



Rev. Aki Rogers will start as MBT's new resident minister in June 2026.

## New resident minister appointed

By Jason Matsumoto

**W**e are delighted to announce that Rev. Aki Rogers (they/them) will join the Midwest Buddhist Temple as our new resident minister, starting in early June 2026.

Rev. Aki will be under a one-year supervisory period, officially overseen by Rev. Kurt Rye with operational oversight delegated to Rev. Ron. The MBT Board of Trustees is grateful to both Rev. Rye and Rev. Ron, as well as to BCA Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada, for their support in this process.

Click this [link](#) to hear Rev. Aki Roger's Shinnen-Enkai message to the MBT Sangha.

Rev. Aki comes to us with a deep commitment to Shin Buddhism. While this will be their first appointment as a full-time minister, Rev. Aki brings years of dedicated service and leadership as a Minister's Assistant at Senshin Buddhist Temple

*see rev. aki, page 5*



Photo by Kailani Yu

## Celebrating the new year

By Carl Ichikawa

**O**n Jan. 25, the temple held its Annual General Meeting and Shinnen-enkai (New Year's party). Despite 6 inches of snow and temperatures in the teens, nearly 80 members and friends gathered along with another 15 online.

The day began with a shortened Sunday Service highlighted by a wonderful Dharma talk by Minister's Assistant Terry Cichocki. (You can hear

the talk [here](#) or read it on page 9).

The service concluded with Rev. Ron leading the installation of the 2026 Board of Trustees. Rev. Ron received a warm welcome as he returned to the najin for the first time since his surgery.

Immediately after the service, Cliff Long, as emcee, kicked off the Annual General Meeting.

*see new year, page 10*

## Rev. Ron recovering, getting stronger

**R**ev. Ron continues his recovery from bypass surgery. He is getting stronger each day and has started to attend Sunday services. Rev. Ron and Elaine thank everyone for all of the well wishes and positive thoughts.



MBT will continue to deliver services as planned. The weekly program is being managed by the Service Planning Committee with Rev. Ron's guidance.

# happenings

By Elaine Matsushita

Please drop by JASC at 5700 N. Lincoln Ave., on Friday, Feb. 20 for JASC's February Soup & Rice event. You'll get not only a great dinner and wonderful fellowship but will also support addressing food insecurity.

Enjoy soup made by volunteers, rice made by JASC staff, and a community meal for a good cause. All donations received in gratitude for the meal will be given to MBT's Outreach Program for the Unhoused/monthly sandwich-making program.

The event will be held from 6–8 pm.

Volunteers are needed for setting up, bringing soup, staffing the event and cleaning up. Please contact Joy Zavala for more information or if you would like to help at the event.

## Conversation with Yu Miri

The Buddhist Temple of Chicago Asoka Society is hosting a conversation with acclaimed novelist/playwright **Yu Miri**. Yu is currently in residence at the University of Chicago as a Visiting Research Associate in East Asian Languages and Civilizations. Her residency is part of "**Re-Staging a Japanese American Chicago**," a project sponsored by UC's Center for East Asian Studies.

Yu will carry out oral history interviews with members of Chicago's Japanese American community and use those as the basis for a new theatrical playscript. "Re-Staging" is based on projects she has carried out in Japan working



Photos from Kiku Taura

Oh the people you will meet! Kiku Taura and Takamasa Onose met friend and MBT member Barbara Sherman and niece Marissa at their local sushi shop in Japan. And, later, Kira and Maya Nord (and mom Mari, not shown) were on the same flight home.

with residents in areas affected by the 3/11 tsunami and Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011.

Yu and project co-organizer, **Michael Bourdaghs**, will be make a public presentation about their plans, including a video introducing Yu's previous

theatrical productions. The event is open to all who are interested in learning more about the project.

It will be held at the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, 1151 W. Leland Ave., from 2–4 pm on Saturday, Feb. 7.

If you plan to attend, please register [here](#). Or click [here](#) for more information about the project.

## Day of Remembrance

Full Spectrum Features' latest short docudrama, "Enough," will be featured at Chicago's **Day of Remembrance**

**2026**, an annual gathering that marks the signing of Executive Order 9066 and honors the many generations shaped by Japanese American incarceration. The gathering will be held from 2–4 pm Sunday, Feb. 22 at the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N Clark St.

Rooted in the decades-long history of the Japanese American Redress Movement—from the lead-up to the 1981 Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) hearings through the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988—the film turns to community memory and testimony to ask what it takes to confront harm honestly and pursue repair over time.

Following the screening, a panel of community members and practitioners will reflect on how the legacies of Redress speak to present-day struggles around state violence, surveillance, and displacement.

see *happenings*, page 13

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Please send articles and photographs to: **Midwest Buddhist Temple, 435 W. Menomonee St., Chicago, IL 60614** or [bulletin@mbtchicago.org](mailto:bulletin@mbtchicago.org)

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Don't forget to visit our website, [mbtchicago.org](http://mbtchicago.org), for more information about Shin Buddhism and the Midwest Buddhist Temple.

# Monshu's New Year's message

*Editor's note: The following message from Monshu Kojun Ohtani is reprinted from the Wheel of Dharma and was translated from his New Year's message to the Honganji-ha in Kyoto, Japan.*

## By Gomonshu Kojun Ohtani

As we welcome the New Year, I wish to extend to you my greetings. First of all, in recent years, natural disasters such as typhoons, heavy rains, earthquakes and large-scale forest fires have occurred frequently in Japan and other parts of the world, causing great damage.

I would like to express my sincere condolences to those who lost loved ones and convey my sincere sympathy to everyone who was affected by these disasters. I sincerely hope that everyone will be able to return to a sense of peace and normalcy as soon as possible.

Last year was a milestone year,

marking 80 years since the end of World War II. In July, I had the precious opportunity to conduct memorial services in Okinawa, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, each location which experienced indescribable destruction in this war.

I was also given the precious opportunity to listen to the stories of those who experienced the war. Listening to those stories, it made me reflect on the message delivered by then Sokunyo Monshu at the "Memorial Service for All the Victims of the 50th Anniversary of the End of the War" conducted in 1995, at which time he expressed his regret that our organization went against the teachings of our founder and actively cooperated in the war in the name of Buddhism.

I was reminded that I must take to heart the words of Sokunyo Monshu and move forward, carrying out my duties with a

renewed determination.

The post-war journey of our organization began with the aim of realizing a peaceful society where all people can live happily while not forgetting how we actively cooperated and participated in the war.

We must remain mindful of this fact and never repeat the same mistake. Even today, wars and conflicts continue around the world and many precious lives are threatened.

In such a situation, let us always keep in mind the wish of our founder, Shinran Shonin, and move forward each day guided by his words, "Let there be peace in the world, and may the Buddha-Dharma spread."

January 1, 2026

OHTANI Kojun  
Monshu  
Jodo Shinshu  
Honganji-ha

## Realizing our interconnectedness

*Editor's note: The following message from Bishop Marvin Harada, and accompanying artwork at right, is reprinted from the Wheel of Dharma.*

## By Rev. Marvin Harada

*Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America*

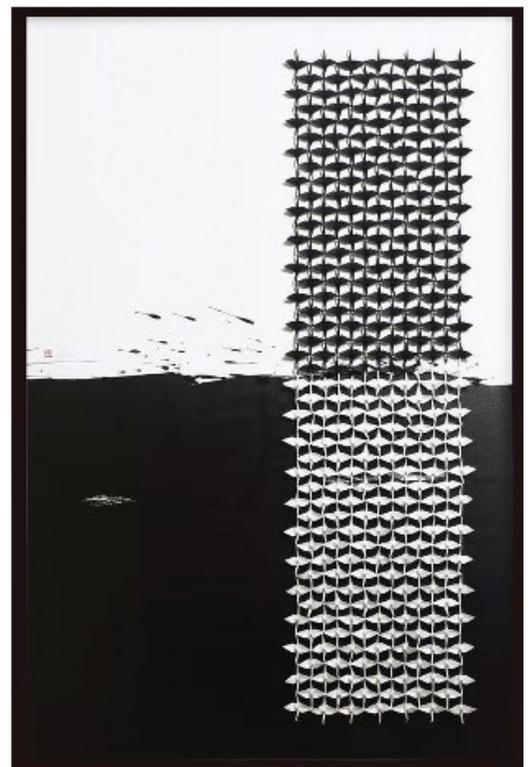
Happy New Year to all of you. May I take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support and "Dana" that enabled us to meet and exceed our goal of \$15 million for the Dharma Forward campaign.



