

Sandwich crew

Volunteers deliver 350 sandwiches that were made for the unhoused. *Page 14.*

**Ginza time!**

It's time to eat, drink, be merry—and volunteer! *Page 3.*



Midwest Buddhist Temple

Bulletin

The monthly newsletter of the Midwest Buddhist Temple

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435 W. Menomonee St., Chicago, IL 60614 • 312.943.7801 • mbtchicago.org • Minister: Rev. Aki Rogers

Dancing fools fill Bon Odori with joy



Photo by Bruce Unruh

*Under a
beautiful
summer sky*

By Carl Ichikawa

MBT held our annual Bon Odori on Saturday, July 11. It was a beautiful summer evening as Aki Sensei led the audience in gassho in honor of our ancestors, and then reminded us that, "Those who dance are fools and those who watch are fools. So if you're a fool anyway, you might as well dance."

*More photos
from MBT's
Bon Odori,
pages 10–11.*

And with that, over 200 dancers filled the parking lot to the happy rhythm of 14 songs, starting with the traditional "Bon Odori Uta," and including the classic "Tanko Bushi" (coal miner's dance) and the popular "Pokémon Ondo."

Young and old, first-timers and veterans—the happy faces reflected our sangha's diversity.

Intermission brought out the

*Why do we
dance to
remember
loved ones?*

The following is from a Dharma message that was shared on July 12, 2026.

By Rev. Aki Rogers

Good morning everyone. For those of you who were able to join us last night, I hope you enjoyed dancing and remembering those who have gone before us and thank you for making it

to this morning's service. And thank you to everyone else also joining us this morning whether in person or online for our Kangi-e or celebration of joy service.

Today I'd like to share a little more about the origins of kangi-e and dancing to remember loved ones. It comes

see *kangi-e*, page 9

see *odori*, page 11

happenings

By Elaine Matsushita

Tickets are on sale now for a one-night-only performance of **"Defining Courage,"** a story about what it means to be an American and the legacy of the Nisei World War II soldiers, Americans of Japanese ancestry who served in the segregated military units of the 100th Infantry 100th Infantry Battalion, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the Military Intelligence Service, and the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion.

The performance will include stunning cinematography, historic film and interviews and local musicians on piano, cello, violin, ukulele, guitar, drums and trumpet with the RAISE choir, curated by Music Director **Chris Wade**.

According to the program's website, event-goers can see, hear and experience the Nisei soldiers' incredible heroics through this piece of innovative storytelling. "Far from a history lesson, it is a testament to inner strength, one that inspires us in our search for courage in today's world."

The program, narrated by Emmy-winning ABC7-Los Angeles news anchor and filmmaker **David Ono**, will be held at the Athenaeum Center for Thought and Culture, 2936 N. Southport Ave., Chicago, at 6 pm Sept. 20. Tickets are \$35-\$100 and can be purchased [here](#).

15 years and going strong



Photos from Dana Johnson

Ho Etsu Taiko opened for Nick Offerman at the Ramova Theater and also performed at the Anderson Japanese Gardens Summer Festival.



Above: Logan' dad Dean, brother Trent, grandparents Helen and Kaz Ideno, Logan and mom Gail.

Right: Ellen Dunleavy came home a huge fan of both Warsaw and Gdansk

Photo (above) from Helen Ideno; photo (right) by Ellen Dunleavy



JACL Chicago will be celebrating 15 years of Kansha at its **Go Go Go Kansha!** fundraiser on Sunday, Oct. 18. Kansha alumni, family, friends and supporters are invited to gather for a fun afternoon at Kamehachi to reconnect, share memories, celebrate

the community we've built, and support the future of the Kansha Project.

Kansha visionaries **Bill Yoshino** and **Pat Harada** will also be honored for their lasting impact. Kamehachi is at 1320 Shermer Rd., Northbrook. You can RSVP

to join this special milestone celebration, clicking [here](#).

Let's dance

The **Japanese American Service Committee** and Asian Improv aRts Midwest are hosting a Bon Odori

see **happenings**, page 15

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

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Don't forget to visit our website, mbtchicago.org, for more information about Shin Buddhism and the Midwest Buddhist Temple.

celebrating 71 years

Ginza Holiday: We're ready to go

By Kiku Taura

Our 71st Ginza Holiday Festival is just around the corner, and we are ready! Thanks to everyone who signed up as a volunteer for setup/cleanup or at one of the many stations.

There is still time to sign up to donate food for our volunteers—we especially need donations for Friday and Sunday. We have extended the signup deadline to Aug 1, so check the weekly announcements for the link.

Here is a reminder of the dates and times:

- **Friday, Aug. 7** / 5–8 pm
- **Saturday, Aug. 8** / 11 am–8 pm (extended hours!)
- **Sunday, Aug. 9** / 11 am–4 pm

Come to enjoy our signature grilled chicken teriyaki, Hawaiian shave ice and udon noodles.

Visit our community partner booths to find information about the Japanese American Citizens League, Japanese American Service Committee and other organizations.

Check out our MBT Booth/Bookstore for Japanese snacks, T-shirts and religious books and items. Visit the Waza artisans to see candle-making, papier mache, tenugui and ceramics, and shop at the many Japanese-themed vendor booths.

Stay for the stage performances, which will



Photo from Kiku Taura

Ginza shoppers Alexa Tang and Andy Park stocking up!

feature Minyo and Awa Odori folk dance; koto; martial arts; the Na Kupuna Ukulele Club of Chicago; and our renowned MBT Taiko and Ho Etsu Taiko groups.

See you at Ginza!

New classes, activities offered by MBT

There are several new opportunities to learn more about Buddhism at the Midwest Buddhist Temple. We hope you will check them out.

The temple provides classes throughout the year on Zoom. This allows everyone to participate from the comfort of their homes and from anywhere in the country.

Currently, MBT offers online study classes three times a year during the months of January–February, May–June and September–October. Topics vary and classes are open to anyone to join. No prior knowledge or temple affiliation is required. All class sessions are free, though offerings of *dana* (donations) are always appreciated.

For specific dates and times, please contact us at office@mbtchicago.org or call 312.943.7801.

MBT Study Class

Number of sessions: 8

When: 7 pm Wednesdays (Sept. 9, 16, 23 and 30; and Oct. 7, 14, 21 and 28)

Where: Via Zoom

About: This is an informal discussion group about topics on general Buddhism and our Jodo Shinshu tradition. We will focus on ways in which the Buddhist teaching and practice impacts our daily lives. Emphasis is on discussion/participation as we learn best through our interaction with each other sharing our life experiences.

No prior knowledge or commitment to attending all sessions is required. Attendees can also submit questions via email or an online form before each class.

To register: Click [here](#).

Jodo Shinshu for Bonbu People

Number of sessions: 8

When: 7 pm Thursdays (Sept. 10, 17, 24; and Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29)

Where: Via Zoom

About: This is a lecture-style class with a Q&A

see **classes**, page 4

August 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 July, and who we will remember during the MBT service on Aug. 2. To add a family member, please contact the MBT Office.

