

The Buddhist Temple of Chicago BULLETIN

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Volume 67 Number 7 April 2011 (2555 B.E.)

Scheduled Events

(call 773-334-4661 or see www.budtempchi.org)

Dharma Sunday School - Sunday 11:AM
12:00pm for April, the 10th and 24th

Religious Services

Sunday at 11:00AM - 12:00PM in English Sunday
at 1:00PM - 2:00PM in Japanese (only on day of
Monthly Memorial)

Monthly Memorial Service - Shotsuki Hoyo, 1st
Sunday of each month, except where noted.

Buddhist Studies/Practices

Discussion Group - Open to All, Sangha Q & A,
2nd Sundays, 12:30PM - 2:00PM

Introduction to Buddhism - call temple to confirm
dates and time

Meditation Classes - Sundays 9:00AM -
10:15AM, Thursdays 7:30PM-9:00PM - use
parking lot entrance.

Sutra Study Class - 3rd Sundays, Open to All,
12:30PM - 2:00PM

Weekly Study Class - Wednesdays, 7:00PM -
8:30PM

Special Observances/Events

Hana Matsuri, 10th Sunday (see bulletin
article within)

Hatsu Mairi, 24th Sunday, Celebration of
Children's First Visit. (see insert).

Activities

Asoka Society - 3rd Saturdays, 1:00PM

Calligraphy - Japanese brush writing class 1st & 3rd
Tuesdays 7:00PM

Crafts Class - 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 10:00AM -
12:00PM, Open to All (call temple for confirmation)

Fencing - Introduction to Kendo, Dojo sessions,
Tuesdays, 8:00PM - 10:00PM at Bethany United
Church (Bob Kumaki, 847-853-1187)

Japanese Language Instruction - Saturdays,
10:00AM - 12:00PM, children and adult classes,
call 773-334-4661 to register

Japanese Swordsmanship - Iaido, Mondays
7:00PM - 9:00PM

Taiko Drumming - BTC Kokyo Taiko Drum
Troupe, Fridays, 7:00PM - 9:00PM

Taiko Drumming - Isshin Daiko Group, Saturdays
7:00PM - 9:00PM, call for appointment

The Power to Stand Up and Move Forward

[Note: The following article is from the Orange County Buddhist Church's bulletin, reprinted here with permission, describing my visit in January of this year. - YA]

For our Ho-on-ko Service this year (memorial service for Shinran Shonin), we were fortunate to have as our guest speaker, Rev. Yukei Ashikaga, from the Buddhist Temple of Chicago. I met Rev. Ashikaga over 30 years ago, when I went to Chicago to study under Rev. Gyomay Kubose. At that time, the Buddhist Temple of Chicago (BTC), which Rev. Kubose founded himself, had three outstanding ministers, Rev. Gyomay Kubose, Rev. Gyoko Saito and Rev. Yukei Ashikaga. I spent 9 months in Chicago studying under Rev. Kubose. I got to know Revs. Saito and Ashikaga at that time, but of course, spent most of my time with Rev. Kubose. I was so happy when Rev. Ashikaga accepted my invitation to speak at our Ho-on-ko Service this year.

I love having guest speakers, first of all, because I don't have to think about a sermon on Sunday. Secondly I love having guest speakers because I always find something meaningful in their Dharma talks. After you become a minister, you begin to appreciate the Dharma talks of other ministers. I listen for good "stories and examples" that I can use for my own talks in the future. I am not the lone ranger in that regard. Most of the ministers that I know all do the same.

Last Saturday morning, Rev. Ashikaga did a Japanese BEC [Buddhist Education Center] Lecture for us. It was a wonderful lecture, and in his lecture he shared some words by a teacher in Japan that I found most meaningful, and I would like to share it with all of you.

The teacher's name is Rijin Yasuda, and he was a student of the great Jodo Shinshu teacher and minister of the Higashi Honganji tradition, Rev. Ryojin Soga. Rev. Ashikaga shared something from what he read in one of Yasuda Sensei's books, I believe. It could have been something that he heard in a lecture, but I believe that he took it from a book, but I cannot quote the page and work.