To me, it is a reflection of how all of you value the teachings, your local temple, and our BCA and the Institute of Buddhist Studies. It is gratifying to know that we all share the same aspiration to move the Dharma forward, especially to those who have never encountered the Jodo Shinshu teachings.

The image in this photo is the artwork of an amazing artist, Paula Pietranera, who folds and makes cranes. We have all seen folded origami cranes, but what is unique about Paula's artwork is that all of the cranes in this piece were created from a single sheet of paper. Each crane is connected to all the other cranes. Her artwork is called "Renzuru" or "connected cranes," and she learned that art in Japan.

We got her permission to use her artwork for



the BCA calendar for 2026, as it is a beautiful expression of our theme for this year, "Realizing

see *bishop*, page 8

# Ultimate goal of Shin Buddhist life: True entrusting

The following is from an archived Dharma message that was shared on Jan. 4, 2026.

By Ellen Dunleavy

A couple of weeks ago, Dec. 21 to be exact, we saw the shortest day of the year. The days are getting longer every day. Yay! And, yet, when you get up in total darkness, as I did this morning in order to get here on time, it certainly doesn't seem like it. But daylight is, according to the experts in such things, increasing by one to four seconds each day to begin with.

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Click this [link](#) to hear the Dharma message shared by Rev. Patti Kanaya on Jan. 11, 2026.

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One to four seconds; so small an amount it can't be seen by me even post-cataract surgery. These small seconds of increasing light are a good example of a subtle kind

of change. Because you know, change is happening all the time even if we can't see it or are unaware of it.

I was recently diagnosed with afib, atrial fibrillation. One day, I was feeling fine doing my usual stuff in my usual way, and the next, I was in the ER with a heart rhythm no jazz band could replicate.

How did that happen? Well, duh, impermanence.

My heart has been working for a lot of years and now it's wearing out or maybe just got some kind of cardio dementia. In any case, it happened while I wasn't looking.

There are times when change creeps up on us like that king of impermanence, aging. And other times, change shocks, smacks and shakes us up without any discernible or satisfactory trajectory.

Getting mugged on a sunny Sunday afternoon many years ago in my adopted home, Dublin, was like that. Though I was unhurt, I was certainly not unscarred. I was, to be honest, pretty much afraid all the time afterwards. The stress led to illness.

Staying home to recover, I found myself mesmerized by a series of Hong Kong movies shown on TV. Of course, I became immediately obsessed and started reading about these crazy films and the crazy city where they were made.

And then I had a crazy thought. What if I actually went to Hong Kong?

I don't know how in my still terrified state I was able to convince myself that traveling to an unknown Asian city was a good idea, but I do know that I had the cab driver driving me to the airport reassuring me.

"You'll be grand, love."

Of course, it turned out he was right and that I could not have chosen a safer place to visit post-mini trauma. Well, OK, there



The giant Tian Tan Buddha statue on Lantau Island in Hong Kong.

are places just as safe, but I didn't know that then.

One of the things on my "must see" list in Hong Kong was the giant Buddha statue on Lantau Island. After a 45-minute ferry ride and an equally long bus ride up into the mountains, I arrived at Ngong Ping.

The statue, built in 1993, makes the one in Kamakura look like a miniature. Really.

But long before there was a statue luring tourists to this far-off spot, there was a monastery.

You can visit the Po Lin (Precious Lotus) monastery's temple, which is just what I did—reading about it from a page copied from a Hong Kong guidebook, which, to be honest, did not tell me anything really at all about Buddhism or what was taking place. There was an altar and incense burners and folks bowing.

Now, I should probably say here that there was more going on with me than post-crime stress; more probably than I even knew. I walked past the altar and around the corner where there was another statue of another Buddha, Amida Buddha, I later learned.

I took one look at it and immediately started crying.

What? I all but ran back outside and sat on a bench trying to figure out what was going on. Why was I so emotional? Was this some new form of jet lag?

And, then, I suddenly had this immense feeling of joy. It was almost as if I could hear a voice saying, "You don't have to worry anymore."

Even after all these years, I still can't describe the lightness I felt then. And, then, it was time for lunch. I walked over to the temple's restaurant and immediately started to worry about having to sit at a large table with strangers.

But in spite of encroaching anxiety, something of that initial feeling remained and occurred again at other Buddhist temples in other parts of Asia.

Back in the United States, I didn't know what to do with that feeling, how to follow it up somehow. All the books on Buddhism in the Evanston Public Library were about meditation, which I found not at all helpful.

Then one August afternoon, I came to the Q&A session in the MBT hondo at Ginza Holiday Festival. The temple felt familiar in some ways and strange in others, but I decided to keep coming and listening. I can say, without any reservation whatsoever, that it was the best decision I ever made.

The journey from mugging in Dublin to illness to Lantau Island to MBT seems to be a circuitous one. But looking at it from the perspective of causes and conditions, it seems quite straightforward and, at the same time, quite surprising.

Unlike the Buddha who was looking for a way out of suffering, or Shinran searching for an alternative teaching, I was just a tourist on a day trip.

We often hear the phrase, "seize the day." But, in the movie "Boyhood," one of the characters expresses the way I feel when he says, "sometimes the day seizes you."

I know some of you grew up coming to the temple and maybe left and returned again as adults. And some of you are like me—interested in Buddhism and what it might offer. Or you might live in the neighborhood and came in because you are curious about what goes on in here.

But all of us made a choice to be here. What happens to us after that, whether we feel changed at all, may or may not be up to us.

In Buddhism classes, folks are always

see *entrusting*, page 5

## entrusting

*Continued from page 4*

asking our senses about *shinjin*. Difficult to explain, even for our wise and scholarly ministers. There's certainly no way I could. So I turned to Rev. Taitetsu Unno's book, "River of Fire River of Water" for guidance.

*Shinjin* is sometimes translated as "faith." Finding the word faith lacking seems common with those trying to illuminate the concept. Rev. Ron prefers "faithing," giving *shinjin* a more dynamic connotation.

Rev. Unno refers to it as true entrusting. He asserts that the basis of any good relationship is trust, but that true entrusting "underscores ... that which is true and real—the working of great compassion."

He explains it this way: "*Shinjin* as true entrusting moves in two directions that

ultimately become one. On the one hand, the person entrusts the self completely to the Primal Vow, the working of great compassion. And, on the other, the person entrusts the self totally to the reality of one's limited karmic self.

"The latter is made possible by the former. Thus, they constitute a single awakening.

"This is *shinjin* or 'faith' as true entrusting." He sums up by saying that, "... the ultimate goal of Shin Buddhist life is true entrusting."

Rev. Ron has said that, when we experience *shinjin* everything changes and nothing changes because we still have to live in this world. We still have to sit at the restaurant table with strangers and take the ferry and the bus.

He has also suggested that sudden awakening may be facilitated by allowing

the unexpected to happen.

We take in what we can of the teachings each week here at MBT. We let the experience of infinite wisdom and compassion wash over us. We are able to stop a moment to remember that there is more to our lives than Google's newsfeed or our list of things to do.

The kind of awareness that Rev. Ron talks about may or may not happen for us.

What we are aware of is that we are here now in the hondo listening and doing our best to absorb what we can. We're not going to be perfect—or, speaking for myself, even good. But, hopefully, incrementally, imperceptibly, change will come to us.