August					
1932	Takehiko Taketa	1981	Yuri Iwamoto	2001	Ted Itsuso
1942	Buichi Kaihara	1982	Sunao Harada		Miyata
1945	Keiichi		Tadao G.	2002	Akira
	Matsushima	1984	Nishimura		Matsushita
	Nobuko Okubo		Kevin Terao	2003	Raymond Saiki
	Shizuko Okubo	1987	Kuroye	2004	Edward S.
	Seinosuke		Sadanobu		Tsusaki
	Yoshida	1988	(Nob) Mizuki	2009	John Pistilli
1946	Onosuke	1989	Tokiye Sata	2010	Kenneth
	Nakamichi		Barbara Miyuki		Masamitsu
1947	Ichijiro Kitagawa		Temma		Henry Umeki
1951	Mitsuo Kono		Okane		Joe Taura
1956	Lester Shishida	1990	Kawaguchi	2012	Katsuo
1960	Kokichi		Harue Saida		Matsumoto
	Yamashita		Stephanie H.		Miyuji Mike
	Kichitaro Masai	1991	Blank		Oshita
	Hanzo		Takashi Mizuki	2015	Yoshi
	Sameshima		Mine		Katsumura
1961	Tomeno Shintani	1993	Utsunomiya		Violet Mizuki
1963	Kamenojo		Henry "Hank"	2018	June Harada
	Asakura		Kaihara		Yoshihiro
1964	Mabel		Kai Greg		Kawaguchi
	Furukawa		Oshita	2019	Mineko Hirata
1967	Masajiro Hirota	1994	Bette Shimizu	2020	Sakiko Okuda
1968	Hisako Shimizu		Dorothy	2022	Kadi Sue
	Fusa Tanaka	1995	Nishimura		Sprengle
	Kyotaro		Hideo Clark	2023	Daniel
	Yamakoshi		Shintaku		Nakagawa
1970	Hiroshi	1996	Tomoo Sato	2024	Marian Toshiye
	Masumoto	1997	Terry Yamauchi		Buri
1971	Sumi Shizuru	1998	Toshiko Inahara		Yasuko Okigawa
1973	Matsuhei Tono		Motohiro		Ryan Kotaro
1974	Shotaro		Kawaguchi		Meher
	Yamamoto		Yoshitomo Sora		Takayuki
1978	Masahide		Irene		Yoshigawa
	Kuroye	1999	Yamashita		
	Ted Nakashima		Rev. Shinshi E.		
1979	Kiyoko Kay	2000	Ohseki		
	Nakata		Kiyoi Ikoma		
1980	Ataye Hirata		Albert K.		
			Yamamoto		

classes

Continued from page 3

session for *bonbu* (ordinary, imperfect) beings. Each eight-week session will be on a certain topic or theme.

For the Sept.–Oct. 2026 sessions, Aki Sensei will introduce the basics of Jodo Shinshu—including a brief history of the founding of the Hongwanji branch of Pure Land Buddhism by Venerable Shinran, the primary sutras and texts, important teachers and their contributions to our understanding of the Buddha-dharma, etc.

No prior knowledge or commitment to attending all sessions is required.

Possible future topics/themes: The life of Shinran Shonin, the seven great teachers of Jodo Shinshu, Shinran's Letters, Rennyo's Letters, Eshin-ni's Letters, Women in Jodo Shinshu, Chanting and Rituals, "Practice" in Jodo Shinshu.

To register: Click [here](#).

New activities at MBT

Bonbu Chats (in-person Dharma discussions).

When: After service, 11:30 am–12:30 pm on second and fourth Sundays, starting in September.

Where: Location to be announced at the end of service (usually in the *hondo* or a meeting room)

About: Join Aki Sensei for an informal discussion session after service. These discussion sessions are open to everyone to ask questions about anything related to Jodo Shinshu, the teachings, how to apply the teachings in our daily lives, etc.

Introduction to MBT and Family Dharma Service

When: 9:45–10 am on first and third Sundays, starting in September.

Where: Meet in the *hondo* (main hall)

About: Join Aki Sensei or one of our minister's assistants to learn about Midwest Buddhist Temple and some basics—how family Dharma services are conducted, incense offering, our *onaijin* (altar) space, etc. Anyone can join and no pre-registration is necessary.



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Finding inspiration in a tale of 2 Sanghas

Reprinted from the Wheel of Dharma, June 2026; published by the Buddhist Churches of America.

By Glenn Inanaga
BCA President

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ... in short, it was so far like the present period.” That opening line from Charles Dickens’ “A Tale of Two Cities” came to mind on my flight home from Minneapolis, where I had attended the BCA Eastern District Council Meeting and the 80th anniversary of the Twin Cities Sangha, on the weekend of May 2–3.

Dickens wrote about the past, but the duality he described — extreme swings between hope and despair, between the best and worst—has a way of applying to any era, including our own.

I often share what I call the “bad news” with BCA and temple leaders at national and district meetings: Our membership is declining. As part of my commitment to transparency, I believe leaders deserve access to this data so we can make better decisions together—even when delivering it is so difficult. The presentation I was preparing for the Eastern District Council was no exception.

The numbers are sobering. Membership reported to the BCA has fallen roughly 3% year over year since 2023. At that rate of decline, projections suggest the organization has approximately 30 years before membership becomes unsustainable or concentrated in just a few large temples—a sobering benchmark that underscores the urgency of reversing the trend.

This is why, as reported in the April 2026 *Wheel of Dharma*, we are proposing “Project Catalyst”: a 5-year pilot program that changes how BCA collects membership income by fixing the assessment amount, freeing each temple’s leadership to focus energy on growing membership rather than managing assessments.

I’ll admit I wondered how the Eastern District Council would receive data like this. Would it land as “the worst of times?” I may have suggested that some emotional preparation wouldn’t hurt.

What happened next surprised me. The bad news was readily accepted. Leaders engaged in a thoughtful, energized discussion about “Project Catalyst” and the path to long-term sustainability. But it was what came during the temple reports that truly shifted my perspective.

Our friends from Albany Sangha—in New York’s state building itself from the ground up, in a new city, with no permanent home of its own—and asking not for help, but for recognition. capital, nearly three hours by car from its sponsoring temple, New



Photo courtesy of Glenn Inanaga

BCA President Glenn Inanaga is shown with the Eastern District Council officers at the council meeting on May 2 in Minneapolis. Shown, from left, are: Rev. Kurt Rye (Eastern District Kyokuchō), Allison Hagio (Midwest Buddhist Temple), Miye Jacques (Seabrook Buddhist Temple), Nancy Okada (New York Buddhist Church), Rev. Chiemi Onikura-Bly (Twin Cities Buddhist Sangha), BCA Minister Emeritus Rev. Ron Miyamura (Midwest Buddhist Temple), Cheral Tsuchiya (Twin Cities Buddhist Sangha), David Brady (New York Buddhist Church), Inanaga, Andrea Chapman (Ekoji Buddhist Temple) and Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada.

York Buddhist Church, led by temple President David Brady and Rev. Kurt Rye—were described as growing steadily and insistently requesting official BCA recognition.

Thanks to the efforts of Rev. Dr. Aaron Proffitt and Rev. Gary Jaskula, the Albany Sangha gathers for services in a Unitarian church building and has established a Dharma School. Here was a community.

The following day on May 3, the Twin Cities Sangha offered a similar lesson. As I learned from Rev. Chiemi Bly, in its 80-year history as a satellite of the Midwest Buddhist Temple in Chicago, the Sangha has never had a permanent temple site—moving from homes to community centers and beyond.

Sangha President Cheral Tsuchiya joked warmly that they have a “temple-in-a-box,” and that the best part is they can hold a service wherever the moment calls for it. That Sunday, the anniversary service was held on the second floor of a beautiful restaurant and conference center, where nearly 100 guests experienced the Nembutsu with the altar framed against blue skies, green trees and the Minneapolis skyline. It was as beautiful a view and as moving as any service I’ve attended in our most established temples.

Despite very different circumstances, both Sanghas share a common thread: audacity and persistence. Albany is building community in a completely unexpected

new area. Twin Cities has thrived for eight decades without a building to call its own. Neither has waited for ideal conditions. Both have grown by embracing flexibility and refusing to let convention define what a Sangha can be.

It is a testament to the continuing historic effort that larger temples have made to create and develop Sanghas around them—and my hope that more temples will consider starting. It parallels the national effort the BCA is making to support new Sanghas in communities without the support of a larger temple nearby—and only possible due to your support and generosity through donations and membership.

That is the “best of times” Dickens was reaching for—and it’s happening right now, in Albany and Minneapolis and, I believe, in communities like Las Vegas, Dallas, Cleveland and across the BCA.

The membership decline is real—and the urgency is real. But so is this: That when given the chance, our temples, churches and Sanghas meet the moment with creativity and heart. It inspires me to keep sharing the “bad news” and asking for financial and leadership support without hesitation, because I’ve seen first-hand that our leaders and members have the capacity—and the will—to write a different ending.

dharma school corner



Photos by Jennifer Toguri

Aki Sensei (and Jennifer Toguri, not shown) present Kyle Nobuhata with a BCA certificate to recognize his high school graduation. Kyle—shown with his dad, Marc; sister, Kaitlyn; mom, Heather; and Aki Sensei—graduated from John Hersey High School. He will be studying social relations and public policy at Michigan State's College of Public Affairs (James Madison College).



