

MBT Sangha welcomes Aki Sensei

*'From one person
to another, one
generation to the next'*

*The following is from a Dharma
message that was shared on
June 7, 2026.*

By Rev. Aki Rogers

Good morning everyone, and thank you, Rev. Miyamura, for the introduction. I would also like to give thanks to the Midwest Buddhist Temple board and advisers for entrusting me with sharing the Dharma here as your new resident minister.

I am humbled and look forward to serving the Sangha and broader Midwest community as best I can. I am also grateful that Rev. Ron will be mentoring me as I settle in here.

I'm especially grateful to be able to be here to share the Dharma with you all at this June Shotsuki or monthly memorial service for those who have passed away in the month of June. Monthly memorials in the Shin Buddhist tradition are not for the sake of those who have gone before us, but are gifts of opportunities to hear the Dharma given to us by those who went before,

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Photo by Allison Hagio-Conwell

At the June 7 service, Rev. Ron Miyamura introduces Rev. Aki Rogers to the MBT Sangha.

*Temple's
15th minister
joins MBT*

By Carl Ichikawa

On June 7, we welcomed our 15th minister in the 82-year history of the Midwest Buddhist Temple. The hondo was full with 102 members and another 16 joining online to hear Rev. Aki Rogers' first Chicago Dharma Talk (see story at left).

After service, the Sangha gathered in the Social Hall where Board of Trustees President Jason Matsumoto expressed the temple's appreciation to those who worked to continue services after Rev. Todd's departure nine months ago.

Rev. Ron came out of retirement and the Service Planning Committee of Terry Cichocki, Taryn Hutt, Tracie Padal, Alex Vincer and Joy Zavala was created to coordinate the weekly services—which included selection of the chairperson, chanting leader, Dharma talk and readers.

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Pioneers homecoming

Sangha honors MBT pioneers and looks to the future. *Page 3.*



Ginza

Calling on all to help celebrate MBT's 71st Ginza Holiday Festival. *Page 5.*



happenings

By Elaine Matsushita

Apologies. In the June issue of the Bulletin, we included information about a high-tech "FBI imposter scam" that targeted **Rev. Peter Hata**, retired minister of the Los Angeles Higashi Honganji Betsuin temple, and his wife **Diane**, a former MBT member and daughter of the late **Ray** and **Marion Kayano**, and cost them their life savings, IRA retirement funds and more. The link to a GoFundMe account to assist the Hatas was not working, however.

Here is the [link](#) if you are able to donate.

And here is the background on what happened to the Hatas: Rev. Peter Hata and his wife Diane were targeted by a high-tech "FBI imposter scam," in which they lost their life savings, IRA retirement funds and, as if that weren't enough, a home equity loan that the scammers coerced them to take out. They were made to believe they would get their funds back and actually did not know they were scam victims until this year.

A GoFundMe campaign, managed by **Nina Rizzo**, a board member of the Berkeley Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple, has been launched to help the senior couple keep their home, heal from this traumatic loss, and fully reconnect with family, friends, and community who, because of the scammer's confidentiality mandate, did not know this happened to them.

This is an example of the increasing incidence of a form of "elder abuse," one involving a new generation of high-tech imposter scams that specifically target seniors. Scammers know the elderly generally trust the FBI, trust their government, and want to follow the law. Scammers turn their trust into a vulnerability which make them easy targets. Whether or not you can donate, please share this page and help spread awareness of this new generation of scams. This could benefit many people, not just these two seniors.

Here are more details: In February 2025, scammers convincingly posed as FBI agents using Caller ID spoofing to make their calls appear legitimate, wore uniforms



and badges, and presented "charging documents." Peter and Diane were told that a New York bank manager had stolen their identity, created fake bank cards in their name, and that they were now suspects implicated in this manager's crime ring. In addition, they'd face three to seven years of imprisonment if they broke confidentiality. Strict confidentiality was mandatory because the case was still being investigated, and not all the criminals had been caught.

After terrifying the two, the scammers then cunningly claimed that, since the two retired seniors were likely innocent, they could be offered "priority investigation," meaning they could be cleared in 10 days. However, qualifying for this required their funds to be "digitized" so that their origins could be electronically traced and cleared by the FBI. This is how they stole the funds—the funds were converted into a digital form which the scammers were then somehow able to access and steal.