*Namu Amida Butsu – with gratitude and kindness beyond words.*

## rev. aki

*Continued from page 1*

and Berkeley Buddhist Temple. They grew up attending Orange County Buddhist Church and are excited to experience MBT's vibrant Sangha and extended community in Chicago.

In their own words, Rev. Aki writes: "*I'm grateful and humbled to be given this opportunity to serve Midwest Buddhist Temple by sharing the wisdom and compassion of our Shinshu teachings. I look forward to getting to know the Sangha and broader communities as we journey on this path together.*"

We are very fortunate that Rev. Aki already has some important connections to MBT. In 2018, they received a grant from the Gyodo Kono Fund to support their pursuit of Tokudo ordination. Their stellar application materials included a resounding letter of support from Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto. They were also a

classmate of Rev. Todd, who has been supportive of Rev. Aki's appointment as the next resident minister at MBT.

In addition, Rev. Aki also told us that relatives in their family, including their mother, were born and raised in Chicago immediately after incarceration during World War II, a historic journey that resonates with many of us at the temple.

[Here is a great article](#) from the Lion's Roar to read about Rev. Aki.

During the selection process, MBT leadership was deeply moved by Rev. Aki's insightful interpretations of the Shin Buddhist path and their genuine enthusiasm for fostering a supportive and inclusive temple environment. They expressed a clear vision for promoting the temple's rich history while simultaneously exploring innovative ways to engage new members and address the spiritual needs of our contemporary society.

They are particularly passionate about expanding youth programs and deepening adult study groups and Buddhist education.

We recognize that the continuity of religious leadership is vital, and we feel incredibly fortunate to have found a minister who embodies the spirit of compassion and understanding that is central to our tradition.

Rev. Aki will move to Chicago after finishing their master's program at Ryokoku University in Kyoto, Japan. Prior to attending Ryokoku University, they also completed the one-year hon-ka program at Chuo Bukkyo Gakuin, a seminary school, to learn the practical side of Shinshu ministry such as chants, rituals and doctrine.

We ask the Sangha to extend their warmest possible welcome as Rev. Aki navigates life in an unfamiliar city. We look forward to many years of learning, growth and fellowship under Rev. Aki's compassionate guidance.

## Classes to resume on Feb. 4

A new series of Buddhist study classes called "Selected Topics of Shin Buddhism" will begin on Feb. 4.

The series, which will run until March 25, will look at different topics each week, so people can join at any time. Typically, Rev. Ron will talk about a topic for a few minutes and then allow for discussion and interaction.

The hourlong classes will be held at 7 pm Wednesdays. You can sign up for the weekly Zoom link by contacting Rev. Ron directly at [rev.ron.mbt@gmail.com](mailto:rev.ron.mbt@gmail.com) or by contacting the MBT Office at 312.943.7801.



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# Kicking off new year, practicing dana

By Jennifer Toguri

January was a whirlwind of creativity and reflection as we welcomed 2026!

### January highlights

- **Year of the Horse:** We kicked off 2026 by folding origami horses as we reflected on the past year. We also explored the "Fire Horse" horoscope and spent time setting intentions for the year ahead.
- **Gratitude & Giving:** To acknowledge Ho-onko, we studied the life of Shinran Shonin. We continued to discuss the Golden Chain and, in the spirit of Dana, our students completed a custom-built skateboard which will be donated to a local youth.

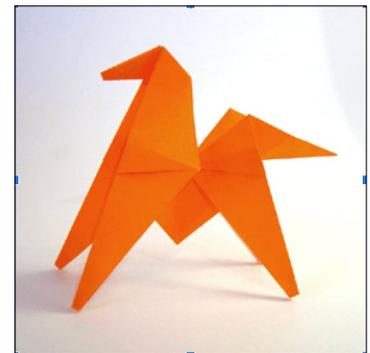
### Upcoming in February

**Feb 1: Dharma School class.** Minister's Assistant Terry Cichocki will lead a special workshop on chanting. This is a great chance for students to find their voice and learn the rituals of our service.

**Feb 15: Dharma School-Led Service.** We invite all families to come out and support our students as they lead the Sangha for the family service.



2026 is off to a fast start—let's keep this wonderful momentum going!



Photos from Jennifer Toguri

Dharma School students make a custom-built skateboard, which will be donated to a local youth. They also kicked off the Year of the Horse by folding origami horses.

*The light of compassion that grasps us illumines and protects us always;  
The darkness of our ignorance is already broken through;  
Still the clouds and mists of greed and desire, anger and hatred,  
Cover as always the sky of true and real shinjin.  
—From Shoshin Nembutsu Ge*

**oishii / recipes  
from mbt friends**

**Fried Tofu**

**Ingredients**

1 pkg. tofu, cut into 1" cubes  
Tempura batter (see below)  
Oil, for frying  
Katsuo, for garnish  
Soy sauce

**Tofu batter ingredients**

1 1/2 cup ice water  
1 egg  
1/2 tsp. salt  
2/3 cup unbleached flour  
1/3 cup cornstarch  
1 tsp. baking powder

**Directions**

1. Cut tofu into 1" cubes.

2. For tofu batter: Mix ice water, egg and salt. Then combine flour, cornstarch and baking powder. Add slowly to liquid mixture. Do not overmix.

3. Drain tofu cubes on a paper towel. Dip into tempura batter.

4. Fry tofu in hot oil. Drain fried tofu on a paper towel.

**To serve:** Sprinkle Katsuo on top and serve with soy sauce.

*To order a copy of "Oishii Cookery," send a check (\$15, if picked up at the temple; \$20, if mailed—made out to MBT Women's Association) to MBT, 435 W. Menomonee St., Chicago, IL 60614.*



Photo by Kiku Taura

The Ho-Onko otoki Toban Team hard at work preparing the veggie bowls for the Sangha.

# Commemorating death of Shinran

By Kiku Taura

**O**n Sunday Jan. 18, MBT celebrated Ho-onko, a Jodo Shinshu holiday commemorating the death of our founder, Shinran Shonin. The name derives from "ho-on" meaning "return of gratitude" and "ko" meaning "gathering."

We had a good turnout despite the cold weather. Following service, which featured a Dharma Talk by Minister's Assistant Jesse Zavala, we gathered in the Social Hall to share the otoki meal prepared by the Toban team led by Lynne Matsumoto. The delicious vegetarian meal was composed of tofu and veggies on rice.

Dharma School student/toban member Quinn Carsten was a star worker, helping to prep and

serve the meal, clearing the tables and ensuring leftovers were taken home by participants.

Ho-onko is one of six Jodo Shinshu holidays that we celebrate as "envelope days." The temple sends members reminders to encourage donations in honor of these important occasions.

The MBT Buddhist Women's Association organizes toban groups that rotate and prepare the meals on these occasions. All are welcome to volunteer for a toban, or most importantly, to join us for these holidays to enjoy the service and warm fellowship with other members and friends.

This Ho-Onko service and gathering truly reflected the spirit of gratitude.

## buddhist women's association

# Memberships still being accepted

By Jeanne Toguri

**A**lthough our Membership Drive has ended, we still will be accepting membership for 2026. The dues are \$10.

We do not accept credit cards or Zelle currently. If interested, please let us know by leaving a message with the MBT office (312.943.7801) and someone from our Board will contact you. Or you can leave dues in an envelope addressed to the MBT Buddhist Women's Association.

**New Life for Old Bags:** Just a reminder that while we have canceled our in-person sessions, we do have some supplies for those still wishing to make the sleeping mats. Please contact the MBT office

(312.943.7801); leave a message for the BWA and someone will contact you.

We are still accepting completed sleeping mats to distribute to the unhoused.

Also, we just heard that the United in Faith Lutheran Church will also be phasing out their sessions of NLOB this spring.

**General Meeting:** We are in the process of scheduling a General Meeting for the Midwest Buddhist Temple Buddhist Women's Association within the next two months. We will communicate with members via email and post the information on our Bulletin Board in the Social Hall.

