



# The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

## June 2025

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### Being Right or Being Kind Rev. Frederick Brenion

I recently answered many questions from college students about Buddhism, Jodo Shinshu, and our temple. They were all good questions. A few made me pause. This one stood out. "What determines whether something is right or wrong?"

I wrote back, that strange as it may sound, I'm not overly concerned about right or wrong. Sometimes life gets rather messy on what to do. One day, my son ran into the street to chase a ball, I screamed at him to stop because he was in danger of being hit by a car. Screaming can be a rather harsh thing. It seems to contradict the noble step of 'right language.' But it was the right thing to do at that moment to keep my son safe. Later, I explained to him why I yelled at him and he understood. But we both felt bad about it for different reasons. If I had been mindful about how kids are and that I did the same thing as a kid, the right thing would have been to have first put up a fence in my front yard. He'd be safe and I wouldn't be screaming at him. Buddhism advises us to look for skillful ways of doing things or anticipating things. We can get somewhere and learn from our experiences.

Yet quite often doing right on one thing conflicts with other things that seem right to do. Some years ago I wrote an essay about our denomination's stance on "No More War." Then shortly afterwards, Ukraine happened, and later Gaza. Our denomination opposes war and yet so many people are placed in a life and death decision to fight back. How does one resolve these things? I have no answer. The problem with war is that one responds with war. I am reminded of the movie "Wargames" where the conclusion was, "A strange Game. The only winning move is not to play." And yet we keep playing this ultimate game of right and wrong. We ask ourselves what is right, what is wrong. Sometimes it's obvious to one but not another.

Of course, in Buddhism, we do have something akin to 'right' and that is the precepts. They're not commandments but suggestions for behavior we aspire to. We strive not to kill, to be truthful, not steal. We try not to engage in inappropriate sexual behavior, nor take things that can harm our minds. We can't force these on people but they are for us to pursue. And to do that we need something else. We need to be enlightened by Buddhist virtues.

That's why I responded to the student that I'm more concerned with the question of being compassionate and wise as a better way towards living our lives. These are the two supreme Buddhist virtues. They both go together. This is why our central image on the altar is of Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Wisdom and Unending Compassion. We must learn to be wise in expressing our compassion. We must learn wisdom from the experiences that life gives us.

There is a saying that if you have the choice of being right or being kind, then choose kindness. As the Dalai Lama often says, "Be kind, and if you can't be kind, then at least do no harm. Now that is both wise and compassionate."

**Endarkenment**  
**Bill Bohlman, Temple President**

“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (*John 8:12*) At the moment of his enlightenment, the Buddha cried, “Avidya”, “Oh, darkness”. The common thread of both these statements is that we are in darkness and we are freed by the light. What is the nature of this darkness?

A number of years ago, I attended a seminar by Dr. Nobuo Haneda. While discussing enlightenment, he commented that it must have an opposite; he called it endarkenment. To attain enlightenment there must be something to overcome, hence endarkenment. This endarkenment is the inherent condition of humans, and is the root of all suffering. Rev. Gyomay Kubose in his book *The Center Within* writes, “You, I, the whole world is in enlightenment, but because of our ignorance we are unable to see this world of enlightenment.” In Buddhism our ignorance is the cause of the darkness.

Buddhism differs from many of the theistic religions in that those religions often ascribe the cause of this darkness to an outside, malevolent force. The most common of these is the devil, the Prince of Darkness. However, even though the cause of the darkness differs, the path to overcoming the darkness is quite similar; we draw upon a power beyond ourselves. In theistic religions, one calls upon the power of a deity to save them from their suffering. With true faith eternal salvation is attained. Buddhism does not have a divine being, yet a path to liberation from suffering exists. This path is the Buddhadharma.