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oishii / recipes from mbt friends

Ohagi (rice cake covered with bean paste)

Yield: 24

Ingredients

2 cups mochi rice
1 cup short-grain rice
3½ cups water
1 recipe koshi azuki filling (see recipe below), homemade or store-bought (18 oz.)

Directions

1. Rinse and cook rice. While still hot, mash rice grains partially with wooden spoon dipped in water. Make rice balls about 1½" in diameter between palms of hands dampened with salted water.
2. Place an 8"x8" dampened cloth in palm of hands; spread 1 Tbsp. of "an" on it. Place rice ball in center of "an" and wrap around rice ball using cloth to shape smoothly.

Koshi Azuki An Filling

Yield: Makes approximately 40 walnut-size balls.

Ingredients

1 lb. azuki beans
1 tsp. baking soda
2 cups sugar
½ tsp. salt

Directions

1. Soak azuki beans in water overnight.
2. Cook beans in water with baking soda until very tender, stirring occasionally. Add more water as needed.
3. Add sugar and salt, when sugar dissolves, put beans in blender and puree.
3. Return beans to a pot and heat over very low heat, stirring constantly. When consistency is like thick mashed potatoes, take off heat and cool.

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.

Becoming our foolish selves

The following is from a Dharma message that was shared on July 5, 2026.

By Rev. Aki Rogers

Good morning everyone and thank you for joining us for the monthly memorial service for those who have passed away in the month of July.

Monthly memorials in the Shin Buddhist tradition are not for the sake of those who have gone before us, such as to help them transmigrate out of the realms of animals, hungry ghosts, or even hells (and, yes, in Buddhist cosmology there are many such

Click this [link](#) to hear Aki Sensei's Dharma message—*"We are many, but also one"*—from July 26, 2026.

as the eight hot hells and eight cold hells), attain a better rebirth such as a human or celestial being, or speed them along their way to becoming a Buddha, but are gifts of opportunities to hear the Dharma given to us by those

who went before, sharing with us their connection to the Buddha-dharma, the teachings that helped them live their lives authentically and with gratitude.

In July, we have two other events to remember those who have passed away before us, both of which will be held next week. The first, Obon dancing, is on Saturday, July 11. This is when we come together as a community to dance with joy and gratitude while remembering family and friends who have gone before us. Then Sunday morning, we will have Kangi-e, which means "Gathering of Joy"—a chance to hear the Dharma and why it is considered a joyous time, not just sorrowful remembrance.

Some of you have been attending our Bon Odori practices this week, and for those who haven't, there are a couple more practices this coming week. However, you also do not need to practice beforehand.

Dancing at obon is not about being the best dancer or doing the moves exactly right.

It is an occasion to remember our indebtedness to all who have passed away before us, to appreciate and thank those lives and to reaffirm the preciousness of all lives.

Appreciation happens when we are opened up to something beyond ourselves and that can happen through dancing, whether we dance well or poorly. It becomes a type of active meditation wherein we can momentarily forget the self, our egos: It is at this moment, that we suddenly remember our connection to others, our indebtedness to them and truly dance joyfully in remembrance—happiness is the ego getting it's way, joy is being free of that ego. In this spirit, there is "Awa-odori," famous in

*... Happiness is the ego
getting it's way, joy is
being free of that ego ...*

Tokushima Japan, but also danced at many obon gatherings outside of Tokushima and Japan too. The lyrics of one of the last verses captures the spirit of the Jodo Shinshu understanding of Obon:

Odoru ahou ni (Dancing fools)
Miru ahou (And watching fools)
Onaji ahou nara (Since they are both fools.)
Odoranya son son (What a waste not to dance)

As Rev. Mas Kodani says, "To truly dance Bon Odori is to be truly connected. It must be done without a calculating mind, without a mind needing to always be in control. It is 'just dancing' in its purest form—without guile, without pretense, without embarrassment, without ego asserting itself in any direction."

The Jodo Shinshu teachings are about recognizing the ego as arguably the biggest root of suffering and trying to let go of that ego to entrust in the Other Power working of the Primal Vow.

When we dance, we may start to compare ourselves to others. "I'm better than them." "They're doing the moves wrong." "Their yukata isn't a good look."

Our egos cause us to critique and discriminate between "good" and "bad," "right" and "wrong," and to arrogantly think our subjective opinions are objective facts.

Or we go negative, "I can't do this, so I won't." "I won't look good in front of others, so I will just sit out." "It's too embarrassing if I make a mistake."

Even this is our egos trying to protect itself, and so we suffer by missing out.

In one of Shinran's letters to Nembutsu followers, he relates the following memory of his teacher, Master Honen:

I recall hearing the late Master Honen say, "Persons of the Pure Land tradition attain birth in the Pure Land by becoming their foolish selves." Moreover, I remember him smile and muse, as he watched humble people of no intellectual pretensions coming to visit him, "Without doubt their birth is settled." And I heard him say after a visit by a man brilliant in letters and debating, "I really wonder about his birth."

To this day these things come to mind.

We may often think that those who are learned, those who can quote the texts readily and speak at length on the

teachings are the ones who are "settled" in having realized or awakened to shinjin, the entrusting heart, yet Master Honen questions those types.

Why? Why is it that Master Honen is confident in believing that humble folks of little education who visit him have attained the settled mind of shinjin?

First, what do we mean by "foolish" being? In Japanese, this is "*gusha*" or "*orokana mono*" meaning ignorant type of foolish, as in lacking common sense or basic education. But in Jodo Shinshu, we don't mean this as a comparative of "smart or educated" versus "ignorant or illiterate" amongst the general populace.

A foolish being in Jodo Shinshu is one who lacks the perfected wisdom and insight of the Buddhas, one who lives life repeatedly engaging in activities that cause suffering to self and others without awareness of said harms.

So how do we know if we lack the wisdom of the Buddhas? How does one come to realize their foolishness? It is through hearing and reflecting on the Buddha-dharma that we realize the light of awakening always shines on us and helps us to see ourselves as we truly are and not what we imagine ourselves to be. By illuminating us and the situations we find ourselves in, we are able to more clearly see our foolishness, our ignorance, our flaws that lead to our suffering and that of others.

This experience of seeing ourselves as foolish beings, helps us (at least briefly) to let go of our egos, to drop the pretenses and airs, and experience something different without the protective shell of delusion our egos create. Along with this experience of understanding just how foolish we are, is the simultaneous realization of the truth of the Buddha-dharma that seeks to help all beings become free from the causes of suffering.

These two aspects—awareness of our foolish nature and awareness through experience of the truth of the Dharma—are "shinjin," the heart that entrusts without a doubt in the truth of the Buddha-dharma.

Bon odori is an opportunity for us to experience this. Our connections to those who have passed before us give rise to the causes and conditions that offer us an opportunity to gather to dance together and remember those loved ones.

Combined with the Dharma teachings, we have a chance to see ourselves as we truly are, a moment or two to let go of our egos, to not think about ourselves especially in comparison with others. And this lets in the realization of our deep connection and indebtedness to others, and the gratitude and joy that arises.

And, of course, the moment we try to grasp

see **foolish**, page 8

foolish

Continued from page 7

and hold on to that joy, that moment of clarity beyond ourselves, it is gone. And now we chase after repeating that moment because our egos have returned and want to control the situation.

So dance the next dance, and the next, and the next, each moment a chance to see the moment in its fullness beyond yourself and your calculating, discriminating mind, your connection to everyone around you, physically present and those in your heart.

For me, growing up with these teachings, I didn't get it when I was younger. It wasn't until after my great-grandmother passed away when I was in 11th grade that I think I first really "got it."

Obons blurred together, going to practice, learning the moves for the 10 or so dances, dancing at a few different Obons throughout southern California.

It was just fun and something we did during the summer. But,



Photo by Bruce Unruh

by high school, I had stopped going to the Bon Odori part, just a quick stop by the local temple to pick up teriyaki plates, wontons, andagi (Okinawa-style donuts), and hopefully leaving before anyone recognized me. I had grown embarrassed to even dance.