# bishop

Continued From Page 3

our Interconnectedness.”

Look at the world around us today. Conflicts and wars. Political divides. Frequent mass shootings. From a Buddhist standpoint, it is disturbing, to say the least.

Buddhism teaches us to realize our interconnectedness. How can we harm or kill someone if they are really a part of each of us? We might differ in our political views or religious views, or even ethnic and cultural views, but deep down, we are all human beings.

Thich Nhat Hanh explains this beautifully and even humorously by using the example of cookie dough. We put all of our ingredients together to make cookie dough, then we scoop out the cookie dough and place them on the cookie sheet. All of the cookies came from the same dough. They are of the same essence. But what if some of the cookies started to say, “I am the best cookie. I am the perfect color. You are too dark or too light.” Or, what if another cookie said, “Hey, move over! You are getting into my space on the cookie sheet!” It would be absurd if cookies started to



converse that way. They don't know they are of the same essence.

Aren't we humans the same as those cookies? We ourselves do not see our interconnectedness. We do not see our essence, our humanity. This leads to all kinds of cruelties and injustices in the name of this or in the name of that.

We have so much to offer the world in our teachings. We need to share our teachings of interconnectedness with a world that only sees divisions and barriers. Just like astronauts who all say that their view of the world changed once they went into outer space and saw our fragile Earth from that perspective, we too must share the Buddhist view of the world that is interconnected, that is

without borders in one sense. From outer space, you cannot see any borders between countries or states. All you see is one fragile, beautiful Earth that is shared by not only humans, but by innumerable forms of life. The human race is not the master of the Earth. We are just one tiny part of it.

I understand that Ellison Onizuka, the Japanese American astronaut who died in the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster in 1986, said after his first trip into space on the Space Shuttle Discovery, “I have seen the Pure Land,” to describe his view of the Earth from outer space.

Although in our Nishi Hongwanji orthodox doctrine, this is an expression they would frown upon, to me, how could anyone argue with what Ellison Onizuka saw? It must be an unbelievable perspective to see our Earth from outer space.

I hope that our efforts to share the teachings with others will lead to a world and society that will begin to see our interconnectedness and find a way to live with each other as human beings, as sentient beings, on this one and only planet that we have to live on, our precious Earth.

## Find out ways to volunteer

Are you interested in volunteer opportunities with the Midwest Buddhist Temple? If you are, just fill out this [form](#) and join the 2026 MBT Volunteer Mailing List. No commitment, just information!

We'll contact you when new volunteer opportunities are announced (new, fun projects in the works). We definitely appreciate your interest.



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# Breathe in, change. Breathe out, let go.