All along, Peter and Diane were reassured they'd soon have their names cleared and their funds returned. Eventually though, the two began to have suspicions due to no longer hearing from the scammers.

Earlier this year, they "broke confidentiality" and called the real New York FBI, asking to speak to the "agents." They were told by the FBI that there were no such agents in the New York office (or anywhere in the system). Their worst fears were then

realized—they would never receive their funds back.

For almost an entire year, the confidentiality requirement meant the two could not tell anyone about the "case"—not friends, family, colleagues or other law enforcement. Living with this dark cloud over their head took its toll. By August, Diane had been diagnosed with depression and anxiety.

Bankruptcy attorneys have advised them that, because of the equity in their home, they don't qualify for bankruptcy. Ironically, it's their very equity as homeowners that threatens them with having to sell their home of 37 years in order to get out from under the crushing loan interest, which they are struggling to pay for monthly.

This fundraiser will help the two keep their home, heal from this traumatic loss, and fully reconnect with family, friends, and community. Peter and Diane deeply appreciate any support you can offer. But whether or not you can donate, please share this [GoFundMe page](#) and help educate your communities about this type of crime.

The fun(ny) side of life

The temple's new office manager, **Jade Brooks**, is leading a very busy life. In addition to her MBT duties, she has been "exploring opportunities at The Second City and learning how to ground my creativity and support my comedy passion by taking classes," says Jade. "I'm also in a comedy group called **It Left the Group Chat**. It's an LGBTQ- and BIPOC-led improv and sketch group, and we just started our Season 2 kickoff last week! Woohoo!"

Shows will be open to the public from September through April at the Comedy Clubhouse, 1462 N. Ashland Ave. All are welcome, "but please be advised that the shows are 21+ and the humor can be R-rated. We also do crowd work."

Taiko Up North

Mike and **Yvonne Harada** were off to Minnesota to see daughter **Emily** and Taiko Arts Midwest perform in the beautiful

see *happenings*, page 15

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

Reflections on our roots

Honoring our pioneers and looking to the future

By Elaine Ogawa

In the Dharma Talk at MBT's Founder's Day Service on Sunday, June 28, Aki Sensei (they/them) reflected on the journey that led them to MBT. Sensei shared not only their own decisions, but also the causes, circumstances, and people who guided and supported them along the way—including being a grateful recipient of a Kono Family Memorial Fund scholarship.

Connections and interdependence in action.

Sensei asked that all of us reflect on our own paths (causes and conditions) that led us to MBT and express gratitude. They spoke about Rev. Kono and the challenges of establishing MBT, quoting him: "The Nembutsu is the unimpeded path." It couldn't be stopped.

As Aki Sensei expressed, each of us has a responsibility to continue the cycle of being guided and, then, guiding others to continue the teachings. Pay it forward.

This inspiring Dharma message was the perfect prequel to MBT's 82nd Founder's Day and Pioneers Homecoming. Our founding members possessed immense courage, dedication, *gaman* (perseverance), and foresight. The Issei and Nisei sacrificed deeply to invest in the future. And even the Sansei contributed what they

see *pioneers*, page 16



Photos by Jason Matsumoto and Allison Hagio-Conwell



Pioneers who were able to attend the Homecoming were (photo at top, from left): Yoko Nakagawa, Fumiko Matsushita, Esther Takeshita, Kay Kawaguchi and Shiz Hidaka, with Elaine Ogawa representing her mom Michi Hirota, and Yumi Masuoka, representing her mom Sachiko.

Showing the Oneness of Life

The following is from a Dharma message that was shared on May 31, 2026.

By Rev. Ron Miyamura

Good morning. This will be my last Dharma Talk as the part-time, retired minister of MBT. Starting tomorrow, we will have a new Resident Minister, Rev. Aki Rogers. I can be an adviser and supervisor.

This morning, I would like to remind ourselves what I have been saying all these years. I would like to talk about my favorite ways of explaining what Buddhism and Shin Buddhism are all about.

First, the story that I call "The Fork in the Road" This is the story of a man sitting on a rock in the forest. There is a path that comes toward the rock, and then splits to the right and to the left.

One day the man was sitting on the rock, and he looks up on the ridge-line and sees a young girl being chased by a wild man who is swinging a machete.

They disappear into the forest, and, soon, the little girl comes running up the path toward the rock. She says, "There is a wild man chasing me and trying to kill me." And she runs to the right.

A few moments later, the wild man comes up the path, and says, "Which way did that little girl go?"