But listening to a Dharma talk before Obon reminded me of what I was missing out on by letting my embarrassment, my thinking about what others

would say, my flaws, my ego get in the way.

It was difficult that first Bon Odori. Just mechanically going through the motions of the opening number, "Bon Odori Uta," but somehow—probably three or four dances in—there was a moment of realizing just how many other people were all dancing together, that each of us came to remember loved ones, that I was there because of my great-grandparents and

so many others, that I just danced and it felt so different.

The negative voices stopped, the worries of whether my hands and feet were going in the appropriate direction and in time with the music, all of it just faded away and truly it was such a joy to be there and be connected to everyone and everything else.

And, of course, the moment I went "wow, that was what sensei was talking about..." it was gone. And I foolishly tried to recreate that moment the rest of the night, but that one moment was just...perfect to just dance and be connected in that moment.

Those who have gone before us while physically gone are still with us in our hearts and minds. Our memories that get buried have a chance to resurface when we stop to think on that person.

Memorials and Obon give us opportunities to do just that, stop what we usually do, get out of our usual thoughts, our ego-shells, and think on someone else for a moment or two. To consider our connections to others, what brought us together, what we remember of their traits, their habits, their favorites, and their bits of wisdom that left an impact on us.

A moment to see them and ourselves in a different light. To realize just how much they mean to us and why we carry them with us. A moment to say thanks and feel joy in our causes and conditions that led us here.

So whether it is today or tomorrow or next week or further down the road, the Buddha-dharma is always here helping illuminate us so that we can see our foolish selves as we are, to know we are embraced in that light as we are, and that paths exist for all beings to become free from suffering.

So dance as your foolish self, think on those who came before, and let yourself feel joy at that connection and awareness, even if just for a moment.

With that, please join me in gassho with our palms together.

With deep gratitude for the inconceivable wisdom and compassion we receive,

Namo Amida Butsu.

MBT Dharma School

- Planning
- Teaching
- Leading select services
- Arts & Crafts
- Students of all ages

Email: jennifer.toguri@mbtchicago.org

- Experience preferred but not necessary
- Background check provided by MBT

Fall 2026

Teachers Wanted



MIDWEST BUDDHIST TEMPLE

435 West Menomonee Street Chicago, IL 60614 T. 312.943.7801 mbtchicago.org

kangi-e

Continued from page 1

from a Buddhist sutra called the Ullambana Sutra, or in Japanese the *Urabon-kyo*. It is the story of the first celebration of joy.

“Urabon” is the approximate pronunciation in Japanese of “Ullambana.” And you might recognize that it has the word “*bon*” in it, “Obon” is a shortened version of “Urabon.”

But what do these words mean? Even today, it is not precisely known, but there are some common theories. The most commonly known is that “Ullambana” means “hanging upside down.”

Another theory of the meaning is that the Chinese “*ura*” or “*ulan*” originated from a Sanskrit word that meant “rice” or a type of grain, and “*bon*” is tray. So “a tray to serve rice.”

But what does all that have to do with this celebration of joy or kangi-e? It is our dancing with joy, remembering those who have passed before us and given us the opportunity to hear the Dharma. It is Obon.

I’m sure some, or many of you, may be scratching your heads still unsure of how this all fits together. What does “hanging upside down,” or “rice served on a tray” have to do with a celebration of joy or dancing?

Well, let’s listen to the story of Maudgalyayana from the Ullambana Sutra.

You might know him as Mokuren or Mokkenren in Japanese, or Moggallana in Pali, but, today, I’m going to use his name in Sanskrit, Maudgalyayana.

Maudgalyayana was one of the 10 great disciples or students of Sakyamuni Buddha, along with Sariputra, Maha-kasyapa, Rahula, Ananda and others. He was the best at meditation.

While meditating, he could focus his mind so clearly on anyone and see exactly where they were. His mother had recently passed away and so in his meditative state, he focused to see where she was and how she was doing in her next life.

Maudgalyayana was expecting to see his mother who had cared for and supported him and his siblings, to be in the celestial realm with the devas, where his father was. He was shocked when he saw his mother restrained in the hell realm of the hungry ghosts, or *gaki*. It is the hell for those with insatiable greed.

Worried about his mother’s condition, Maudgalyayana tried to bring her food to eat, but as soon as the food touched her lips, it burned until nothing but charcoal and ashes remained. He tried to give her water, but that too evaporated before it could quench his mother’s thirst.

Nothing helped. Despite all his abilities, Maudgalyayana could not free his mother from being a hungry ghost.

So this is a *gaki* or hungry ghost. They have very narrow throats, so they cannot swallow regular food, and, yet, they have these big bellies because they are never satisfied and always want more and more.

How does one help an insatiable hungry ghost?

Finally, Maudgalyayana asked Sakyamuni Buddha for help once again. The Buddha taught him how to help his mother. Because his mother had been greedy, she never practiced dana, or selfless giving, to the Buddhist Sangha, even when Maudgalyayana had given her extra money to do so.

Instead, she saved the extra money and spent it on Maudgalyayana and his siblings so they could live comfortably and learn the Dharma.

So the Buddha suggested that Maudgalyayana practice with the monastic Sangha during the period that would end on the 15th day of the 7th month and make offerings to them. Maudgalyayana did as the Buddha advised, and sure enough his mother was freed from her attachment to greed and released from the hungry ghost realm.

Maudgalyayana was so relieved that his mother was no longer in that kind of hell that he danced with joy and gratitude.

Thus ends the story known by most Buddhists.

However, there are different understandings of the story. Maybe you had questions that arose from trying to understand how Maudgalyayana’s mother ended up in the realm of hungry ghosts. Was she really so greedy? If she spent her money on her sons, especially Maudgalyana, to become a monk, isn’t that good enough and in the same vein as giving dana to the monastic Sangha since she wasn’t hoarding it and spending it on herself? Instead it benefitted Maudgalyayana to become a great disciple of the Buddha who then helped others?

Or maybe you wondered why didn’t the Buddha just help Maudgalyayana’s mother directly?

So why didn’t the Buddha help Maudgalyayana’s mother directly to get her out of the realm of hungry ghosts? Let’s think about this as if we’re in Maudgalyayana’s shoes.

How do you learn best? Is it when others do it for you? Or when you have to do it yourself? The Buddha was a skilled teacher and knew that in order for others to truly and deeply understand the teachings, personal experience along with self-reflection was the best way for others to awaken to what is true and real, rather than just telling people what to do or think. Maudgalyayana needed to experience for himself as well, what it meant to *really* practice dana, selfless giving.

Flipping this story on its head though, one

Jodo Shinshu understanding of this story is that it is more about Maudgalyayana himself—his thoughts and actions, rather than his mother’s. Maudgalyayana thought his mother was stingy and did not freely give to those outside the family and thus viewed her with disdain. He did not try to redirect his mother’s actions while she was alive and instead continued to blame her for her supposed greed while benefiting from her generosity with him, which went unacknowledged.

So his own negative thoughts toward his mother led him to believe she ended up in the realm of hungry ghosts.

How many of us have done that? You get so mad or frustrated or disgusted with other people that you wish negative things on them or project unkind characteristics and a punishment to match? We say, “Serves them right” because we feel they “deserve” that punishment. And we may do that without understanding the full context.

Maybe there was something you didn’t know about or there were extenuating circumstances? Or maybe your own lack of patience or shortness of temper made it difficult to extend kindness and empathy?

Maudgalyayana for all his ability to meditate and use it to see where people were, wasn’t able to see his own biases nor the fuller context of his mother’s kindness and generosity toward him.

His connection with his mother gave rise to the conditions for Maudgalyayana to reflect more deeply on himself and his relationship with his mother even after her death. The Buddha’s teachings and guidance on practicing dana helped him see just how much it took to support him and his siblings through his own efforts to feed and clothe the monks during just one practice period. His mother had done this her entire life.

When Maudgalyayana realized this reality of himself and his mother and broke through the delusions of his biased mind, he danced with joy and gratitude for his deceased mother.

While we may think of death as the end of our relationship with our loved ones and friends who have passed away before us, it is not the end—just the way we connect with them has changed. They continue on in our hearts and minds, through our memories of them.