In his talk, Rev. Ashikaga shared the following: Yasuda Sensei once said, "Many people think that the Nembutsu, Namu Amida Butsu, means something like this - that you take a big load off of your shoulders, like a big backpack, and you sit down and you let out a big sigh of relief. That's what people think Namu Amida Butsu means, that you relax and feel relieved, with a burden

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Temple News

February, 2011

02/05 The Funeral/Memorial Service for Kinji Sugano was conducted at the Temple. The late Mr. Sugano, 76, passed away on January 22, 2011. He is survived by wife Kimie, daughters Edna Sugano and Doris (Jim) Derbick, sister Sumire Maruta and brother Katsushi Sugano.

02/06 Shotsuki Hoyo (Monthly Memorial Service) was observed. Rev. Ashikaga delivered the Dharma message in English in the morning service and in Japanese in the afternoon service.

02/13 Nirvana Day Special Service was observed. Elaine Siegel gave a talk for Dharma School, and Rev. Patti Nakai delivered the Dharma message. The young members of the North Shore Unitarian Church visited the Temple. Bill Bohlman entertained them with his talk on Buddhism. * * * Special Interfaith gathering was held at the Temple.

02/18 The March issue of Temple Bulletin was mailed.

02/19 Asoka Society met * * * Rev. Ashikaga visited Lourdes Beltran at the Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

02/20 Pet Memorial Service was observed. The Pet's Memorials were shared by Rev. Ashikaga, Janet Lipner, Glenn Fujiura and others. Mr. Justin Woodward was the Lay Speaker.

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The Buddhist Temple of Chicago Bulletin

The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

1151 W. Leland Avenue

Chicago, IL 60640-5043

Phone: 773-334-4661, Fax: 773-334-4726

www.budtempchi.org

Rev. Yukei Ashikaga, Head Minister,

Rev. Patti Nakai, Associate Minister

Gary T. Nakai, President

Edited and produced by Gary T. Nakai, Rev. Patti Nakai, Ruby Tsuji

Contributors: Rev. Ashikaga, R. Adams, Dennis Chan,

Gary Nakai, Rev. Patti Nakai, Kay Schroeter

Editor's Note: Comments, corrections, questions, suggestions are encouraged. Submitted material will be reviewed for suitability and availability of space.

Anonymous submissions will not be published, but authors names may be withheld from publication upon request. Deadline: first Friday of the month.

btculedtr@hotmail.com

Items Before the Board

The board of directors is off to a fast pace of dealing with temple business and some involve breaking new ground. But first of all, the board is pleased with the 2011 membership response, as over 150 memberships have renewed thus far. We appreciate the loyalty and support expressed by these responses and would like to remind you of the option of paying your membership dues in installments. Please see the membership form enclosed with this bulletin mailing.

As the board is also keeping itself aware of opportunities to engage possible candidates to be the next Resident Minister, it has been reviewing available temple calendar dates to invite ministers to BTC for preliminary visits. One such date has been identified as Sunday, August 17th. This date is not a special Buddhist observance date for BTC so it will offer us a more casual atmosphere to become acquainted with the visiting minister, which is in contrast to having the guest minister speak for O-Higan, Hanamatsuri, Ho-On-Ko, observance and the like. As of this writing, solid confirmation of who it will be cannot be made, but rest assured as we near this and any future chosen visit date, announcements will be made at Sunday service, and through the affiliate organizations.

One of the changes to consider along the business end of the temple is that of how BTC operates as an incorporated entity. In particular, how BTC carries on business engaging independent contractors versus employees, and the ease with which BTC can take on non-ministerial, compensated help in the future. Along with that we should explore the availability and affordability of providing group health insurance as this relates to the new resident minister hire.

For more timely updates to the above matters, please contact any board member or yours truly. In any event, announcements will be made at Sunday service, through temple affiliations, and through the bulletin.