*The following is from a Dharma message that was shared on Jan. 25, 2026.*

~~~~

*Everything that has a beginning has an ending.  
Make your peace with that and all will be well.*

—Buddha

## By Terry Cichocki

**T**oday, we will have a short Dharma message because we are having a general meeting after the service and our annual Shinnen-Enkai, or New Year's party, after the meeting. We hope you will stay for the general meeting and the party too.

We just celebrated the New Year. Welcome 2026.

New beginnings, like a New Year, offer us the chance to welcome change.

Change can be unsettling.

But it's the only true thing in life.

Buddhist teachings tell us that there are two main principles of Buddhism to remember.

1. Everything is impermanent or ever-changing.
2. We are all interdependent. We rely on each other and are grateful for the sacrifices of others which allow us to be here right now.

Sometimes, we may associate change with loss. Loss is inevitable in life.

Everything in life is a circle. For every loss, there is a gain. For every gain, there will be a loss. Light and dark. Birth and death. We can't have one without the other.

We cannot breathe without letting go of our breath to welcome our new breath. We may not think about it since breathing seems so natural and normal.

But if we are mindful of our breathing, we can see how letting our breath go and allowing a new breath to come in is welcome. Letting go is natural. Letting go means change.

Resisting change or holding our breath is constraining. It is stressful to hold our breaths for any length of time. Breathing fully is freeing. Letting go allows us to free ourselves for the next moment.

When we practice New Year's resolutions, we are seeking change because we may feel this sense of being held back. That maybe things just weren't working out the way we wanted them to in the previous year. We feel that sense of dissatisfaction.

The Buddha called that *Dukkha*. The first of the Four Noble Truths.

We may wish to expand and grow and feel better. Making New Year's resolutions feels natural too. We want to change for the better. And what better time to do it than at the New Year?

But we are creatures of habit. And soon enough, our old habits come back, and we realize we may have only done a fraction of what we resolved. We may have started that change we resolved to make but then stopped.

Give yourself credit for trying. Life is often a series of one step forward and two steps back.

Maybe it's best to have compassion for ourselves first. We are imperfect humans having a human experience. It is bound to be a journey of discovery.

And what do we do when we're on a journey? We experience things in newness with open minds and open hearts. And we can do that, too, with our everyday lives. Each day, we can make the start of another leg of the journey on this adventure. And along the journey, wise teachers can point us in the right direction.

We have, of course, the Buddha, Shinran and Honen to guide us in our Jodo Shinshu tradition.

We have our senseis who offer us Dharma sharing.

We have our Sanghas who help us learn the Dharma through our interactions with each other.

The Dharma is everywhere. We experience the Dharma when we connect with our hearts to the world and to each other.

We may encounter our next great change just running an errand or listening to the person in front of us.

The greatest changes can happen when we notice. Notice our thoughts, notice our actions, notice what is around us. When we pay attention, we can change our mind. Everything has a message if we listen with our sincere hearts and minds.

On any journey, we just need some road signs along the way. Trust what you see along the way. Sometimes the message is hidden in the places we see every day. When we are present in each moment, we can see, listen and feel the Dharma all around us.

In 1852, Eliphalet Oram Lyte wrote the nursery rhyme: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." We can compare the words in this rhyme with a thought of the Buddha Dharma. Lyte's words, which all probably know are: *Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.*"

We are gently piloting our lives down the

stream, not up the stream. Up the stream is too hard. Too much ego striving.

We are joyous and happy while we row the boat or our lives effortlessly down the stream. Because life does seem like a dream. It passes so quickly. It seems to be just an illusion.

Life and our experience of life is interdependent on causes and conditions in the moment. All of our drama and life events come and they go. Just like our breath. Breathe in—change, breathe out—let go.

Our breath reminds us there is only now—that is all we have. The past is over, and the future is just a dream.

As human beings, we think time endlessly stretches before us. But that is an illusion. Everything can change with our next breath.

When we can break down many Dharma messages into bite-size pieces, we find it becomes easier to remember the wisdom of our teachers.

Allow me to share these short bits, or anecdotes, with you, from wise teachers who shared their Dharma with us in the past.

Rev. Koshin Ogui, former resident minister for our temple, shared his departing Dharma message with these three points to remember, he said:

1. Do not lose your sense of humor.
2. Do not lose your sincerity.
3. Do not take yourself so seriously.

The Dalai Lama once said, when asked what his religion is, said "to be kind." We can always remember to be kind to each other.

And Rev. Ron finishes his Dharma talks with this: "With kindness and gratitude beyond words."

Remembering a message in bits may help as a signpost to guide our journey.

*"We are showered every day with gifts, but they are not meant for us to keep. Their life is in their movement, the inhale and exhale of our shared breath. Our work and our joy is to pass along the gift and to trust that what we put out into the universe will always come back"*

—Robin Wall Kimmerer

Let us practice for the New Year like the Gomonshu advises in the Jodo Shinshu pledge. Please gassho:

**Jodo Shinshu Pledge**  
By Ohtani Kojun, Monshu

*Breaking out of my shell*

see **breathe**, page 10

## new year

*Continued from page 1*

The full 28-page report was shared earlier in a Special Edition of our weekly email newsletter.

Joining Board President Jason Matsumoto were Vice President Allison Hagio, Treasurer Dana Johnson and Recording Secretary Kiku Taura.

Jason began by encouraging us to follow the eight actions in today's service program:

- Listen with a kind heart
- Peace for all beings
- Walk gently on the Earth
- Practice daily gratitude
- Be a light for others
- Find joy in small things
- Patience in every moment
- Connect with kindness

He then provided a recap of 2025 which marked MBT's 81st year. He recounted how Rev. Todd's medical condition led him to resign in September, triggering Rev. Ron coming out of retirement for a second time.

With the assistance of the Service Planning Committee, our Minister's Assistants, and many volunteers, weekly services continued uninterrupted.

Jason thanked Albert Sora for

*see new year, page 11*



## breathe

*Continued from page 9*

*I will share a warm smile and speak gentle words  
Just like the kind Buddha.*

*Not becoming lost in my greed, anger, and ignorance  
I shall think and act with an open mind  
Just like the calm and peaceful Buddha*

*Not putting myself first  
I will share in the joy and sadness of others  
Just like the compassionate Buddha*

*Realizing the gift of life I have received  
I shall strive to live each day to its fullest  
Like the Buddha who tirelessly works to liberate all.*

*Namu Amida Butsu*



Photos by Kailani Yu, Joy Zavala and Gary Tsuchiyama

## new year

*Continued from page 10*

his many years on the board and as chairman of our Ginza Holiday Festival.

Allison Hagio presented *oseibo* (year-end appreciation) to custodian Ian Taura, office manager Taryn Hutt, and Rev. Ron. Jason reminded us that Ian and Taryn are part-time and yet keep the temple clean and operational. We all share our appreciation for their dedicated work.

Next were highlights from the Minister (Rev. Ron), Religious Department (Roger Suekama), Dharma School (Jennifer Toguri), Women's Association (Jeanne Toguri), Events Committee (Joy Zavala), Kono Fund (Carl Ichikawa), and Ginza (Alexa Tang). Their summaries reinforced the many successes in 2025, thanks to the efforts of the Sangha.

Treasurer Dana Johnson reviewed the 2025 Operating Account, then presented the 2026 Budget which was passed by the voting members. Her 5-minute summary reflected hours/days/weeks of preparation

see *new year*, page 12



## new year

*Continued from page 11*

as she also managed a migration of our accounting to a new process.

Steve Arima presented a Certificate of Recognition to past office manager and current Minister's Assistant Jesse Zavala. Similar recognition was presented to Rich Taura who served as past treasurer and also as head chef for virtually every temple event.

Jason then presented his Outlook for 2026. The surprise announcement was that Rev. Aki Rogers will be joining MBT as our resident minister in June (*see the article on page 1 for full details*).

Jason explained the critical role that the Buddhist Churches of America plays in training ministerial candidates, and he expressed the temple's gratitude to Bishop Marvin Harada for his support of MBT and the Eastern District.

