 11am Qi-Gong	20	21 Facebook Live Meditation 7:15pm	22 Taiko 7pm	23
24 9:30am Meditation 11am Regular Service 3pm Aikido	25 laido 6:30pm	26 11am Qi-Gong	27	28 Facebook Live Meditation 7:15pm	29 Taiko 7pm	30
31 9:30am Meditation 11am Regular Service 12:30 Board Meeting 3pm Aikido						