Gassho,

Gary T. Nakai

President

- "Temple News" continued from previous column -

02/27 Brotherhood Sunday Special Service was observed. The guest speaker was Walter Reed, who was a representative from the Holocaust Museum of Skokie, Illinois. After the service, newly elected Temple Officers Inauguration Ceremony was conducted by Rev. Ashikaga.



AN INVITE TO JOIN THE ASOKA SOCIETY

The Asoka Society is named after King Asoka, who ruled for the Mauryan dynasty (modern India) for over forty years in the third century BC. He converted to Buddhism and spread the word throughout India and the Middle East. According to his edicts, it is documented that he provided humanitarian help including doctors, hospitals, inns, wells, medical herbs and engineers to his neighboring countries. Our Asoka Society began after the temple was founded on the south side of Chicago by Reverend Kubose. The society is our temple's premier auxiliary group and also has the most members.

The Asoka Society volunteers assist the temple when asked and provide three special luncheons during the year for members after Sunday service. The Spring O-Higan special luncheon was catered by the Asoka Society. The volunteers will also sponsor the Summer O-Bon on August 14 and the Fall O-Higan on September 18, 2011.

All temple members are welcome to join the Asoka Society. Meetings are held the third Saturday of each month from 1 – 3 PM. After a short business meeting, refreshments are served and concludes with social activity. This is a wonderful occasion to meet and enjoy the company of temple members. Annual dues are \$15.

A Call for BTC Scholarship Applications

Again it is that time of the year to think about awarding BTC scholarships.

The guidelines for the scholarship are as follows:

Applicant must be a high school senior or an undergraduate senior who has attended The Buddhist Temple of Chicago Dharma School and or participated in one of the affiliated youth programs of BTC, and is a member in good standing for the present year and past year at BTC, or as a dependent whose parents/guardians are members in good standing for the present year and past year at BTC.

The scholarship(s) will be awarded on the basis of merit and personal dedication to the Dharma, with consideration to individual need.

An applicant must complete the Scholarship Application, obtain one recommendation from someone who is not a minister of BTC, and write a 200 word essay. All applications must be accompanied by a certified transcript of the student's high school and/or college grades and ACT/SAT scores. The responsibility for a completed application rests with the applicant.

Applications must be received no later than May 30, 2011. All correspondence, forms, inquiries and applications should be sent to the BTC Scholarship Committee c/o BTC.

The number of BTC scholarships available will be determined by the Board of Directors, up to a maximum of the number of funded scholarships available.

Recipient(s) of the BTC scholarship will be notified during the first week in June. The scholarship(s) will be awarded at The BTC Sunday Graduation Service in June.

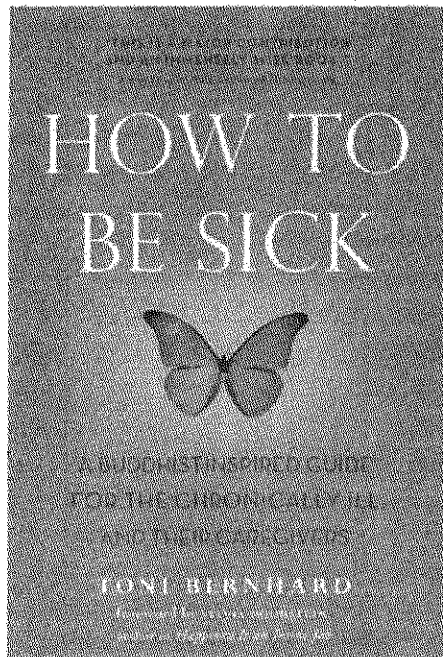
CRAFT CLASS RESUMES

Dennie Okuhara and members are busy sewing a quilt for this year's Natsu Matsuri. Class meets on the first and third Saturday of the month 10am–12 Noon. For more information, please call Dennie (773) 478-2869

Japan Tsunami Relief Fund Collection

Due to the horrific tragedy experienced in northeast Japan as a result of the earthquake and devastating tsunami that it created, Rev. Ashikaga has felt it only proper to ask the Sangha of BTC for donations to the relief effort being organized by the North American District office of Higashi Honganji (Kantoku-bu). Even though BTC is administratively independent of this jurisdiction, channeling our donations in this manner simplifies our giving through a related Buddhist organization that knows best how to disperse the funds locally. The collected amount will be forwarded to Kantoku-bu identified only as from the Sangha of The Buddhist Temple of Chicago.