The meeting was adjourned, and we all headed downstairs for the luncheon prepared by Elaine Miyamura and her volunteer toban group. Grady Hutt emceed the Shinnen-enkai party, while Christina Szabo and Elaine Matsushita provided delightful piano and cello music. Lunch was offered with vegan and gluten-free options.

A common thread throughout the Sunday Service, General Meeting and Shinnen-enkai celebration was The Golden Chain. Taryn Hutt invited all to write a wish, words of gratitude, or a goal for 2026, on strips of gold-colored paper as we linked our wishes and connection to everyone in the room and beyond. A simple but beautiful project.

A replay of the 80th Anniversary video was shown and was a poignant reminder of the Issei and Nisei members who made MBT possible. Lots of smiles as the now not-so-young Sansei saw images of their youth.

Jason introduced a welcome video by Rev. Kurt Rye ([click here](#) to view). Rev. Rye is the resident minister at the New York Buddhist Church, as well as the supervising minister for MBT, Seabrook and Ekoji. Since Rev. Ron is retired, Rev. Rye is the only kaikyoshi minister in the Eastern District, and we are grateful for Rev. Rye's assistance.

Jason then introduced a welcome video by Rev. Aki who introduced themselves and expressed their excitement in coming to Chicago once they complete their studies in Kyoto.

Gary Tsuchiyama presented Terry Cichocki with a gift of gluten-free snacks as a thanks to her and John Bickulcs for 21 years as hosts of the monthly Saturday Afternoon at the Japanese Cinema. Gary calculated that 168 movies have been shown—all accompanied by a wide variety of yummy treats provided by Terry and John.

As they take a well-earned break, the Events Committee hopes to continue the movie tradition on a quarterly basis.

Christina and Elaine returned to the stage to lead a singalong featuring "Edelweiss" from "The Sound of Music," "What a Wonderful World," made famous by Louis Armstrong, and John Lennon's "Imagine." They shared that these songs were specially picked as we are in a time when the world needs more compassion and kindness.

The day ended with the traditional coal miner's folk dance, Tanko Bushi.

Many thanks to all who made the day possible as there was a conscious effort to spread information about MBT in a fun, engaging way.

We accomplished so much in 2025 and that leads to the promise of an even greater 2026.

## February memorials

On the first Sunday of each month, the Midwest Buddhist Temple holds a collective Monthly Memorial Service during the regular Sunday Family Service, when loved ones can be remembered and honored.

Although memorial services are held in memory of a loved one who has passed away, the purpose of the memorial service is for us, the living, the ones who remain behind. The memorial service provides an opportunity to express appreciation and gratitude for the many benefits we have received from the person who passed away. These are the names of temple friends who have passed away in February, and who we will remember during the MBT service on Feb. 1. To add a family member, please contact the MBT Office.

| February |                    | 1992 | Masaru Moss        |
|----------|--------------------|------|--------------------|
| 1924     | Yuzo Nakamoto      |      | Motooka            |
| 1928     | Yuji Nakamoto      | 1993 | Margaret Holcomb   |
| 1929     | Masao Masai        | 1994 | Tane Miyata        |
| 1937     | Tomo Doi           |      | Jane Fujimoto      |
| 1942     | Yonetoki Sakaye    | 1995 | Edward Higashi     |
|          | Kanzo Yamashita    |      | M. Edith Koyanagi  |
| 1945     | Takeichi Miyata    | 1996 | Mary Mitsuko       |
|          | Kenichi Yoshida    |      | Imamura            |
| 1953     | Sometaro Kubota    | 1997 | Jiro Shinozaki     |
| 1954     | Roy Yasuo          | 1999 | Lily Shizuko Mukai |
|          | Tadamaru           | 2000 | Allan Isami Hagio  |
| 1958     | Juichiro Hirakawa  |      | Howard Shinagawa   |
| 1959     | Wataru Arakawa     | 2001 | Phyllis M. Kimitch |
| 1961     | Minoru Okubo       |      | (MN)               |
| 1968     | Mas Hagio          |      | Byron Fujisawa     |
| 1969     | Yaichiro Mizuki    |      | Shun Yun (Tracy)   |
| 1970     | Minezo Imanaka     |      | Ohta               |
|          | Toyotaro Mitsuoka  | 2002 | Rosey Roberts      |
|          | Tomokichi Uyeda    | 2003 | Harry H. Kato      |
| 1971     | Charlotte K.       |      | Kazuo Murakami     |
|          | Nakaoka            | 2004 | Kiyoe Kunisada     |
| 1975     | Frank Sawa         | 2005 | M. Albert Hayashi  |
| 1976     | Toyono Miyata      |      | Takehisa           |
|          | Tame Tsusaki       |      | Yokoyama           |
| 1977     | Harry Yoshio       |      | Nellie Kono        |
|          | Tanaka             | 2006 | Kiyoe Hirokane     |
| 1978     | Roy Hieshima       |      | Shigeru Yamaguchi  |
|          | Shina Honda        | 2007 | Florence Miyata    |
| 1979     | Yoshio Jerry Ito   |      | Tsuyako Okazaki    |
| 1982     | Tame Tanabe        | 2011 | Setsuko Kawakami   |
| 1983     | Haru Nishikawa     |      | Makoto Mort Morita |
|          | Yasuo Sugimoto     | 2013 | Marion Teruo       |
| 1984     | Yukio Fujishima    |      | Kayano             |
| 1985     | Taki Udaka         | 2015 | Kathryn Miyamoto   |
| 1986     | Haruko Kawachi     |      | Wier               |
|          | Hisayo Shishida    | 2017 | Miyeko Toguri      |
|          | Kimiko Tanaka      |      | Helen Tsuchiya     |
| 1987     | Kiyoko Moriki      | 2019 | Roger Kataoka      |
|          | Paul Toru          | 2020 | Donna Ichikawa     |
|          | Yamashiro          | 2021 | Ray Imamura        |
|          | Janette M.         | 2022 | Ben Chikaraishi    |
|          | Yamashita          |      | Doris Endo         |
| 1988     | Sharon S.          | 2023 | Mary Ellen         |
|          | Bubenheimer        |      | Yamashita          |
|          | Yukio Kimura       | 2024 | Misa Bretschneider |
|          | Kazuo Tanaka       |      | Dr. Parakrama De   |
| 1989     | Susumu Gus         |      | Silva              |
|          | Yamashiro          |      | Reika Yokochi      |
| 1990     | Hina Shigetome     |      | Emiko Murakami     |
| 1991     | Unokichi Nishimura | 2025 | Mary D. Fischer    |
|          | Kay Kiritani       |      |                    |
|          | Zuzman             |      | ~~~~~              |

## happenings

Continued from page 2

Panelists include **Rebecca Ozaki** (Yonsei, granddaughter of a CWRIC testifier), **Mary Samson** (Sansei, Redress organizer), **Dr. Britt Dantley** (family therapist and clinician), **Brian Tee** (director and actor), and **Scott Sakiyama** (attorney and anti-ICE advocate). Together, they will consider how practices of storytelling, accountability, and care can interrupt repeating patterns of removal and state violence—both within families and across communities. Click [here](#) for more information.

### Lunar New Year Gala

The **43rd Annual Lunar New Year Gala**, hosted this year by the Chinese American Community, will be held on Saturday, Feb. 28 at the Marriott Marquis Hotel, 2121 S. Prairie Avenue, Chicago. **Rev. Patti Nakai** and **Sofia Ozaki**, representing the Japanese American community, as well as **Dr. Manjeet Singh Chawla** and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, will be honored.

Rev. Patti, the retired resident minister of the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, will receive the Exemplary Community Service Award. Rev. Patti served at BTC from 1995 to 2023. Born in Chicago, she received a master's degree in Shin Buddhist studies from Otani University in Kyoto. A fully ordained Jodo Shinshu minister, Rev. Patti has been involved in various interfaith activities in dialogue with Muslims, Christians and other faiths, and has been an active member of several Japanese American community groups.

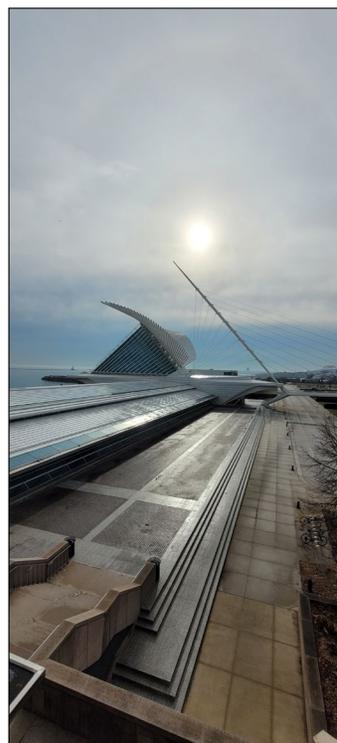
Sofia Ozaki will receive the Youth Who Excels award. As a Japanese Pakistani American Muslim woman, Sofia Ozaki represents her Asian American identity across many community spaces. She is a first-year student at Ball State University's college of architecture and works as a part-time research assistant in a National Science Fund study on daylighting and the effects on children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Sofia balances her studies with her volunteer work within the



**Above:** The Mickey Hamano Family celebrated the New Year with warm weather and sunshine in the Bahamas! Ahhh, shorts and sandals!! Remember them?

**Left:** Ellen Dunleavy had a wonderful visit to the Milwaukee Art Museum, where she saw pieces of 20th century art donated by Peg Bradley.

Photo, above, from Mickey Hamano; photo, left, from Ellen Dunleavy



place from 1–3 pm at Chicago Aikikai, 1444 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago. **Dr. Ken Kikuchi**, **Bohao Zhang**, **Qin Coe** and MBT's own **Dwight Sora** will demonstrate the therapeutic benefits of aikido for mind and body. A bento lunch from Tanoshii Sushi will be served. More information is available on the registration page [here](#).

### JACL scholarships

The Chicago Chapter of JACL offers scholarships ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000+ to undergraduate and graduate students who have demonstrated a commitment to JACL's mission. Scholarships are awarded based on an applicant's understanding of and alignment with JACL's mission, as well as academic performance and extracurricular involvement. Scholarships are open to all, regardless of race or ethnicity.