Buddhism does not have a belief in an eternal, individual soul; therefore, it does not speak of eternal salvation. Rather, the Buddhadharma presents a way to overcome suffering in this life; to liberate oneself. In Jodo Shinshu Buddhism this power beyond self manifests itself in the Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life. This is not a real person or deity; rather it is a personification of the unbounded light of the Buddhadharma. When we become aware of this unbounded light, the light of realization of life as it truly is, not as we wish to perceive it, we are freed from the darkness of our ignorance.

The light to overcome the darkness must come from outside us; we are only the recipient of the light. It is as if you were in a dark room; you cannot become the light. However, you are the one who seeks the switch to turn on the light. It is this seeking of the switch that will lead you to the ability to turn on the light. As we flood our lives with this light, our suffering diminishes as we become more aware of the true nature of things. Our darkness recedes as the light shines ever more brightly. Embrace the light and find peace.



**Scheduled Activities – subject to change**

**Weekly services** – Sundays 11 am - in-person, Facebook Live

**Qigong (Chinese exercise)** – Tuesdays 10:30 am

**Sunday Meditation** – 9 am

**Thursday Meditation** – is on brake until September.

**Asoka Society (social gathering)** – 1 pm June 21st

**BTC Dharma Book Club** – 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month, 6:30 pm

Please sign up with this group to receive zoom linkage.

The above activities are open to the public and free (donations appreciated).

If you are interested in the activities below, please leave your contact information and the group will set up an appointment for you to visit with them.

**Iaido (martial art)** – Mondays, 7 pm

**Kokyo Taiko (drums)** – Friday evenings, Sunday afternoons

## **Shotsuki Hoyo, A family Tradition**

**By**

**Gary T. Nakai**

Two facts surround Shotsuki Hoyo, the observed monthly memorial service on the first Sunday of each month: family members regularly attend and this service traditionally is the largest regularly attended service in each month; despite Sunday service attendance generally waning in recent years. The memorial Sunday service is highlighted by the board up front containing the names of those loved ones who passed away during that particular month since the beginning of BTC's existence.

Reminders to the surviving families are and have been mailed out reliably in advance each month by a long-serving, dedicated Nisei administrative volunteer. The basis for this monthly mailing is the temple funeral/memorial records, for the most part.

Another fact that was once a self-perpetuating tradition is that some of the after-service refreshments were generously contributed by the families; as a gesture of their appreciation in memory of their beloved. Another, more recent practice, was that family members were encouraged to participate in the services; ringing the Kansho, acting as service chair, reading Dhammapada selections, and even in some cases leading the chanting. All of the foregoing was not a stipulation imposed by the ministers, but an inclusive tradition that caught on and was willingly embraced by family participants.

An open invitation of how to confirm participation in the service will be included in the reminders sent out each month and the monthly memorial listing in the bulletin. Participation in our services by Sangha members, especially by the families at Shotsuki Hoyo, the Monthly Memorial is encouraged and greatly appreciated.

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**"The reality of nature,**

**the reality of life is oneness.**

**But we humans have such a strong egotistic nature.**

**We are the ones who create dualism;**

**we are the ones who talk about two sides:**

**front and back,**

**right and wrong,**

**me and you.**

**As soon as life is dichotomized,**

**tension is created."**

**Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose**



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> 9 am Meditation 11 am Monthly memorial	<b>2</b> Iaido 7 pm	<b>3</b> Qigong 10:30 am	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Taiko 7 pm	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> 9 am Meditation 11 am Regular service	<b>9</b> Iaido* 7 pm	<b>10</b> Qigong 10:30 am	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Taiko* 7 pm	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> 9 am Meditation 11 am Regular service	<b>16</b> Iaido* 7 pm	<b>17</b> Qigong 10:30 am	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Taiko* 7 pm	<b>21</b> Asoka 1 pm
<b>22</b> 9 am Meditation 11 am Regular service	<b>23</b> Iaido* 7 pm	<b>24</b> Qigong 10:30 am	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Taiko* 7 pm	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> 9 am Meditation 11 am Regular service	<b>30</b> Iaido* 7 pm					
*Iaido and Taiko require appointments made in advance						