For those who are observing Hatsubon, the first obon after the passing of your loved one, you may be feeling a mix of emotions, various levels of grief and sadness, or numbness, or relief. There is no “right way” to grieve, and we each process death differently depending on our own circumstances and our own experiences with the one who passed away.

Yet each person, each being and our



Over 200 dancers filled the parking lot to the happy rhythm of 14 songs, starting with the traditional "Bon Odori Uta," and including the classic "Tanko Bushi" (coal miner's dance) and the popular "Pokémon Ondo."

Young and old, first-timers and veterans—the happy faces reflected our sangha's diversity.

Photos by Bruce Unruh (unless otherwise indicated)



Photo by Carl Ichikawa



Photo by Carl Ichikawa



Photo by Heather Ichishita Nobuhata

odori

Continued from page 1

ever-popular Popsicles, and then it was back into the circles for "Tokyo Ondo."

Throughout the evening, members of MBT Taiko and Ho Etsu Taiko kept the beat from the *yagura* (raised platform), where they were joined by our former resident minister Todd Tsuchiya and his wife, Connie, who both made the trip from Minneapolis for the festivities.

Bon Odori marks the midpoint of summer, a time to reunite with our friends and catch up on the past year.

At MBT, our founding minister Rev. Gyodo Kono wanted folks to enjoy the dancing, free from the work or cooking. For a few years, we served our famous chicken teriyaki but quickly reverted to an evening of just dancing.

On Sunday, about 100 members filled the *hondo* (chapel) for the Obon/Hatsubon service. At the front of the *naijin* (altar) were 88 candles from family and friends in honor of a loved one.

On the *maejoku* (altar table) were the *homyo* (Buddhist names) of the 13 individuals who passed since the last Obon. These Hatsubon (first Obon) names were read during the service, with family members offering *oshoko* (offering incense), and received a box of incense from Aki Sensei.

Aki Sensei shared their first Obon Dharma Talk at MBT (see page 1), and we all enjoyed *otoki* (light lunch) prepared by the toban.

Many thanks to Bon Odori Chairman Jim Chikaraishi, who led a group that strung the lights, built the *yagura*, and set up the chairs. Also thanks to Elaine Miyamura and the MBT Minyo Group who held five practices, and led Saturday's dancing. Rev. Ron was the evening's emcee and Grady Hutt managed the audio system.

On Sunday, toban chairs Nancy Rivera and Elaine Ogawa led their crew in the preparation of a delicious somen lunch.



Photo by Bruce Unruh



Photo by Carl Ichikawa



Photo by Carl Ichikawa

kangi-e

Continued from page 9

connection to them offers us an opportunity to hear the Buddha-dharma, to reflect deeply upon ourselves, and be guided. Even for those who are observing their second, third, 10th or more obon, even years down the road our emotions will vary. Some days will be good, others sad, yet others we may not even think on our loved ones, except for the fact that it is obon and so we're sort of forced out of our daily-grind minds and to reflect on others for a brief while.

It is in those moments of reflection beyond ourselves, we are truly able to hear the Dharma, the gift given to us from those who have left us.

As Venerable Shinran reflects in his wasan in gratitude to the Chinese master Tan-luan who clarified the importance of Amida Buddha's benefits for all beings after attaining birth in the Pure Land:

The directing of virtue for our return to this world is such that

We attain the resultant state of benefiting and guiding others;

Immediately reentering the world of beings,

We engage in the compassionate activity that is the virtue of Samantabhadra.

While of course those who have died do not return to us in physical form, they return to us in our memories, in our continued dialogues with those memories and ourselves, and the gifts of opportunities to hear, practice, and reflect on the Buddha-dharma so that wisdom and compassion continue to be shared, one person to another, one generation to another

until all beings are free from suffering.

And maybe, just maybe, we, too, can feel a bit of that joy and gratitude alongside our sadness and grief as we live our lives as fully and authentically as we can.

Please join me, if you'd like, in putting our palms together in gassho,

With kindness and gratitude beyond words,

Namo Amida Butsu

Understanding how MBT came to exist

The following is from a Dharma message that was shared on July 19, 2026.

By Joy Zavala

Good morning. A few weeks ago, we celebrated Founder's Day, a day when we commemorate the Midwest Buddhist Temple's origins and legacies. It was a day of recognition and gratitude, especially for our Nisei pioneers who were able to attend on that special Sunday.

In 2024, we celebrated MBT's 80th anniversary, and it brought back many personal memories for me at this temple.

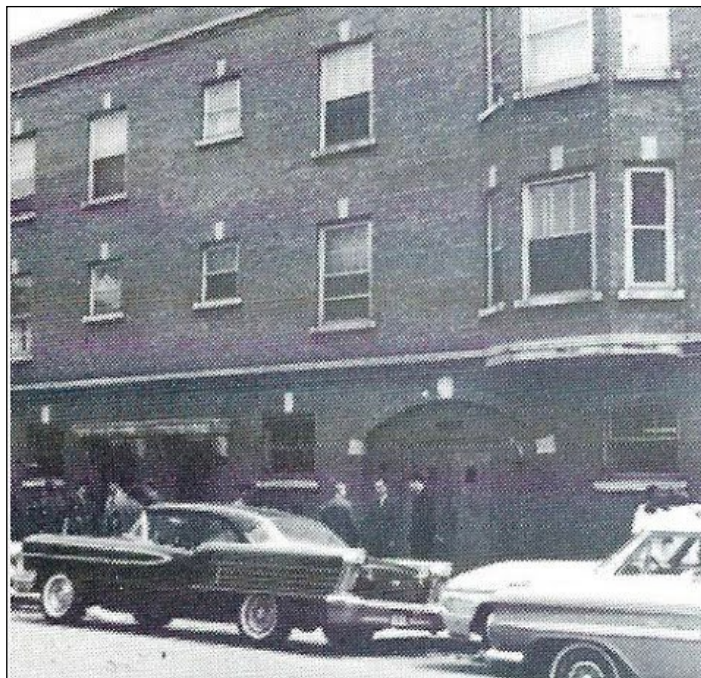
In order to understand the origin of MBT, we must go back in time. Here is a little history about Japanese in America.

From 1886 to 1911, more than 400,000 Japanese women and men immigrated to America, particularly to Hawaii and the West Coast. Issei (first-generation Japanese) and Nisei (second-generation Japanese) were the founding members of the Midwest Buddhist Temple. They were my grandparents and parents.

In 1942, Executive Order 9066 authorized the forced removal of all people deemed a threat to national security from the West Coast, resulting in the incarceration of around 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry. About two-thirds of them were born and raised in the United States.

They were given only a few days to dispose of their property and report to temporary "assembly centers." One was in Santa Anita Park, a racetrack in southern California, where entire families stayed in horse stalls with dirt floors. My mom and her family were sent to the Fresno Assembly Center, which was on the Fresno County Fairgrounds.

From the assembly centers, they were sent to live in internment camps. They stayed in row-style, tarpaper-covered barracks. They were surrounded by barbed-wire fences with armed guards pointing their guns in.



The Midwest Buddhist Church (as the Midwest Buddhist Temple was formerly known).

The camps were located in areas with harsh weather (hot summers and freezing winters). The internees tried to live as normal a life as possible, with children attending school, and adults employed making low wages. Sports leagues were formed, newspapers were published and gardens planted.

The average time spent in the camps was three years, and the last of the camps closed in 1946. Many were given \$25 and a train ticket.

But during the war, many of the Nisei men were drafted or enlisted in military service, with some wanting to show their loyalty. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team was formed in 1943 and was composed of Americans of Japanese ancestry. It became the most decorated unit for its size and length of service during the entire history of the U.S. military. Some Nisei members of this temple served in the 442nd.

After World War II, the Issei and Nisei did not know what their future would hold since many of them had been farmers in California. But when the war ended, they were forced to make a difficult choice: Remain in the camps

and await permission to return to the West Coast or gain release under the condition they relocate to the Eastern part of the United States.

Many, known as "resettlers," chose to start a new life here in Chicago.

Some of the Nisei mentioned how they felt they didn't really fit in. When they saw signs on buses that said for colored people to sit at the back, they were confused and didn't really know where to sit. Many of them decided to sit in the back.

