



## The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

# January 2026

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### A New Year's Greeting to You

**Rev. Fred Brenion**

Growing up, New Year's Day always seemed a different from the other holidays we celebrated. It wasn't religious like Christmas. It wasn't national like the Fourth of July, Washington's Birthday, or Thanksgiving. It was just itself. It's sort of like our own birthdays, only New Year's is a birthday party for the world.

I'm told that in Japan individual birthdays weren't celebrated until about 1950; everyone celebrated their birthday on New Year's Day under the belief that everyone got older on that day, not the actual day of birth. This is probably why New Year's Day is the most popular holiday in Japan! You were considered to be one year old when you were born, owing to an old view of the length of pregnancy, and you became two on the following New Year – even if you were born the day before! Still, New Year's in Japan is like everyone's birthday party together. It gives a message that while each of us is special, and we are, we are also all in it together. There is much Buddhism in that.

Let me wish each of you a Happy New Year! I hope that you meet your deepest aspirations this coming year. This past year some of us have experienced great joys, some great sorrows. Yet each day has been a reminder of the teachings of the Dharma. We live in a world of impermanence and change. There is nothing new in this. Right now, the Sun is shining. Each of us is breathing. The flowers on our altars or at our homes smell wonderful. There is a New Year smile on your faces. Life still goes on. Still, there is something about New Year's that makes us want to celebrate, plan, and hope. It's a new start.

On New Year's Day, many people are waking up with hangovers. Others are watching parades, or planning for the big sports games of the day. Some will go to temple to hear the Dharma. Each of us is making the start we need to do. But why go hear the Dharma? I could all be sleeping in right now! I think I need to hear the Dharma to get my perspective straight. I am about to step out into the year.. On New Year's Day, most of us have the custom of making resolutions. What we hope to accomplish, what we want to commit ourselves to doing. We do this every year. I can't speak for others, but I have seldom ever kept any of my resolutions. I did have good intentions, but I soon fall flat on my face. I usually give up, starting over the next year, and the next, never getting anything done.

The message of Jodo Shinshu is the message of New Year's Day. Many of my Christian friends describe themselves as being Christmas Christians, or Easter Christians. They identify with certain holidays as being central to their self-meaning. I think I am a New Year's Day Shinshu follower. I make resolutions and fail to follow them. I am at heart a self-power person, a jiriki person. That is why I know I will fall on my face. I need to hear that. In our central story of a great Bodhisattva, Dharmakara, I hear of a person who sees reality clearly for the first time when he encounters the Dharma, and he makes the deepest resolutions possible. We often call them aspirations, vows. He knows that everything is at stake for everyone, and so he commits himself completely. Unlike me, Dharmakara got the job done. His is the primal vow, the resolution made for everyone's benefit. Maybe that is my problem. My resolutions are not deep enough. I'm not making them on behalf of others, just myself. How selfish I am. I am always about me.

Yet, I can really smile today because whether I succeed or not, the Dharma, imaged as Amida Buddha as the fulfillment of Dharmakara's Vows, has already succeeded for me. I am accepted as I am, right now, every now. Each now is a new now, no matter what, because of this. Each now is always a New Year's now, even if it is at the last day of the year. And, when the time comes, at the last moment of my life. Wow! That's why this can be, and will be a happy New Year!

Happy New Year Everyone!

Namu Amida Butsu!

**A Look Ahead**  
**Bill Bohlman, Temple President**

As we begin the New Year, we have exciting changes ahead. The two main items are the renovation of the residence building and the possibility of a new resident minister.

Recently, the board of directors approved the repair and renovation of the residence building. This decision was put to a vote of the membership and was overwhelmingly approved. The scope of this work entails repairing all immediate defects, restoration of areas damaged by the water leak in 2024 and renovation of two of the apartments into updated, livable units. Work should commence soon and hopefully will be completed by sometime in the spring. This renovation will maintain the building as a long-time asset for BTC, as well as providing living quarters for any new resident minister.

For over two years, Rev. Fred has acted as supervising minister allowing us to continue to have Sunday service and has been available for other ministerial duties; for this we are grateful. However, for a sustainable future, the temple needs a resident minister. Rev. Victor Ogundipe should finish his Kyoshi training and additional education sometime in 2026. At that time, he would be qualified to be a resident minister. Although nothing is certain yet, Rev. Victor has previously expressed an interest in becoming our resident minister.

Another short-term possibility has been presented to us by Bishop Kawawata and Higashi in Los Angeles. They have asked if BTC is willing to have a young Kyoshi minister from Japan come to BTC to gain experience as a resident minister in America. We have agreed in principle to this idea and will work out the details in the coming months.

While these changes are occurring, the temple will continue to be a place where anyone can come to hear the Dharma. The true strength of the temple is the Sangha. Although attendance at Sunday service is lower than years ago, the Sangha continues to support the temple; for this we are grateful. On behalf of the board of directors we wish you a happy and healthy New Year.

**EITAIKYO SERVICE**  
**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**  
**SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 2026**

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**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** – 7:15 pm

**Asoka Society (social gathering)** – On break until March

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



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### January 2026 Calendar

Events may be canceled or moved:

Check [www.facebook.com/budtempchi](https://www.facebook.com/budtempchi) for the most up-to-date changes.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 11 am Monthly Memorial 9 am Meditation	5 Iaido 7 pm	6 Qigong 10:30 am	7	8 Meditation 7:15 pm	9	10
11 11 am Regular Service 9am Meditation	12 Iaido* 7 pm	13 Qigong 10:30 am	14	15 Meditation 7:15 pm	16	17
18 11 am Regular service 9 am Meditation	19 Iaido* 7 pm	20 Qigong 10:30 am	21	22 Meditation 7:15 -pm	23	24
25 11 am Eitaikyo Service 9 am Meditation General Membership meeting	26 Iaido 7 pm	27 Qigong 10:30 am	28	29 Meditation 7:15 pm	30	31