community, and her own at-home baking business.

Tickets are \$150 each, or \$1,500 per table of 10. For more information, please contact Karen Kanemoto at [jmaskanemoto@gmail.com](mailto:jmaskanemoto@gmail.com).

### Tea Talk

The Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois is hosting its 3rd TEATALK on Aikido & Mental Health on Feb. 7. The event will take

Funding for scholarships is provided by generous donations from JACL Chicago members and the greater Chicago Japanese American community.

All application materials are due by email to [scholarships@jaclichicago.org](mailto:scholarships@jaclichicago.org) by 11:59 pm Central Time on Sunday, March 1, 2026. Awards will be distributed at the annual Scholarship Luncheon on Sunday, May 17, 2026. For more information and application materials, please click [here](#).

### Meet me in Nihon!

**Kiku Taura** and **Takamasa Onose** were joined in Japan by friend and MBT member **Barbara Sherman** and niece **Marissa** at their local sushi shop. Kiku, **Mari Nord** and daughters **Kira** and **Maya** found themselves on the same flight home!

### Happy sweet 16!

We hear that **Dominick Macri** is turning (sweet) 16 on Feb. 12. Happy birthday, Dom! Meanwhile, brother **Luca Macri** started taking Japanese language classes at the JASC. And, according to dad **Nick Macri**, the whole Macri family—Dominick, Luca, Nick and Lisa— went skiing recently—both downhill and cross-country!

### Art in Milwaukee

**Ellen Dunleavy** went on a day trip to Milwaukee last week to see an excellent exhibit at the Milwaukee Art Museum. "Local philanthropist, **Peg Bradley**, donated a huge collection of 20th century art to the museum 50 years ago," says Ellen. "We were lucky enough to see a special exhibit of the collection, which included pieces by **Georgia O'Keefe**, **Stuart Davis** and **Andy Warhol**. The museum also has an amazing collection of Haitian art. Of course, after our visit, we had some cheese curds and bought more cheese at Milwaukee's Public Market."

### Happy birthday to...

We would like to send happy birthday wishes to other friends born in the month of February: **Harumi Ichikawa** / Feb. 4 **Kenji Morimoto** / Feb. 7 **Dominick Macri** / Feb. 12 **Pat Harada** / Feb. 22 **Gail Chase** / Feb. 25

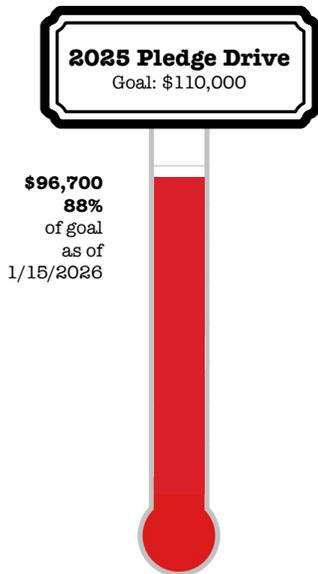
**MIDWEST BUDDHIST TEMPLE  
2025 PLEDGE DRIVE**  
(there's still time to complete your 2025 pledge)

MBT welcomes everyone to become temple members, with no minimum pledge requirement. All MBT supporters are asked to give what they can financially, as well as their much appreciated time and effort. Donations can be made online at [mbtchicago.org/join-support/donate-now/](http://mbtchicago.org/join-support/donate-now/); look for the purple "Donate Now."

**DONATE NOW**

**What are the benefits of making a pledge?**

- Maintains the daily cost of operating the temple (salaries, utilities, maintenance, supplies)
- Supports our religious, social and community programs
- At the \$300 minimum, allows voting on key temple issues
- Receive our monthly Bulletin newsletter
- Provides membership in the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), including Wheel of Dharma newsletter
- Ensures the continued growth of the temple



# Guide to financial giving at MBT

The temple is fortunate to have members and friends who volunteer their time and energy to support our activities. While this physical support is critical, we also ask our members to consider providing financial support. Over the coming months, we will highlight some of the more common ways to support MBT financially. You can view the full Guide [here](#).

**Beyond Cash Donations / Unique Ways to Support the Temple**

Please note: Regarding the tax treatment of any charitable donation, seek the advice of a tax professional first. Individuals will have different circumstances that only a tax professional can clarify. MBT is sharing generic, publicly available information but is not providing tax advice.

**Support Through Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) and Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs):**

Individuals aged 70 ½ or older with IRA accounts can make Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) directly to the temple. QCDs are excluded from taxable income, offering a tax-efficient way to give, and may also be used to satisfy your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) once you reach age 73. If you're interested in supporting the temple through an RMD, consult your financial advisor for details.

The following article provides helpful information about the RMD process.

**Leaving a Legacy / Planned Giving:** Planned giving allows

individuals to make meaningful contributions to the temple through estate planning while preserving financial stability during their lifetime. Examples include bequests in wills or trusts, charitable gift annuities, or naming the temple as a beneficiary of a retirement account, life insurance policy, or investment account.

Including the temple in your estate planning supports its mission and leaves a lasting legacy. If you're considering a planned gift, consult your legal or financial advisor and notify the temple so we can honor your generosity. For more information, please email [office@mbtchicago.org](mailto:office@mbtchicago.org) or visit our Planned Giving web page.

**Making an Impact with Stock Gifts:**

Donating appreciated stocks or securities is another tax-efficient way to support the temple. By donating long-term appreciated stock directly to the temple, you may avoid paying capital gains taxes on the stock's increased value. Additionally, you may claim a charitable deduction for the stock's full market value, provided you've held it for more than one year.

The process is straightforward: stocks are transferred directly to the temple's brokerage account. This method maximizes your donation's impact and provides significant tax savings. Consult your financial advisor or tax professional to learn more, and email [office@mbtchicago.org](mailto:office@mbtchicago.org) for assistance.

## You can listen to Dharma talks on MBT's YouTube channel

We have moved our YouTube channel to a new location: [youtube.com/@mbtchicago-youtube](https://youtube.com/@mbtchicago-youtube).

Here you can view Dharma messages from the comfort of your home. We keep about 12 months of the latest videos online.

If you have any questions just drop us a note at [youtube.admin@mbtchicago.org](mailto:youtube.admin@mbtchicago.org). So check out our channel and become a subscriber by clicking the "Subscribe" button.

If you hit the bell icon, you will be notified when we post new content.



4427 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60640  
773.275.0097 | [www.jasc-chicago.org](http://www.jasc-chicago.org)

# domo

The Midwest Buddhist Temple gratefully acknowledges the following donations received between **Dec. 17 and Jan. 20.**

Due to some delays in processing, you may see your donation

acknowledgment in the next issue of the Bulletin. Please reach out to the office with any questions. Please notify the Bulletin or the MBT Office of any omissions or corrections.

## Bodhi Day

Phyllis Aragaki  
Mark & Susan Brown  
Dr. Michael & Yvonne Harada  
Dianne Ichishita  
Gale & Jim Kono  
Kachiko & Koji Okubo  
Ken & Janice Rivera  
Jeanne & David Toguri  
Joy & Jesse Zavala

## Memorials

Deanna Badgett  
Peggy Edwards  
Karen Hoehn

## November Memorial

Dianne Pape

## December Memorial

Sharon Inokuchi  
Judy & Wayne Matsuyama  
Susan Mitsunaga  
Gary Tsuchiyama  
Tommy Yamashita  
Ellen Yoshihara  
Joy & Jesse Zavala

## January Memorial

John Adachi  
Carol Baba  
Malee Chompoo  
Dr. Michael & Yvonne Harada  
Mari & Jeff Johansen  
Lydia Maggio

Michael Nishi & Angela Konishi  
Esther Takeshita  
Terry Tanabe  
Jennifer Toguri  
Jeanne & David Toguri  
Joanne Toguri  
Tommy Yamashita  
Teri Yasunaga-Blasco  
Joy & Jesse Zavala

## February Memorial

John Adachi  
Lynne & Jerry Matsumoto  
Dr. Rick & Joyce Morimoto  
Taura & Tsuchiya Families

## Rev. Kono Fund

Gillion Carrara

## Nokotsudo

Seiji & Nell Itahara

## Legacy Garden

Jeanne & David Toguri

## Outreach Programs

Esther Chin (in memory of  
Yoshito Hashimoto, Mineso  
Imanaka, James Imanaka,  
Judy Imanaka, Michael  
Imanaka)

Seiji & Nell Itahara  
Ted & Gayle Kodama

## Pledge / Membership

John Adachi

Stacy Arima Castillo  
Mark & Susan Brown  
Joshua Chambers-Letson  
Tom Corbett  
Amy Erb  
Gia Gunn  
Paul Imaoka  
Seiji & Nell Itahara  
Christopher Johnston  
Brian Key  
Marshall Kubota  
Jason Matsumoto &  
Tiana Pyer-Pereira  
Elaine Matsushita & Bob Sutter  
Mary Miller  
Sharon Miyata-Sipich  
Michael Omori  
Derek & Kristine Provo  
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Andrew Rowland  
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Kaye Shinozaki  
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Rich Taura  
Gary Tsuchiyama  
Mr. & Mrs. Roy Yamamoto  
Ellen Yoshihara  
Aeko Yoshikawa  
Joy & Jesse Zavala

## Special Donations

Ho Etsu Taiko  
MBT Taiko  
Hannah Carson  
Jiuqing Cheng  
Allison Hagio  
Pat Harada & Tom Rowland  
Seiji & Nell Itahara  
Dean Katahira  
Sachi Komoda  
Debra Levie  
Joseph Linnen  
Yumi Masuoka  
Brian Nagata  
Naoki Nakashima  
Marie Ochi-Jacobs  
Devin Okazaki  
Michael Rowder  
Chika Sekiguchi  
Laura Semba  
Susan Shiraga  
Cynthia Thinnis  
Lawrence Wiley  
Robin Wylie