END OF STORY.

What would you do? Is it more important to always tell the truth. That is, not to tell a lie? Or would you try to save the little girl and say she ran to the left?

We don't know how the story ends. Each of us has to decide how the story ends. Would you tell a lie and hope to save the little girl? But, maybe the man would realize that you lied, and come back to hurt you? Or do you have



Photo from YouTube

Rev. Ron Miyamura shares his last Dharma Talk "as the part-time, retired minister of MBT."

to always tell the truth?

And there are any number of other ways that the story might end.

It does not matter whatever your answer might be. The real meaning of the story is that each of us has to be responsible for what we tell that wild man.

In a like way, Buddhism does not give you the answer. Rather, it reminds us to be responsible for our thoughts, words and actions.

We always have the freedom to choose.

The second example that I like to use to explain how Shin Buddhism affects our lives is about eating.

In Buddhism, all sentient beings have the potential for Buddhahood. All living things can attain Enlightenment.

This means, that plants, animals and humans are all part of life and are thus equal. Humans are not superior to animals, and animals are not superior to plants. No. Every

living thing is equal.

With that as the basis, we then can see that all life is inter-related and inter-connected.

We all like to think that we should not kill. But to survive, we have to know that we kill. We like to think that I am not a killer, but in reality, we are all killers.

Maybe we like to think chickens and cows are bred to be food animals, so it is OK. Maybe we like to think my garden is for food, so it is OK.

Yes and no.

Every time we eat, we have to kill. We kill plants and animals in order to eat and survive.

To not eat would mean starving ourselves and that would be to kill ourselves.

Thus, no matter what we do, we have to kill.

How do we justify killing? There is no logical answer, we can use our brains and think about this forever. And there is

no real understanding. Logic and brain power just cannot resolve this.

The only answer is a spiritual answer. How do we understand and deal with this basic fact: We have to kill to survive?

As a Buddhist, we start with acknowledging and accepting this fact, and then we have to appreciate the sacrifices of others. We can then start to see that I am not the center of the universe. It is the Oneness of all life that makes each of us part of the whole.

When we begin to realize that I, my ego, am not the center of the universe, then we can start to appreciate the sacrifices of others.

It is the efforts and workings and sacrifices of others that allow me to live. With this realization, we cannot help but be thankful and grateful.

In Shin Buddhism, we call this living a life of gratitude. This sense of appreciation is what

see **oneness**, page 5

71st Ginza Holiday is just around the corner

By Kiku Taura

Calling on all MBT members and friends to help celebrate MBT's 71st Ginza Holiday Festival—either as a volunteer or guest.

Here are the dates and times for Ginza 2026:

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

Ginza was established by our Issei and Nisei founders, as a way to introduce Japanese culture and traditions to our American neighbors. This year, we continue that tradition, bringing together Japanese food, cultural performances, artisans and Dharma talks within MBT's grounds.

We welcome back the WAZA artisans from Japan. They will be bringing their fine crafts as well as demonstrations of candle-making, papier mache, tenugui and ceramics.

Handmade Japanese food that will be sold at the festival includes our signature grilled chicken teriyaki and Hawaiian shave ice. We are happy to announce the return of udon noodles.

Stage performances will feature minyo and Awa Odori folk dance; koto; martial arts, and our renowned MBT Taiko and Ho Etsu Taiko groups.

We rely on our 100-plus volunteers to operate the festival. All are invited to sign

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up on our [volunteer portal](#) by July 19.

We are also continuing last year's successful Volunteer Food Donation signup to provide food for the Ginza volunteers during the festival. A signup

sheet will be posted on the bulletin board in the Social Hall, or check the weekly announcements that are sent by email to sign up online.

See you at Ginza!

Oneness

Continued from page 4

makes us human and allows each of us to live life in harmony with others. Each of us is a part of the whole, and thus, the ego is no longer the center of the universe.

Perhaps one of the best examples of appreciating the sacrifices of others is when we say that simple word before we eat—*itadaki-masu*.

Itadaku is the Japanese word that means to thankfully receive. This word has so

much included. When we say *itadaki-masu* before we eat, it is our way of thanking everyone and everything that came together to make this meal that I am about to eat.

We thank the person who cooked, and we thank the grocery store, and we thank the person who stocked the shelves, and we thank the truck driver, and we thank the farmer, and we thank the rain and the sun and the soil.