If you wish to participate in this manner for this relief effort, please send your donation in check form made out to The Buddhist Temple of Chicago, marked for Tsunami Relief, c/o Rev. Ashikaga. If you have any questions, Rev. Ashikaga will answer them.



THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

Understanding the Nembutsu through recognizing the Paramitas in others – send in your recognitions!

Sunday Service Participants: Ruth Abbinanti, Bill Bohlman, Glenn Fujiura, Anna Idol, Annika Lemme, Janet Lipner, Shawn Lyte, Walter Reed, Kay Schroeter, Leroy Wiley, Justin Woodward and Mrs. Hisayo Ashikaga, our pianist.

Sunday Refreshments: Rodel De Ocampo, Jackie Donofrio, Antoinette D'Vencets, Noreen Enkoji, Haru Ito and Helene Rom.

Temple Bulletin Mailing: Rev. Ashikaga, Dennis Chan, Antoinette D'Vencets, Noreen Enkoji, Evelyn Inamine, Haru Ito, Chuck Izui, Dorothy Kuse, Gary and Rev. Patti Nakai, Mary Shimomura, Tak and Tommi Tomiyama and Ruby Tsuji.

Thanks to Dorothy Kuse for donating office supplies.

Taking care of the Temple inside and out - Tomio Tademoto.

Cleaning the entire Temple every week – Harky Tademoto.

For manning the Temple office every Thursday – Tak Tomiyama.

For emptying the trash bins, filling them with new bags and putting them out for disposal – Adam Kellman, April Kellman, Shawn Lyte and Rev. Patti Nakai.

Book Review by Kay Schroeter How To Be Sick, by Toni Bernhard

This is a new book published by Wisdom Publications, a publisher that concentrates on Buddhist writings. I was very impressed with the way it goes far beyond the usual “cookie cutter” advice. It encourages the reader to direct one’s thinking back to one’s own mind and way of looking at things.

Ms. Bernhard addresses issues such as dealing with (i.e. thinking about) doctors who seem indifferent to one’s case, experiencing a “sick upon sick” experience (perhaps tripping and breaking an ankle while one is in the process of being treated with chemo), the lack of daily or even regular social contact (some from our Sangha know how it feels to be home on a Sunday unable to get out when the group is enjoying service and a luncheon that day), the isolation, perhaps unable to get out to a park or to go to a grocery store. Ms. Bernhard talks about the “pain of loneliness” saying, “It is just my life; there’s nothing wrong with it even if I’m lonely at the moment...One can transform that neutral fact of isolation from the despair of loneliness to the serenity of solitude.”

One’s “state of being” remains the same but one’s outlook changes. She draws on teachings from Zen, Thich Nhat Hanh and Tibetan writings but is not preachy. Her comments are applicable to those with aggravating chronic illnesses as well as those suffering a catastrophic illness.

In gassho

The Light Continues Shining

By R. Adams

[Note: This is a follow-up to the article "The Shining Light" published in last month's bulletin. Roger Adams has been with our temple for about fifty years and his articles reflect the teachings of Rev. Gyoko Saito and his teacher Haya Akegarasu, as well as the more recent influence of Dr. Nobuo Haneda.—PN, ed.]

What happened to Amida Buddha? What happened to all our study of Buddhism if in the end we haven't discovered the very essence of our being, and if it has not resulted in Amida Buddha as that essence? We must all share in this brightness or we may not have really known the real reason for our coming to Buddhism and listening to its teachings to begin with.