They came to Chicago looking for jobs, not knowing what type of work they should pursue.

In my family, after serving in the U.S. Navy, my dad came back to Chicago and went to school to learn body and fender, and auto mechanic work. My mom worked in an office. My grandfather worked in a plastics factory and my grandmother worked in a designer clothing factory as a seamstress. It was truly a sweat shop with no air conditioning. I know because I also worked there part-time when I was in college.

My family members did what they had to do to make a living

as did all the Issei and Nisei resettlers.

My parents and grandparents did not talk about the internment camps, and I have heard many other children of Nisei say the same thing. I only learned more when I wrote a paper about it in high school and interviewed them.

Jodo Shinshu

Our sect of Buddhism is Jodo Shinshu. In 1173, Shinran Shonin, the founder of our sect, was born into an aristocratic family. At the age of 9, he entered a Tendai monastery, spending 20 years on Mt. Hiei.

After becoming discouraged about ever attaining awakening through harsh discipline and study, he then became a disciple of Honen Shonin who had a similar experience, having spent 12 years on Mt. Hiei.

Honen declared that all self-generated efforts (or Self Power) toward enlightenment were tainted by attachments and therefore meaningless. We should simply say the Nembutsu, not as a contemplative exercise or means of gaining merit, but by way of wholly entrusting oneself to Amida's Vow to bring all beings to enlightenment.

After gaining popularity, both Honen and Shinran were banished from the capital, with the established temples convincing the emperor to enact a government ban on Honen's Nembutsu teaching.

Honen and Shinran were stripped of their priesthood. Shinran then considered himself "neither monk nor layperson," taking the name Gutoku Shinran. Gutoku means 'stubble-haired foolish one,' indicating his humility while considering himself foolish or ignorant.

He then married Eshinni and raised a family. He was pardoned after five years and then spread the Nembutsu teaching for 20 years. He did not return to Kyoto but remained in Echigo for three

history

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more years, devoting the spreading of his teachings to farmers, fishermen and outcasts in the countryside, whom he thought opened their hearts more readily than the literate.

At the age of 41, Shinran made his way to the Kanto region, spreading the Nembutsu teaching to men and women of all walks of life.

In his 60s, Shinran returned to Kyoto, writing the *Kyogyoshinsho* (The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way). He lived with relatives, supported by gifts from his followers in the Kanto area.

After his wife, Eshinni, returned to Echigo to oversee property there, his daughter, Kakushinni, took care of him.

Shinran's life took many turns but, fortunately for us, he chose to follow his own path, which we all follow now. He was a rebel of his time, leaving the monkhood and marrying Eshinni.

He wore robes and did not live in temples but spread the Nembutsu teaching to people from all walks of life.

BCA

The Buddhist Mission of North America was established in 1899 to serve the spiritual needs of Japanese immigrants. Its name was changed to Buddhist Churches of America in 1944 while its leadership and members were at the Topaz War Relocation Center in Utah.

They switched to more Americanized terms—such as "church" rather than "temple," and "reverend" rather than "priest"—so they could assimilate and fit in with American culture.

Buddhist leaders and ministers held services in the internment camps. Rev. Gyodo Kono set up a small *obutsudan* (Buddhist shrine) in his barrack in the internment camp in Jerome, Ark. After leaving camp, he then moved to Chicago and founded this temple.

The Midwest Buddhist Temple is part of the Buddhist Churches of America. We are one of over 60 temples and fellowships in the U.S. The BCA is affiliated with the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha tradition, the head temple of which is in Kyoto.

Ministers and MBT

Since 1944, MBT has had 15 ministers, including our newest, Aki Sensei. Our founding minister, Rev. Gyodo Kono, was one of the Issei Jodo Shinshu ministers who helped establish Buddhism in the United States.

In 1937, he moved from Hiroshima to Hanford, Calif., where he was assigned to a temple there. Following his release from the Rohwer Arkansas Internment Camp,

he moved to Chicago where he found many Issei and young Nisei also just released from the internment camps.

He and other Issei and Nisei leaders wanted to establish a place for Jodo Shinshu services and a sense of community.

Rev. Kono held the first service of the Midwest Buddhist Church (later renamed the Midwest Buddhist Temple) on July 10, 1944 on Chicago's South Side. As attendance grew, temple services moved to a few areas close to our current location, ending up on North Park Avenue, just a few blocks from here.

The Midwest Buddhist Church was dedicated in 1950, and that building is now the home of the Old Town Triangle Association.

An even larger building with space for the temple's activities, with cultural and Buddhist educational endeavors was planned, and on Nov. 6, 1971, we dedicated our new Temple of Enlightenment (this building), which was designed by architect Hideaki Arao. It is now an integral part of the Old Town community.

Rev. Kono passed away in 1975 and a sculpture of him is located at the back of our *hondo*. It is a very good likeness of him, especially with his actual glasses set on its nose.

Social events

My grandparents were not born in the United States, but they became U.S. citizens because they wanted to belong and establish their roots here. My grandfather's grasp of the English language was especially apparent when he would swear, which usually happened when the Cubs were losing.

Their social lives, as well as their kids' and grandkids', took place right here at the Midwest Buddhist Temple. They and their extended MBT family formed groups—Fujinkai for Issei women, Women's Auxiliary for Nisei, Tobans for planned events, Young Buddhist Association for the Nisei, the Religious Department, the Midwest Adult Sangha, Choir, Minyo and Ikebana. I'm sure there are more groups that I missed.

When the third-generation Sansei (that's me) were growing up, we had picnics, Katei Nights, Japanese School, Boy Scouts, dances, judo and sports teams. Our weekends were packed with get-togethers, classes and games. MBT was the second home for many of us, and we made life-long friends here.

Now, although the groups we grew up with have disbanded, members of our Events Committee continue to try to come up with fun and educational activities, and we welcome new ideas with a Suggestion Box in the Social Hall.

Holidays

Holidays are very important at MBT.

Our annual Bon Odori festival, which was just last weekend, honors our departed family members. The first Bon Odori took place at our old location on North Park Avenue, with traditional Japanese lanterns lighting the street under the evening sky. Participants wearing colorful yukata danced to traditional songs with taiko drumming. There are now so many people who join in this meaningful celebration, remembering our loved ones with gratitude.

It was also at that location that the Midwest Buddhist Temple held its first Ginza Holiday Festival in 1955. Imagine the planning that went into the first Ginza—the audacity of the young Nisei. Their brilliance and legacy truly live on, and the present Ginza planners know all that went into it and have forged on, preserving our cultural foundation and making necessary changes. Our Chicken Teriyaki has been famous for 70 years and people look forward to having it every year.

Fortunately, Chicago was and has been a welcoming city that embraces diversity with many festivals and events.

Conclusion

The Issei and Nisei persevered the hardships during World War II and established the basis for MBT, including Japanese-American culture. Change is something the Issei and Nisei endured, some of which was not anything they planned.

We should appreciate all that they did to initiate the groundwork for our temple.

From Siddhartha Gautama's search for an end to suffering and discovering the Middle Way in India, to Shinran Shonin descending from Mt. Hiei in Japan and teaching that simply reciting the Nembutsu, deep listening and having gratitude for the Dharma, to Rev. Kono's voyage from Hiroshima to California and then right here to Chicago, where his leadership and dedication, along with the Issei and Nisei, formed the basis for the Midwest Buddhist Temple, our journey continues to thrive and grow.

Now, when we look around, our Sangha is very diverse. We welcome our newcomers who are attracted to the Jodo Shinshu teachings. I view anyone who rings our doorbell and walks into this temple for the first time as being very brave. We who have attended MBT since childhood probably cannot imagine the feeling.

I hope we can continue in the tradition of our founders and embrace all attendees—old and new. While the Dharma makes its way into our hearts and minds inside this temple, we are so grateful for all who

history

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came before and guided us,
to those who are present now,
and to those who will remain in
the future.

Please place your hands
together in Gassho.

