



The
Buddhist
Temple
of
Chicago

May
2026

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Meaningless Meaning, Purposeless Purpose

Rev. Fred Brenion

I came across this amazing quote from our founder, Rev. Gyomay Kubose that I want to share with you.

"A reporter from a local newspaper came to our house to interview my wife about the Japanese tea ceremony. This reporter continuously asked, "What is the meaning? What for? Why do you do that? What is the purpose for that?" This kind of question was directed at everything in the making of tea – at every gesture, every implement. Without thinking or deliberating, my wife finally replied, "No meaning. Meaningless meaning. It is purposeless. Purposeless purpose."

Isn't that just something? Doing something for no particular reason or even without meaning? I remember as a child, I would just go play. If I was asked 'Why are you playing?' I would have said, "To have fun." If I was then to be asked, "Why do you want to have fun? I could only answer, "Why not?" or perhaps, "For no reason." As a kid I think I would have looked strangely at an adult asking me these things. Why do you need a reason to play? You just played. To play is the simple naturalness of being a child. A child's sheer suchness.

Of course, purpose is a good thing too. Doing things meaningfully is a good thing as well. But we don't always have a reason. Sometimes we're just natural, perhaps 'in the moment'. Sometimes we try to force being natural and it becomes very unnatural. Sometimes I think that the art of being a kid that we all had got lost, misplaced, or even buried. The adult world can be pretty hard and demanding. I confess that as a child I did mischievous things. Sometimes harmful. When called to the task I would be asked, "Why did you do that?" And I had no reason. But I had to produce a reason and that was a struggle. "Just because" was not an acceptable answer. I was questioned over and over until those above me were satisfied. I refer not just to parents, but teachers, and later bosses as well. I learned a lesson to think before doing, plan before acting. These are good skills to have at hand in learning to be an adult. But something is lost. Something that really should have beheld on to.

That's why doing things like a tea ceremony is a truly normal thing as Mrs. Kubose was trying to show. She said later about the reporter that, until then, she didn't realized that he and she were really living in different worlds. Some want worlds that require constant meaning and purpose for everything. Some of us live in a world where play and spontaneity can still have a part. Shinran, our great teacher, said something similar, that the real goal is to find our "Naturalness". To talk about it or think about it, is to spoil it. One is simply it, without a thought! That is truly something.

In sheer pleasure I discovered that D.T. Suzuki said something remarkably like Rev. Kubose. He wrote:

"Namu-Amida-Butsu" is "meaningless meaning," and if we try to give it some kind of meaning, or start to think that some significance should exist within it, then the six-syllable Name is no longer one's own, and floats away up to the highest clouds."

That is so right! We find that the heart of our Buddhism is the heart of real play. No meaning or purpose. Just being. It is enough for a child. It can still be enough for each of us. Find your inner child and let them out to play!

Memorials Bill Bohlman, Temple President

Memorials are an opportunity to express our gratitude to our loved ones and honor their life. Even though BTC does not have a resident minister at this time, memorial services can still occur. Although she has retired, Rev. Patti Nakai has officiated the first memorial and giving of the Dharma name for some longtime members. However, all other memorials are still available.

Each month, we have the shotsuki hoyo service. A postcard is sent to the contact person of the deceased to remind them of the date. Unfortunately, the last few months only one or two individuals have come to that service to honor their loved one. Rev. Patti often said that shotsuki hoyo is your loved one calling you to hear the Dharma. Have we lost the ability to hear this call? It is said that when someone passes beyond this world of samsara they become a Buddha, a teacher. By honoring their memory at shotsuki hoyo, you are hearing their voice through the Dharma.

Our tradition has ample opportunities to honor our loved ones and hear the Dharma. The makurya-kyo, pillow service, gives our loved one the opportunity to hear the Dharma, perhaps for the final time. After their passing various dates can be observed. The first is the 49th day or 100th day service. Annual services are held at various dates. The one year service is on the first anniversary of the passing. The following third year, seventh year, thirteenth year, twenty fifth year, thirty third year and fiftieth year are observed one year before the western way of counting anniversaries (3rd year on 2nd anniversary of passing)

These later services are usually performed by a minister, however, prior to her retirement Rev. Patti trained some of the lay leaders on how to do these services. Also, Rev. Fred Brenion, our supervising minister, is available to do these services via Zoom with enough prior notice.

Memorial services are one of the most important functions of the temple. We want to assure everyone that BTC is still here for you. With gratitude for the lives they lived; let us continue to honor our love ones. Namu Amida Butsu.



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 – in person, Facebook Live

Asoka Society (social gathering) – 1 pm, May 16

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

Our Beautiful Hana Matsuri!

April 12th was our Hana Matsuri, the Flower Festival honoring the Birth of the Buddha!
Here is the Ochigo Parade! With Jane Morishige, Ron Yoshioka, Grand Children. Photo by Alice Murata.

A closer look at the beautiful Hanamido. Photo by Alice Murata.

And our intrepid Hanamido decorators: Gwen Kato, Noreen Enkoji, Alice Murata, Ms, Karen Kanemoto,
Robin Kanemoto Jane Morishige, Photo by Arlene Nozawa/



NATSU MATSURI SUNDAY, JULY 19 SILENT AUCTION

Donations needed for the Silent Auction.

Collectibles, artwork, interesting items, jewelry and more.

Please bring donations to the temple before July 15, 2026

for inclusion in the Silent Auction.

All donations are tax deductible.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

May 2026 Calendar

Events may be canceled or moved:

Check www.facebook.com/budtempchi for the most up-to-date changes.

**Iaido and Taiko require appointments made in advance*

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