~~~~

*if you have arranged donations through a giving fund or automatic payment, please ensure that your name is included so that we can properly record and acknowledge your generosity.*



## Musicians, singers: Come join the MBT Band

### By Joy Zavala

Calling all musicians and singers: The MBT Band is recruiting new members. If you play an instrument and/or would like to participate as a singer, please sign up [here](#) or on the signup sheet on the MBT Bulletin Board in the

### Social Hall.

The MBT Band will perform in upcoming services and events. Scheduling will be based on musician/singer availability.

So, if you would like to share your talents and be a part of the band, please sign up.



february 1961

# Learning from the Umé (Japanese Apricot)

This is excerpted from "Shinjin Sho-in /  
Jodo-Shinshu Essays: 1953-1962" by  
Rev. Gyodo Kono

~~~~

(The following was written for the devout  
by Kudo Yoshinaga, who resided in this  
area from January 20th to February 7th).

The ume blooms

Elegantly and fragrantly

In the cold ...

That's what attracts

The nightingales

In the valley.

How quickly time passes ... the joy of  
the beginning of spring passed before  
I was aware, and it is now February, with  
spring starting in earnest. In Japan, this is  
the time of year when we wrap ourselves  
in warm clothing to enjoy apricot-blossom  
viewing (umé-mi) amid the lingering winter  
cold. No flower draws the minds and  
hearts of people as does the flower of the  
umé (Japanese apricot), at least in Japan.  
In Japan, the sight of a blossom bravely  
withstanding the steady downpour of  
snow, bearing the intense cold winter wind,  
silently enduring all obstacles in its path  
is considered equivalent to the strength of  
conviction of Buddhist leaders who braved  
all odds to spread the Dharma. Just the  
thought of their sacrifices is enough to  
make us bow our heads.

Further, when all other blossoms wither  
from the oppression of nature, only the  
umé maintains its dignity and grace. What  
a wonderful example they are for those who  
have lost their way in life, who blindly follow  
the fashions of society, and who live their  
lives by being concerned about what others  
think about them. The umé teaches us to  
persevere and be ourselves as we make  
our way in the world.

The fragrance containing such spirit and  
courage that is emitted so naturally like  
this is what so attracts the nightingale in

the valley.

Nothing is more beautiful than those who,  
without seeking it, are adored and followed  
by others, who are praised without asking  
approval. When I consider such excellence,  
such sacredness, is found even in a  
single flower, I cannot help but feel how  
much more those with the "flower of the  
joy of conviction" are loved and revered.  
Shakyamuni Buddha referred to such  
people as "those permeated with fragrance"  
(zenkonin). This is expressed in the sutras  
as: "Those who think of the Buddha are  
always within the embrace of the Buddha's  
light. Further, they are naturally permeated  
by the Buddha's fragrance. That is why  
they are referred to as 'permeated with  
fragrance.' Accordingly, those who live a  
life of the Nembutsu are truly those who  
are purified by the Buddha's fragrance and  
light."

Those who live in accordance with the  
Buddha's teaching never forget the joy and  
pride of being "permeated with fragrance."  
They live lives of taste the refinement such  
that even without referring to the Buddha,  
they capture the minds and hearts of  
others regarding what should and should  
not be done, and make them feel good in  
the process. But that is not done by trying  
to bring it about. Rather, when such an  
attitude resides within us, it is expressed  
naturally. Just as the fragrance of the umé  
blossom is carried along naturally by the  
cold winter wind, the fragrance of *shinjin*  
(the virtue within it) is carried to others even  
in a defiled world. What is most important  
to those with *shinjin* is not just thinking or  
talking about it, rather, it is the realization  
that *shinjin* has the power to move others  
without saying a word.

That is why the Eighth Spiritual Leader of  
the Hongwanji, Master Rennyo said: "Those  
who receive *shinjin* are bathed in Great  
Compassion and thus are very gentle. They  
do not use rough words with friends in the  
Dharma."

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*Falling into an evil path: The Sixth of the*

*Seven Jodo-Shinshu Patriarchs, Genshin  
Sozu, once performed the Nembutsu  
religious practice in the Nembutsu Hall on  
Mt. Hiei. He entered a Nembutsu meditative  
state, purifying his body and mind, and  
then set out for home late at night. In the  
moonlight he heard the gurgle of a brook, all  
the while reciting the Nembutsu. That was  
when he suddenly prostrated himself and  
said, "I've been attacked by 'evil karma.'"*

This is probably what the above story refers  
to: Genshin Sozu felt that the monks in all  
three thousand temples on Mt. Hiei shirked  
performing real religious practice and that  
he alone was seriously purifying himself.  
More than anyone on this mountain, I have  
approached the essence of the Nembutsu  
and am guaranteed birth in the Pure Land  
he thought. All the other monks here are  
degenerate. But Genshin Sozu became  
frightened of the egotistical attitude that he  
a within himself as a result of this insight,  
and lamented his pride.

There are many things similar to what  
Genshin Sozu experienced in searching for  
enlightenment.

"I have received *shinjin*. ... Only I am  
guaranteed birth in the Pure Land. All others  
are bad or evil."

That is the most important thing we must  
become aware of: the frightening self that  
is always prideful and arrogant of its slight  
accomplishment. But what is there to be  
proud of? After all, *shinjin* is what is given  
to us. It is not something we work for,  
something that we accomplish through our  
own efforts.

That's why all we can do is shed tears  
over this self about which we can do  
nothing. That's why we must leave it all to  
the working of that calling voice. We may  
humble ourselves by referring to ourselves  
as pitiful creatures about whom we cannot  
do anything, but when we think we have  
accomplished something others have not  
done (receive *shinjin*), we have already  
"fallen into evil ways." That is something we  
have all experienced and is what we must  
continuously be on guard against.



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## save the dates

**FEB 1** Come fill your tummy and warm up at our Sangha Appreciation Soup Bar. Get to know members of the MBT Board of Trustees, who will be hosting the event, and warm up with a hot bowl of soup. All ingredients to add to the soup will be provided by our board members.

**Time:** 11:30 am (after Sunday service). **Location:** Social Hall. **Cost:** Free. **More information:** Contact the MBT Office, 312.943.7801.

**FEB 1** We will be selling wonderful baked goods during the Sangha Appreciation Soup Bar. Please consider donating baked goods and/or purchasing some to support the temple's Outreach projects.

**Time:** 11:30 am (after Sunday service). **Location:** Social Hall. **More information:** Contact the MBT Office, 312.943.7801.

**FEB 22** Learn a new craft and make small animals at our Needle-Felting Workshop.

**Time:** 11:30 am (after service). **Location:** MBT Social Hall. **Cost:** \$10. **To sign up:** Fill out the form [here](#) or call the MBT Office, 312.943.7801.

**FEB 28** Join us for our Homeless Project sandwich-making day. This is a hybrid event with sandwiches either made at the temple or made at home and dropped off at the temple.

**Time:** Sandwich-making at noon; dropoffs of sandwiches made at home at 1 pm. **Location:** MBT. **More information:** Contact the MBT Office, 312.943.7801, if you would like to participate.

**MAR 1** Enter your favorite chili and cornbread recipes at our annual Chili Cookoff. Small prizes will be awarded.

**Time:** 11:30 am (after service). **Location:** MBT Social Hall. **To sign up:** Fill out the form [here](#) or call the MBT Office, 312.943.7801.

**MAR 1** Please come and shop for some wonderful baked treats or consider donating baked goods to support the temple's Outreach and Homeless projects.

**Time:** 11:30 am (after service). **Location:** MBT Social Hall. **More information:** Contact the MBT Office, 312.943.7801.

## Learn to make cute, little critters with needle felting

By Joy Zavala

Learn how to make small animals, toys and ornaments using wool fiber at our Needle-Felting Workshop on Sunday, Feb. 22.

Gardiner Funo O'Kain will show us how to use felting materials to create small animals. It will be a fun time, socializing and learning a new hobby.

The workshop will take place after service. The cost is \$10 and will cover all supplies. Please sign up at MBT or by using this [link](#).



# FEB

at midwest buddhist temple

## 1

SUNDAY

10:30 am Monthly Memorial Service / Rev. Ron Miyamura

11:30 am Sangha Appreciation Soup Bar

11:30 am Bake Sale

## 8

SUNDAY

10:30 am Family Service / Rev. Chiemi Bly

## 15

SUNDAY

10:30 am Nirvana Day Service / Rev. Bob Oshita

## 21

SATURDAY

Noon/1 pm Homeless Project Sandwich-Making (*see details at left*)

## 22

SUNDAY

10:30 am Family Service / Rev. Patti Oshita

11:30 am Needle-Felting Workshop