Speaking for myself, it is no use going around and around endlessly, I have to examine myself again and again, being challenged by the Dharma, in order to be able to say, "I am I." To be or not to be – is here. "Who am I? (or, what am I?)" must be answered in my lifetime if I want to attain full self-realization. "Do I really know myself?" is the very question itself. We have to invest some time and effort because these are deep and serious questions that have real meaning for our life. Am I truly human? If so, what is the content of my humanity? We shouldn't take it for granted that we are human beings and merely let it go at that. A dog is a dog and a cat is a cat, but even they manifest universal love.

But to attain my real humanity, I have to look into my spiritual life. There is a truth that I must realize that applies to everyone; a truth not just for me alone, but a universal truth that is all-inclusive. Out of this understanding there is the feeling of love and respect for all that I meet and interact with. Buddhism has an expression for it: the nembutsu. The term means "to bow to the Buddha," or better yet, "Buddhas thinking of buddhas." (1).

Even when we separate ourselves from others over disagreements, we should know that the essential life that manifests the whole of the universe flows in all living beings, sentient as well as non-sentient. We suffer when we are separate from others, but by becoming aware of the flow which brings all things to life, we cannot help but want to embrace all beings. I love this hugging and live by it, quietly pushing all else aside, for it is a major ingredient for the feeling of

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lifted from your shoulders. But I don't think that is what Namu Amida Butsu means. I think Namu Amida Butsu means the opposite – that instead, you put a big load on your shoulders, a big responsibility or task, and now you have the power to stand up on your own two feet and move forward in life. That to me is what Namu Amida Butsu means,"

I was so touched by this wonderful teaching by Rijin Yasuda. What meaning it has for all of us at OCBC as we embark on our 50th Anniversary Expansion Project. I think these words by Yasuda Sensei can be our theme, our motto from now until the completion of our project. We have all put on our shoulders a big load, a big task. Yes, it is heavy, but the spirit of the Nembutsu gives us the power to stand up. It gives us the power to stand up and move forward, for the sake of OCBC, for the sake of our friends and family, for the sake of the propagation of the Nembutsu itself. If we find the teachings of Buddhism and Jodo Shinshu to be of value to us in our lives, if we find that the Nembutsu has illuminated our hearts and minds, then we must do what we can to allow it to be shared and carried on to others. That is the power to stand up and to move forward. It is a power that comes from beyond our own ego self. It is a power that makes the load on our shoulders lighter than what is really is. It is a power that not only allows us to stand up on our own two feet, but somehow it feels as if it is pushing us up from behind.

When I think of the wonderful teachers and followers of the Nembutsu that I have known over the years, I feel that Yasuda Sensei's description of the Nembutsu expresses their life much more than that of taking a load off one's shoulders and giving a big sigh of relief. Professor Shigaraki, whose lectures were so meaningful for me at Ryukoku University in Japan, has lived a life in which he carries a big load on his shoulders, to make Jodo Shinshu relevant in this modern world of ours. Dr. Nobuo Haneda has chosen to dedicate his life to the translation and teaching of his teacher, Shuichi Maida. Our life of the Nembutsu is one of putting a load on our shoulders. Although it might be a heavy load, once it is on our shoulders it becomes light. Once we have made that resolve to shoulder that load, the load stops becoming a load. It just becomes a part of our life, our being.

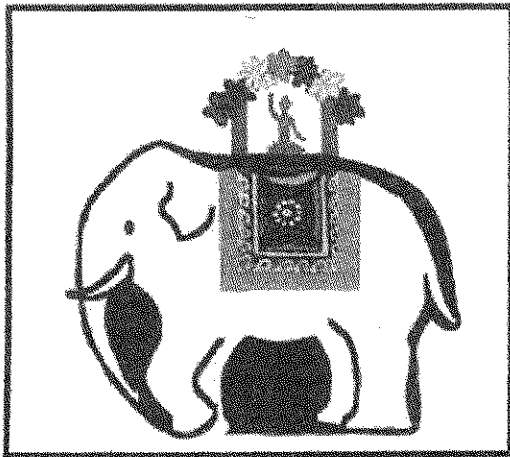
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Hanamatsuri

On Sunday April 10, 2011 we will be observing Hanamatsuri, the celebration of the historical Buddha's birth. According to the Mahayana (east Asian) Buddhist tradition, the birth date of the Buddha is April 8. In Japan, the date is called Hana-matsuri, "flower festival," referring to the Buddha's birth in Lumbini Garden, the place his mother, Queen Maya, wanted to rest while on her way to her parents' home.