From "Shinjin Sho-In, Jodo-
Shinshu Essays 1962-1967" by
Rev. Gyodo Kono:

*"When we become aware that
we are allowed to live as a result
of the blessing of all the things
around us, we cannot prevent
ourselves from expressing with
our mouths what is in our hearts.
That's what the voice of the
Nembutsu is.*

*"When we hear music that
grabs our heart, or when we
come in contact with beautiful
scenery, we sigh in awe without
thinking. Clearly this sigh is the
joy of being blessed, and this
joy felt to the extreme is the
Nembutsu.*

*"That's why the Nembutsu is
the motive power for both the
joy of living, and for creating a
more beautiful world."*

Namu Amida Butsu



Photo by Joy Zavala

Here are some of the volunteers who helped make, bag and deliver sandwiches for the temple's Homeless Project this month.

350 sandwiches made, delivered to unhoused

By Joy Zavala

Volunteers made 350 sandwiches at their homes or at MBT for the temple's Homeless Project on Saturday, July 25.

The sandwiches were then packed in bags with

grapes and delivered to Sarah's Circle, North Side Housing for Men, Lincoln Park Community Services and Ewing Annex Men's Hotel for Men.

Thanks to all of our helpers.



Thanks to our Sangha and guests, MBT folded 500 origami cranes to donate to the Osaka Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International, in partnership with the Japanese Culture Center, for a large-scale collaborative art installation to be displayed at a Chicago cultural institution in 2027.



happenings

Continued from page 2

workshop on Aug. 3. All are welcome to attend regardless of experience. The workshop will be held from 7 to 8:30 pm on the first floor of the JASC building at 5700 N Lincoln Ave. The event is free, but donations are welcomed. Please RSVP [here](#).

Ho Etsu on the go

July and August were busy for **Ho Etsu Taiko**. "On July 13, we had the privilege and honor of opening for **Nick Offerman** (yes, that Nick Offerman) who was doing a benefit concert at Ramova Theater for the University of Illinois Japan House (see poster at right)," says Ho Etsu's **Dana Johnson**. Nick told us personally that it was 'killer,' and we received feedback that his mom said it was the best part of the evening."

The group then performed over the weekend of July 18 at the Anderson Japanese Gardens Summer Festival in Rockford. "Despite Saturday's heat and Sunday's air-quality issues, we performed five sets for hundreds of people who came out to enjoy the beautiful gardens," adds Dana.

And soon, Ho Etsu will be performing at the Ginza Holiday Festival, including "joint performances with the amazing people in MBT Taiko.

"Finally, we invite those in Chicago to make it out to our set at the Chicago Live! Festival at Navy Pier on Sept. 19. Chicago Live! is the 'Midwest's largest free performing arts festival, showcasing the best of Chicago's vibrant cultural scene,' and we are thrilled to showcase our work among other amazing Chicago artists."

Cooperstown baseball

Helen and Kaz Ideno's grandson, **Logan Tanaka**, 12, got to play baseball at Cooperstown, NY, where the baseball Hall of Fame is located. He is on the Burlingame Barons team. Logan's fan club included his father, **Dean**, his mother, **Gail**, brother, **Trent**, and grandparents, Helen and Kaz.

Poland bound

Our world traveler **Ellen Dunleavy** just got back from two weeks in Poland. "I visited Warsaw and Gdansk where I got to see the Baltic Sea," says Ellen. "Both cities have beautiful reconstructed old towns and even more beautiful gardens. I highly recommend Poland!"

Travels to Japan

Dominick and Luca Macri traveled to Tokyo with their Mom (**Lisa**) and **Grandma Ruby (née Wakatani)** to visit

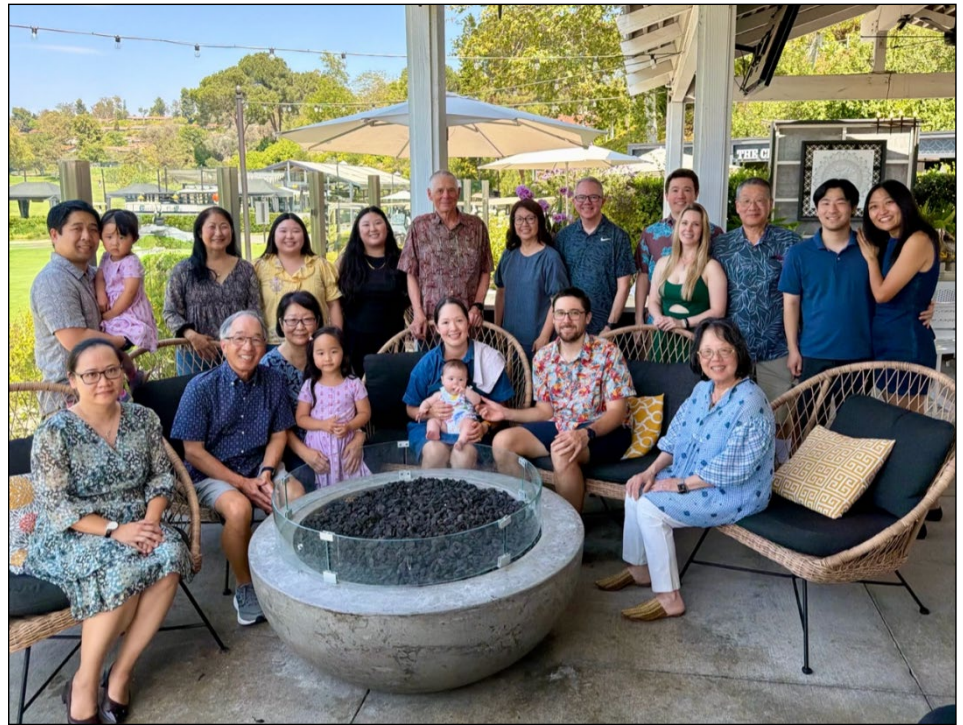


Photo from Mary Doi

Lily Doi (center) sits on mom Lisa Doi's lap when Lisa, dad Eric Langowski and grandma Mary Doi and grandpa Jac Cerney introduce her to her California family.

family with stops in Kyoto and Hakone along the way. Dad (**Nick**) stayed behind and prepared for the Old Town School's Square Roots fest and for some upcoming gigs at the Green Mill. (Nick will be playing at the Green Mill with **Ken Vandermark and The Field Kitchen Uptown Orchestra & Poets** from 8 pm to midnight Saturday, Aug. 1. There's a \$20 cover charge.)

Meeting LA kin

Lily Langowski Doi, her parents **Lisa Doi** and **Eric Langowski**, and grandparents **Mary Doi** and **Jac Cerney** just returned from a quick trip to California. Lily met her Doi family aunts, uncles and cousins and looks forward to seeing them again at Christmas!

We are family!

The **Matsushita Clan** took over Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort in Minnesota recently when 67 of them—from Oregon, Montana, Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois and Florida—gathered for a long-awaited family reunion. Among them were **Fumi Matsushita, Elaine Matsushita** and **Bob Sutter, Josh Fidler** and **Andrea Shlimon, Sam Fidler** and fiancée **Callye Foster**; **Kevin Matsushita** and his kids **Gabby, Matthew** and **Jonathan**. What was really impressive about the wonderfully planned gathering was that it was all organized by the Yonsei—and included a fishing tournament, golf tournament, morning tai chi and fitness sessions, family picnic games, pontoon boat rides, kids movie night, a talent

show, and a slide show that featured 400-plus photos of relatives in family gatherings over six generations.

Sad news

We were saddened to hear that **Michiye Hirota** passed on June 30 at the age of 103. Mrs. Hirota was a lifelong member of the Twin Cities Buddhist Association and the Midwest Buddhist Temple. Our condolences to her daughters **Jean Hamano (Mickey Hamano)** and **Elaine Ogawa (Steve Arima)**, and her large extended family. Services will be private.

Happy birthday to...

