

Who we are:

The Midwest Buddhist Temple (MBT) began in 1944 organized by Japanese Americans relocating to Chicago after imprisonment in the American WWII concentration camps. As our participation in the community has grown, so has the diversity of our membership.

We are a community of Jodo Shinshu Buddhists which is a Pure Land tradition in the Mahayana School of Buddhism. What this means is that we are concerned not only with our own lives but for the lives of others.

We understand that we are interconnected with all beings in oneness. This does not deny our individuality, yet what we do affects others as we are a collective part of this world. We realize our lives are the result of causes and conditions and the actions of others which gives us a profound sense of gratitude.

We practice a religion that teaches us to be truly human. By observing the universe, we come to understand our place in the world. In short, Buddhism shows us that our ego, our image of ourselves, is false. By letting go of our ego, we understand that we are part of a greater whole, not the center.

Our tradition is for the ordinary person and does not require us to become a monk or sit

for hours in deep meditation. It is through deep listening that the Dharma penetrates into our hearts. From our life experiences with others, the Dharma can illuminate even the darkest corners of our ego self.

As with all Buddhist traditions, enlightenment or awakening is our goal. Shin Buddhism teaches how ordinary people can find their own path to enlightenment. It gives us a unique path for everyone to discover awakening.

Who is welcome: You are!

“Come as you are and stay awhile.”

“**Come as you are**” means there is no judgement about who or where you are from, your beliefs, age, class, race, sexual identity, gender or any other basis. There is no exclusivity in Jodo Shinshu. This radical equality is an extremely important message welcoming all those who want to hear the Buddha-Dharma and experience the teaching of non-discrimination of our founder, Shinran Shonin. It is a teaching available to all. Amida Buddha is said to have the “Wisdom of Non-Discrimination.” This is manifested in the Great Compassion that embraces all beings.

To “**stay awhile**” is listening, observing, participating and reflecting, which are important parts of the tradition. This describes one of the primary practices of

Jodo Shinshu, that of “deep listening.” To deeply hear the Dharma or the Buddhist teachings allows us to better understand ourself and our world.

What you will experience at MBT:

A Sunday service is an opportunity to encounter the Dharma, the Buddha’s teachings. We sit in pews, sing songs, chant sutras, participate in readings and hear a message shared by our minister. We welcome families and have a Dharma School for children. Casual attire is fine.

We encounter the Dharma not only through the messages shared in the service, but from the experience of engaging with others during the many activities at MBT. The Jodo Shinshu tradition emphasizes “*ondobo/ondogyo*” meaning fellow travelers on the path. The significance is that we are part of a Sangha or community of followers.

Items on the altar: (*Naijin*/Inner sanctuary)

- **Amida Buddha Statue:**



Jodo Shinshu is a Pure Land tradition. The Pure Land is the land where Amida Buddha resides. Amida is the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life or Wisdom and Compassion and is the golden statue that is revered (*Gohonzon*). Amida Buddha is not a person or a divine omnipotent being who grants us things if we meet certain conditions.

Instead, Amida Buddha is the dynamic reality of infinite wisdom and compassion. Amida is formless but we give Amida anthropomorphic features to help us understand our relationship to ultimate reality. In other words, Amida is the embodiment of the principle of infinite wisdom unfolding as compassion - the way this world actually is but difficult to see because of our blind passions, our egocentric self.

- **Ornaments:**

The ornaments in the *Naijin* (inner sanctuary) are representations of the Pure Land. It is usually not thought of as an actual place but a purified sphere of influence or realization for Amida Buddha. Each has meaning, adding to the environment for us to attain awakening.

- **Meaning of the rituals:**

Worshippers place incense in the burner (*oshoko*), place their palms together (*gassho*), encircling their hands with their mindfulness beads (*nenju*), and recite "*Namo Amida Butsu*."

- *Incense Offering*: incense represents the transiency of life. The smell purifies the air and represents the Dharma. The candle is the light of wisdom of the Buddha. Flowers symbolize impermanence and the changing existence of nature.

- *Gassho*: is an expression of reverence and gratitude.



- *Nenju*: encircling the hands with a nenju represents oneness.

- *Namo Amida Butsu*: is translated as "I take refuge in the Buddha." It is not a meditation or practice to attain enlightenment but an expression of gratitude for having received the True Entrusting Mind of the Buddha.

It is called the *Nembutsu* which means to "think on" or the "recitation of" the Buddha's name.

Can I participate in the rituals?

You are welcome and encouraged to participate in any rituals being done by others and we can help you with any questions. If you are not comfortable, there is no requirement to do so. You don't have to be a member, go through special training or do things perfectly to participate in our gatherings. The act of learning the process and going through the ritual is in itself mindfulness of the Buddha and our lives. We only ask that you are respectful.

Want more details and information?

Please ask us how you can learn more about the temple and our tradition. There are opportunities to be a part of our Sangha in different ways to fit your time and comfort level.



MIDWEST BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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Welcome
to the
Midwest Buddhist Temple



mbtchicago.org

Sunday Service 10:30 am