



The
Buddhist
Temple
of
Chicago

April
2026

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Hanamatsuri
Rev. Fred Brenion

Hanamatsuri, our Flower Festival, celebrates the birth of Buddha. It is a happy and beautiful occasion. One of the highlights is decorating the Hanamido, a kind of small shrine or shelter where a statue of the newly-born Buddha is placed. It is decorated with flowers. Such beautiful aromas, an explosion of colors! The reason for this is that it is said the Buddha's mother, Queen Maya, went to a special garden that was used by her mother's family as a tranquil place to deliver one's infant. In a way, Queen Maya was going home, returning to her roots. It had a special name, Lumbini's Garden. It is said that when she arrived she sought a private area within a protective grove of trees. She held on to the bough of one of the trees and began giving birth. Soon, she was delivered of a healthy boy. It is said that the trees around her began to drop flowers. Dew fell from the leaves tasting like sweet tea. Surely a refreshment for mother and child. Such a homely image. It is said that at his birth, the Baby Siddhartha, for that was the name given to him, took seven steps, and lotus flowers grew at each step to protect his feet, and he proclaimed, "From heaven above and earth below I alone am Noble." One may take this as fact or as myth, but I find that within the story is an aspiration of all of us to express our homage and devotion. This baby was to become our liberator from the bounds of suffering. For us Siddhartha could do anything. And he did. This story of his birth foreshadows his rebirth thirty-five years later under the Bodhi Tree when he finally awoke. There he got up and walked out of the forest, walking towards all of us to express what he had discovered. Hanamatsuri in all its beauty, foretells Bodhi Day and the possibility that we can, with Buddha, awake. Our lives, our selves can be filled with the scent and beauty of flowers.

For me, Hanamatsuri has a special meaning. It was the first time I participated fully in a Buddhist ritual. Beforehand I came to one of our temples as a visitor, a spectator, trying to understand what it is to live and believe in a Buddhist life. My good wife came that Sunday with me to see just what it was I was getting involved with. I thought it was going to be a regular service, but instead it was Hanamatsuri. We sat in the back row. I could see the Hanamido up front, all covered in flowers. Within was 'Baby Buddha' standing within. I did not know that he was standing in a pool of sweet tea! As the service progressed people got up to get in line to go to the Hanamido. They were each given a flower to help decorate or lay upon the shrine. They bowed and did something within the shrine; I could not see what. It was my row's turn. My wife looked at me, I think wondering what I would do. I had been reticent for such a long time. Never verbalizing a real commitment to what I was exploring. On the spot, I got up and got in line. I was now making a kind of public acknowledgement, but of what? As I approached I could see more clearly what those in front were doing. They laid their flower on the shrine, then reached in for a ladle filled with sweet tea and poured it on Baby Buddha. It was now my turn. I asked for a carnation as it is my favorite flower and placed it on top of the shrine. Then I reached in for the ladle and I poured three times upon the infant Buddha. As I did so I whispered to myself, "I hope to go to the Buddha. I hope to go to the Dharma. I hope to go to the Sangha." Then I went back to my seat, next to my surprised wife. I had made a public venture. That it would lead me someday to stand here before you all, in minister's robes of all things. Hanamatsuri is an invitation to begin with young Siddhartha in a voyage of discovery, self-discovery. I hope this day will be meaningful for you, filled with the blossoming of spring within your inner life.

Everyday Gratitude
Bill Bohlman, Temple President

For what are you grateful? When we receive a gift, a compliment or any other enjoyable thing we often have a sense of gratitude. But what about everyday life?

For most of the last sixteen years, and continuously since 2020, I have been on home dialysis. Of course, I am not grateful that my kidneys are damaged but I am grateful for much that has transpired. I am grateful for the technology that allows me to treat my condition at home. I am grateful for the doctors and nurses that give me great care. I am grateful for Medicare that allows me to afford my treatment. Most of all I am grateful that because of all of this I am able to survive and thrive. Everyday gratitude.

Recently, I have begun to volunteer as a driver for a local organization that gives rides to people who cannot drive themselves. For these individuals this service gives them a freedom of movement they do not usually have. They often express their gratitude. One regular rider is a young, blind woman; she has been blind since birth and doesn't even see shadows. However, she leads a full life as a student and a musician who loves to volunteer to entertain the kids at the boys and girls club. She often expresses her gratitude for all those whom help her every day. Through her I have a deeper gratitude for my ability to see.

For over thirty-five years BTC has been a major part of my life. Being able to hear the Dharma and share it with the sangha is something for which I will be forever grateful. Each week a dedicated group of volunteers makes sure that Sunday service will occur. For over two years, Rev. Fred has acted as our supervising minister giving Dharma talks and being available to speak with the service attendees. As we celebrate Hanamatsuri this month another group of talented volunteers will decorate the hanamido. Throughout the year, the sangha is there when help is needed. We are grateful for all these people. This is everyday gratitude.

Deepest Sympathies
To the family and friends of
Hiroyuki Ken Katayama 𑖑 March 10, 2026



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) – April 18 – 1 PM

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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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

April 2026 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
		m	1	2 Meditation 7:15 pm	3	4
5 11 am Monthly Memorial 9 am Meditation	6 laido 7 pm	7 Qigong 10:30 am	8	9 Meditation 7:15 pm	10	11
12 11 am Hanamatsuri 9 am Meditation	13 laido* 7 pm	14 Qigong 10:30 am	15	16 Meditation 7:15 pm	17	18 1 pm Asoka
19 11 am Regular service 9 am Meditation	20 laido* 7 pm	21 Qigong 10:30 am	22	23 Meditation 7:15 -pm	24	25
26 11 am Regular Service	27 laido	28 Qigong 10:30 am	29	30 Meditation 7:15 pm		