You get the idea, there are so many things and people to thank. We cannot possibly thank each one individually.

We cannot even know everyone and everything that contributed to making this meal. So, we thank everyone and everything and all the causes and conditions that allow us to eat this meal.

This is an example of appreciating the sacrifices of others.

And when we finish a meal, we say, *Gochiso-Sama*—thank you for this delicious meal.

We say the name and title of Amida Buddha. We say, “*Namu amida butsu*” which is to thank the Wisdom and

Compassion that is Amida Buddha.

Amida is the Buddha that cannot be measured. Go through and beyond. We cannot use logic, we have to seek a spiritual answer—to go beyond.

Whether it is “*itadaki-masu*” or “*namu amida butsu*,” these are the ways that show me the Oneness of Life.

Namo Amida Butsu ... with kindness and gratitude beyond words

July 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 July 5. To add a family member, please contact the MBT Office.

July			
1951	Kanichi Nishimura		Tokumi Shiimoto
1958	Takeyoshi Kayano	2000	Akira Tohei
1960	Kamejiro Ito	2001	Helen Carrington
1961	Shikagoro Hagio	2002	Eric Kei Yamauchi
1962	Morizo Yamashiro	2003	Harry Endo
	Ichisuke Amano		Mark Crotteau
1965	Frank K. Isoda		Grace Kono
1968	Rise Nakamichi	2006	Kawachi
1972	Frank E. Iguchi	2007	Ted Kawachi
	Gisaburo Minami		Loisalene
1980	Kiyoku Adachi	2011	Dunleavy
1981	Ryukichi Morita		Teruko Fujiki
1984	Yasukichi	2012	Ventura
	Higashigawa		Lynn Akiko Kaihara
1985	Tomiko Endo		Barbara Otsuji
1986	Nami Miyata		Nelson
	M. Barbara	2014	Eva Shiffman
	Mitsueda		June Asakura
1987	Haruyoshi Yanaga	2015	Seiko Nakashima
1988	Isa Okazaki	2018	Hoken Seki
	Shigeko Hamano		Mikako Mazawa
	Mildred Yamashiro		Albert Toshiyuki
	Sachiko Yasutake		Tsuchiya
1989	Satoru M. Tomihiro	2019	Joseph Ventura
	Konoye Hirota		George Naritoku
1990	Kazumi Yamaguchi	2021	Teruki Okubo
	Catello Terrone	2022	Maxine McGinnis
1993	Harry Y. Tadamaru	2023	May Nakano
1995	George Mukai	2024	Harry Sakai
	Naomi N. Yoshida		Kiyo Chikaraishi
1996	Ben Sumita	Year	Dr. Takeshi Osada
	Clifford T. Ota	Unk.	Sohichi Hosaka
1997	Misao Arakawa		
	Isami Yamashita		
1999	Kiko Konagamitsu		

Come dance at Obon, thank ancestors

Please join us for our annual Bon Odori at 8 pm Saturday, July 11, as we dance to express our gratitude to our ancestors.

The MBT Minyo group will lead us in traditional dances during this celebration.

It doesn't matter whether you are Buddhist, new to Bon Odori, or whether you have "two left feet." The important thing is to leave your ego behind and simply express your joy and gratitude for life through dance.

Although you do not need to know the dances to enjoy Bon Odori, anyone wishing to learn them before the festival can attend open practices led by the MBT Minyo group. Please join us in the MBT Social Hall at 7:30 pm for any or all Bon Odori practice sessions on July 1, 3, 7 and 9. You can also join each practice at home via [Zoom](#).

The morning after the Bon Odori, Sunday, July 12, we will have our Obon/Hatsubon Sunday service at 10:30 am.

In Jodo Shinshu, Obon is called Kangi-e, or a "Gathering of Joy." It is a major festival on our Buddhist calendar.

It is a memorial service and celebration in memory of our ancestors and all who have come before us. It is an annual observance and an opportunity for us to reflect upon the innumerable causes and conditions that continue to influence our lives and the benefits we have received

from the countless lives of others.

Kangi-e is awakening. This awakening causes us to dance for joy as a spiritual and festive activity in gratitude.

This observance is held for the sake of the living. It gives us an opportunity to hear the Dharma and deepen our faith in the infinite wisdom and boundless compassion of Amida Buddha.