At the Hanamatsuri service you will see the *hanamido* "flower shrine" symbolizing Lumbini Garden. In the shrine a statue of the baby Buddha stands in a bowl of sweetened tea. As part of the Hanamatsuri service, there will be *kambutsu*, the pouring of the tea from small ladles unto the statue, symbolizing the soft rain that fell when the Buddha was born.

The Hanamatsuri service will also feature the *o-chigo* procession where children are dressed in the colorful costumes of the court nobility of ancient Japan.



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brightness and joy. For here without any special knowledge, we can see, feel and taste life. Here Buddhism is very essential in its simple and direct teachings of universal Oneness.

Gautama Buddha (Shakyamuni) showed us the way himself in his being friends with everybody. Rich, poor, whatever position they came from, it made no difference for he could penetrate behind all of the various ornaments and status that we decorate ourselves with. You can see his universality in the symbol of Amida Buddha which represents our deepest aspiration. In the nembutsu is the bowing Buddha, the essence of Amida Buddha. This essence is what makes the whole difference in whether we are truly human.

(1) Dr. Haneda pointed out that *butsu butsu so nen* (Buddha-buddha-mutually-contemplating), the phrase found in the Larger Sutra, is the source for the term "nembutsu." --PN

Prince Siddhartha: Warrior in Training

by Rev. Patti Nakai

He demonstrated his aptitude in mathematics, the literary arts, archery, and horsemanship...and enjoyed practicing the martial arts and testing his ability in the rear gardens of the palace.

From the Larger (Sukhavativyuha) Sutra

At Hana Matsuri time in April we celebrate the birth of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni (also known as Gautama). Then in December for Bodhi Day we talk of him as an adult who sought and attained spiritual awakening. What happened in between? What was life like for the youth known as Prince Siddhartha?

It is important to note that Siddhartha was not born into the highest caste of the Brahmins, those who acted as intermediaries between the earthly and divine realms. The assigned caste of Siddhartha's family was the Ksatriya, those who ruled by their military power. For most of recorded history, monarchs were trained as soldiers (even the present day Queen Elizabeth served in the British armed forces during World War II). To be a prince meant you had to be prepared to succeed the king as the highest ranking military officer.

The time of Prince Siddhartha is known as the Axial Age (800-200 BCE). The author on popular books on world religions, Karen Armstrong, pointed out that it was a time when warfare became exponentially more destructive and bloody than in the previous age. Instead of small communities coming into gang fights using sticks and stones, centrally organized kingdoms were waging war against other kingdoms with huge armies of soldiers and a variety of weapons. Ms. Armstrong said at that time people were turning to religion for answers to the questions, "How can we end warfare? How can we stop coming into conflict with our fellow human beings?"

Prince Siddhartha as a child witnessed a scene that foreshadowed what he might see on the battlefields in his future. His father King Suddhodana brought him along to observe the ceremonial opening of the planting season. When the farmers plowed into the soil, the boy Siddhartha was delighted to see the wriggling insects and worms that surfaced. Then in the next moment he gasped with horror when a flock of birds swooped down and took the bugs and worms into their beaks. Just like when a child today turns on the TV to watch a nature program and sees the graceful gazelle tackled and killed by a cheetah, it was a shock to Siddhartha to see the reality of life: that beings kill other beings in order to live.