We would like to send happy birthday wishes to our friends who were born in the month of August. Happy birthday to:
Jami Chikaraishi Franchi / Aug. 4
Juli Chikaraishi / Aug. 4
Kari Chikaraishi McCullough / Aug. 4
Kristi Chikaraishi Hsieh / Aug. 4
Ben Chikaraishi / Aug. 4
Rich Taura / Aug. 9
Victor Miyata / Aug. 14
Elaine Miyamura / Aug. 15
Josh Arima / Aug. 16
Cody Arima / Aug. 16
Lisa Doi / Aug. 23
Lynne Matsumoto / Aug. 24
Michael Endo / Aug. 29
Nick Macri / Aug. 31

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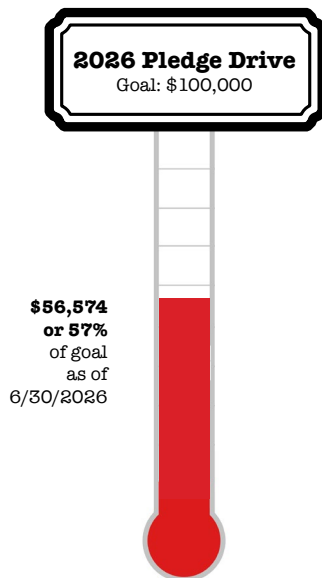
## MIDWEST BUDDHIST TEMPLE 2026 PLEDGE DRIVE

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- 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



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# domo

The Midwest Buddhist Temple gratefully acknowledges the following donations received between **June 16 and July 15**.

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.

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# Chemical leak scare affects OCBC, MBT

*Reprinted from the Wheel of Dharma, July 2026; published by the Buddhist Churches of America.*

**By Jon Kawamoto**  
*Wheel of Dharma Editor*

**T**he nerve-wracking chemical leak scare in Garden Grove, Calif., in late May led to mass evacuations, impacted operations at the Orange County Buddhist Church—and had ripple effects 2,000 miles away in Chicago.

Rev. Akiko Rogers was preparing for their new assignment as the minister of the Midwest Buddhist Temple. Instead, they were among the 50,000 Southern California residents who were forced to evacuate because of the leak.



A storage tank containing around 7,000 gallons of a toxic, volatile and highly flammable chemical at the GKN Aerospace facility in Garden Grove overheated and prompted the mass evacuations. Ultimately, the tank cracked, releasing the dangerous pressure buildup and averting a massive explosion. The evacuation orders were lifted and no injuries were reported.

Methyl methacrylate is used to manufacture plastics, resins and acrylics, like F-35 fighter jet canopies. The federal investigation into the facility's safety violations remains ongoing.

OCBC, located on Dale Avenue, was just outside of the evacuation zone. But when news of the chemical leak spread on May 22, the OCBC board, citing safety concerns, decided to cancel all evening activity, including a Boy Scouts meeting and a Snack Shack fundraiser.

OCBC used email blasts and social media like Facebook and Instagram to reach and notify Sangha members.

In addition, some OCBC Sangha members evacuated, with one family moving in temporarily with other family members.

There was a funeral scheduled the next day, May 23, and the decision was made to proceed with the service. As soon as the funeral ended, OCBC was closed again.

Because the chemical leak scare occurred around the Memorial Day weekend, OCBC did not have its regular Sunday services.

OCBC Resident Minister Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Wondra said a short service was held in the hondo on Memorial Day and then visited several local cemeteries.

Meanwhile, OCBC Resident Minister Rev. Jon Turner was attending the yoga retreat at the Jodo Shinshu Center on Memorial Day weekend. But daughter Emily, a teacher at Pacifica High School in Garden Grove, was directly affected. The school was closed and she evacuated to her parents house, the Turner household.

Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada, who resides in Anaheim, also attended the yoga retreat at the JSC, and said his home was outside the evacuation zone.

OCBC resumed its regular Sunday service on May 31.

For Rev. Rogers, the evacuation capped a hectic week. The day before, May 21, they were the featured guest speaker at the Institute of Buddhist Studies commencement at the JSC in Berkeley. They flew back that evening to Orange County, only to be awakened by the sound of police helicopters hovering in their neighborhood.

"I woke up at 7:30 am and heard police helicopters say that south of Orangewood needed to evacuate," Rev. Rogers said.

Rev. Rogers was living with her brother, sister-in-law, four cats and a dog in a house just north of Orangewood Avenue, outside the initial evacuation zone. Later, the evacuation zone was expanded to include their house, and they evacuated at 2 pm on May 22, to a hotel 5 miles away, where they stayed until they were able to return to their house at 6 pm on May 25, Memorial Day.

"As for moving, originally I was supposed to ship my belongings on Saturday, May 23, but due to the evacuation orders on

May 22, I had to reschedule," Rev. Rogers said. "I tentatively selected Thursday, May 28, as the new date, but wasn't sure how long the evacuation orders would remain, if Orange County Fire/HazMat would be able to mitigate things or worst-case scenario, the chemical tank would explode and while my house may escape damage from the blast, it would likely be in the toxic fumes zone and how long it might take to mitigate that before being allowed back and if anything would be salvageable.

"Fortunately, the chemical leak and potential explosion was mitigated enough that I could return home, finish packing and ship my belongings to Chicago," they said. "I then flew from LAX to Chicago on May 31."

Rev. Rogers has been staying temporarily with BCA Minister Emeritus and former MBT Resident Minister Rev. Ron Miyamura and his wife Elaine in Chicago. Rev. Rogers' belongings were set to arrive on June 12.

In the meantime, the MBT Board of Trustees and Rev. Miyamura have been busy showing Rev. Rogers how MBT runs things. Rev. Rogers conducted their first service on June 7.

"It's been a smooth transition so far and it's been great getting to know MBT, the Sangha here, and the city," they said. "I even got to attend my first Cubs game at Wrigley Field, though I am still an Angels fan at heart.

"With June being LGBTQ+ Pride Month, I look forward to MBT's combined LGBTQ and Fathers' Day service on June 21 and sharing how Amida's Vow accepts everyone just as we are, in all our diversity."

OCBC's Bryan Furumoto, the past president, reflected on the news and the community. "It kind of shows you the strength of our Sangha when you rely on communication and getting the word out," he said. "It's an amazing community."

Rev. Turner thanked all the authorities, municipalities as well as OCBC who were involved with handling the incident safely and without injuries.

"Lots of gratitude — it could have been much worse," he said.



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## save the date

**AUG 2** We will have an Ice Cream Social after service. Please join us for a special cool treat.

**Time:** 11:30 am. **Location:** MBT. **More information:** Contact the MBT Office, 312.943.7801.

**AUG 7-9** It's time for our 71st Ginza Holiday Festival. Come to volunteer, to enjoy our signature grilled chicken teriyaki, Hawaiian shave ice and udon noodles, to visit the Waza artisans and see candle-making, papier mache, tenugui and ceramics, to watch the stage performances of Minyo and Awa Odori folk dance, koto, martial arts, the Na Kupuna Ukelele Club of Chicago, and our renowned MBT Taiko and Ho Etsu Taiko groups—and to shop our many vendors!

**Time:** 5–8 pm Friday, Aug. 7; 11 am–8 pm Saturday, Aug. 8; 11 am–4 pm Sunday, Aug. 9. **Location:** MBT. **More information:** Contact the MBT Office, 312.943.7801.

**AUG 29** 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.

## domo

*Continued from page 16*

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# AUG

at midwest buddhist temple

|          |                                                             |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2        | 10:30 am Monthly Memorial Service / Rev. Aki Rogers         |
| SUNDAY   | 11:30 am Ice Cream Social (see details at left)             |
| 7        | 5–8 pm Ginza Holiday Festival                               |
| FRIDAY   |                                                             |
| 8        | 11 am–8 pm Ginza Holiday Festival                           |
| SATURDAY |                                                             |
| 9        | 11 am–4 pm Ginza Holiday Festival                           |
| SUNDAY   | No service due to Ginza Holiday Festival                    |
| 16       | No service due to the Chicago Air and Water Show            |
| SUNDAY   |                                                             |
| 23       | 10:30 am Family Service / TBD                               |
| SUNDAY   |                                                             |
| 29       | Noon Homeless Project Sandwich-Making (see details at left) |
| SATURDAY |                                                             |
| 30       | 10:30 am Family Service / Rev. Aki Rogers                   |
| SUNDAY   |                                                             |



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## Flower Power Fall Fundraiser

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Proceeds from The Fall Flower Fundraiser will benefit future Garden Cleanup Days. \*All orders will ship starting in mid to late September in time to plant. Thank you for supporting our fundraising efforts.

<http://mbt.fpfundraising.com>