And families who have lost loved ones during the last year will celebrate Hatsubon—or the first Obon. This can be a particularly difficult time for families as the death of their loved one is still so fresh. As we struggle with understanding the transiency of life through our experiences, it is an opportunity to continue our changed life with fullness and meaning.

In the MBT tradition, we will have memorial candles available for a small donation. For \$10 per name, you can have your loved one's name placed on a candle. These candles will be placed on the temple's patio balcony ledge for the Bon Odori dance and in the hondo for the Obon/Hatsubon service.

These candles remind us of the light that shines from the boundless lives of those we love and how their lives continue to have an affect upon us.

If you would like to have a loved one remembered and their name placed on an Obon candle, please visit this [link](#).



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Photos by Joy Zavala

Book (and bargain) lovers stop in at our annual Used Book Sale—some finding new use for a baby stroller (see below). Many also stopped in to enjoy and learn more about our Legacy Garden, which was open during the sale.

Used Book Sale's a success again this year

By Joy Zavala

Our annual Used Book Sale, which was held June 13 and 14, was, as it has been in years past, quite the success—with a beautiful day and sunny skies on Saturday contributing to brisk sales. The rains on Sunday only caused a late start and covers having to be put on and taken off.

With the Old Town Art Fair going on down the street, plenty of foot traffic made its way to our sale.

It truly takes a village to accomplish this event—with the collection and sorting of books started two weeks before, taking out and setting up the boxes and bags of books on the days of the sale, and helping customers and taking care of the sales.

In addition to books, we also sold water, soda and snacks.

Our neighbors have been so generous with their support of our endeavors, with all of the



proceeds going toward our Homeless Project.

Our Legacy Garden was also open during the Used Book Sale and was very popular, with curious Art Fair attendees wanting to learn more about our Japanese garden. The docents were very busy this year, explaining the history and description of our garden, designed by Hoichi Kurisu, the



statue of Shinran Shonin, and the stone water bowl.

Some of the leftover books were delivered to Brown Elephant, which supports LGBTQ+ healthcare and funds care for the uninsured and under-insured at Howard Brown Health. The remaining books were delivered to Open Books, an organization that gives books to students in

their instructional programs, donates them to educators and students through their book programs, and sells them in their stores and online. Those profits are then used to fund their programs.

Thanks to all of our volunteers who helped with this year's book sale and garden walk.

talk

Continued from page 1

sharing with us their connection to the Buddha-Dharma and the support they received during their lives. Each of us has a unique set of causes and conditions that led to us being born, living our lives and, yet, somehow ending up here at Midwest Buddhist Temple today due to a connection to the Buddhist teachings and the gifts of the Dharma paid forward by those who came before.

In reflecting on what to share for my first Dharma talk here, I turned to re-reading the history of the Midwest Buddhist Temple and the difficulties faced by the Japanese and Japanese American community here in 1944 and Rev. Gyodo Kono as they worked together to build and support the Shin Buddhist community here.

Years later, after a pause in sharing the Dharma via the Midwest Dharma publication, Rev. Kono and others were able to restart it so that others could continue to read and hear the Dharma.

He ended his message on this with: "The Nembutsu is the unimpeded path."

Despite all the difficulties Rev. Kono and the members of the Midwest Buddhist Temple faced, the Nembutsu teachings continued guiding them all and could not be stopped, even by outside forces—including mass internment, family separation, discrimination, prejudice, hate, pressure to assimilate, and so on.

This reminded me of my own family history and connection to the Buddha-Dharma.

June is the shotsuki month for both my grandmother and grandfather. In thinking about them, I also think about the "what ifs" and about "where would I be?"

I am here today as a minister ordained in the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha tradition. But would I still be here if certain events and choices made by those in the past didn't happen the way they did?

Would we still have Buddhism if Siddhartha didn't leave the comforts of the palace life he



knew? Would we have Pure Land Buddhism if various Buddhist scholar-monks did not reflect deeply on the teachings and question commonly held but discriminatory beliefs? Would we have Jodo Shinshu if not for Shinran? Would someone else come to the same conclusions and be motivated to share them as he and others had?

About 400 years ago, an ancestor of mine became a Hongwanji priest, but if there wasn't Jodo Shinshu, he may have become a priest in a different Buddhist tradition. Or he may not have become a priest at all.

Because that priest established a temple and it continued to be a Jodo Shinshu temple, just over 100 years ago, my great-grandfather was born into that temple family.