As humans we take the lives of other beings, animals and plants, in order to maintain our biological lives,

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- "Prince Siddhartha" from page 6 -

but is it necessary for us to kill our fellow human beings? In Siddhartha's time and for many people in our time, the answer is "yes." As one kingdom grows and prospers, it needs access to more resources, or it needs to defend its resources from another kingdom which is also seeking to expand. To maintain and develop our cultural group, we have to eliminate those other groups who want us to submit to their way of doing things instead of letting us dominate them. In the world of competing human societies, killing is an inevitable part of being a conqueror or defending against conquerors.

In training to become one who stands and fights his enemies until they surrender or are destroyed, Siddhartha had to develop his physical and mental strength and acquire a wide range of skills and knowledge for surviving and winning on the battlefield. This training would serve him well when he left the palace on a personal campaign to conquer his anxieties over old age, sickness and death, seeking to win unshakable peace for his individual soul. For six years, Siddhartha searched for the answers by going to various gurus and following their regimens of methods for attaining spiritual fulfillment. These methods included long strenuous periods of meditation, yoga poses and bodily mortification. If Siddhartha had not been in top physical and mental shape, it would have taken him longer to master those regimens or he might have easily become discouraged. As it is reported in the stories of Buddha's life, Siddhartha quickly learned and excelled in the physical and mental exercises and amazed each guru with his accomplishments. However with each regimen he mastered, Siddhartha only experienced disappointment that what each guru described as "the ultimate state" fell far short of the breakthrough he sought.

Giving up on the gurus of his day, Siddhartha embarked on the final campaign of his quest for spiritual fulfillment. The legendary stories tell of the demon Mara and his armies attacking Siddhartha as he sat in contemplation under the Bodhi tree. Today we would use the phrase "fighting his inner demons" to characterize Siddhartha's painful process of deepening self-examination. Rather than a shout of victory, the battle ends with the cry of surrender, "Avidya!" (Oh, darkness!). The surrender is Siddhartha finally letting go of his belief in Atman (the pure soul of the individual).

The victor here is life itself which has broken through Siddhartha's shell of self-attachment. As the Buddha, he went on to describe his awakening to others, often using military phrasing. "Greater in battle than the man who would conquer a thousand men, is he who would

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conquer just one – himself." (*Dhammapada* chapter eight, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu at accesstostainsight.org) The wording reminds us that to embark on the path of spiritual seeking, we must have the courage and determination of the warrior. The path is not for the cowardly or complacent.

There are some who have criticized Japanese Buddhist groups for their connection with the martial arts, saying that Buddhism should cultivate peacefulness and not arouse the warrior mind-set in people. But even just in our own temple there are many members who are or have been involved with martial arts and moreover, there are a great number of men and women who have served or are still serving in their country's military forces. Two of our ministers, Rev. Ashikaga and the late Rev. Gyoko Saito, trained at Japanese military schools as teenagers.

Even though military service, especially during international conflicts, puts people into positions where decisions and actions must be taken that lead to deaths and inflicting injury on others, I would rather see those decisions and actions being considered by people who've been exposed to Buddhism or other faiths which value the preciousness of life, than by irreligious people who only see the enemy as images to shoot at in a video game. The path to spiritual awakening takes many different routes for different people, but we can see in the life of Prince Siddhartha, that training as a warrior can be helpful in seeking the truth and that those who have to confront the tragedy of warfare may have more insight about the darkness of the human heart and a greater urge to transcend it.

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Our guest speaker, Rev. Yukei Ashikaga, has been serving as a full-time minister for the past 52 years. That is a record that is unequalled by any minister in the BCA. He has been and is presently serving at BTC since 1959. I was only six years old at that time! From one standpoint, a person might say, "How was Rev. Ashikaga able to serve that long? How does he do it?" But, when you consider his ministerial career in light of Yasuda Sensei's words, I think we can see that for Rev. Ashikaga as well, his past 52 years of ministry have been one in which the Nembutsu itself gave him the power to stand up and move forward each and every day of his life and of his ministry.

Namu Amida Butsu,
Rev. Marvin Harada