However, he was the second son and instead of becoming a priest, he became a Japanese language teacher, got married, and moved to the United States with his new wife. My great-grandparents settled in the Seinan area of Los Angeles,

near the University of Southern California. That could have been the end of my family's connection to Jodo Shinshu.

After moving to the area, my great-grandfather helped teach Japanese at a new Japanese school that opened down the street. The language school also served as a Sunday Dharma school and was run by ministers from Nishi (now LA Betsuin) and was called Senshin-gakuin.

Because the school existed, my grandmother attended both the Japanese school and the Hongwanji Sunday school. Then World War II happened.

My grandmother, her siblings and parents, were all interned in Manzanar. Both during and after the war, Japanese citizens and Japanese Americans faced a lot of discrimination and pressure to assimilate to so-called "American culture," including converting to Christianity.

However, my grandmother and great-grandparents still believed the Jodo Shinshu teachings were the right path for them and, so, along with many other Nembutsu followers, continued

following this path. My grandmother and grandfather left Manzanar and ended up here in Chicago.

I might have ended up a child of this temple, however, in 1952 or '53, they moved with my mom and uncle back to Los Angeles, returning to the area near Senshin.

Because of connections to Senshin Gakuin before the war, my grandma's classmates were now members of the new Senshin Buddhist Temple and offered her rides to the temple on Sundays. That is how my mom came to be raised with the Jodo Shinshu teachings and, eventually, I, too, was raised with Jodo Shinshu teachings at both Senshin and OCBC.

But if those connections didn't exist, or if my great-grandparents and grandmother didn't think the Jodo Shinshu teachings were important enough, I probably wouldn't have been raised the way I was.

And because I was raised in the teachings—but especially more recently as an adult and hearing the Dharma has made me more keenly aware of just how lucky I am for the numerous causes and conditions that allowed me to come in contact with the teachings and to experience the truth for myself—I can't help but feel gratitude.

When I think on it that is. Because the truth is I am still foolish and my ego-centric self often keeps me from noticing the connections to others or even feeling a sense of gratitude unless I am reminded by something outside myself.

This is why monthly memorial services and other opportunities to hear and learn from the Dharma are so important. They remind us that it is due to so many others that we have the chances to hear the Dharma that we do.

Reflect on this for yourself and your own causes and conditions. In just the 800 or so years from Shinran's time of sharing the Nembutsu teachings, how many people are the cause of why each of us is able to hear the Dharma in 2026?

see talk, page 10



welcome

*Continued
from page 1*

Also recognized were our pianists Yvonne Harada, Elaine Matsushita and Christina Szabo for their wonderful music before, during and after service. Come early and stay late as there are always extra tunes to warm your soul.

The pandemic taught us how to use Zoom in our weekly services, and we typically have 10 to 15 people joining each service on Zoom. That requires technical assistance as well as a weekly host, and we are fortunate to have the volunteer services of Grady Hutt, Dean Katahira, Frank and Maureen Osako and Ian Taura.



Special recognition was given to our Minister's Assistants for their tireless efforts to prepare the altar, lead the chanting and deliver the Dharma Talk. The temple is grateful to Terry Cichocki, Ellen Dunleavy, Grady Hutt, Cynthia Mee, Kay

Photos by Allison Hagio-Conwell

Minister's assistants receive special recognition and a gift basket is presented to Aki Sensei before the ice cream gets dished out at the temple's first Ice Cream Social of 2026.

Schroeter, Roger Suekama, Jesse Zavala and Joy Zavala.

Jason next introduced Tracie Padal who researched some of Aki Sensei's favorite things and presented a gift basket filled with Chicago snacks, a Blackhawks cap (sensei is a big hockey fan), area mementos and a welcome brochure with 45 member-recommended neighborhood places to shop, visit and eat.

After Aki Sensei's first official "Itadakimasu," it was time for the first of our monthly ice-cream sundae socials, where members could talk to sensei. It was a very nice Chicago welcome.

To help Aki Sensei learn who's who, we encourage you to make a name tag (including your pronouns) and wear it every Sunday. Supplies are at the information desk.



4427 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60640
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312-266-1616

talk

Continued from page 8

Because each of those people found something important and precious in the teachings and made sure to pass it along to others. From one person to another, one generation to the next. Across an ocean, through great adversity and discrimination.

This reminds me of a passage Shinran included in the postscript to his main work, the True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way. He quotes Dao-cho, the 4th of the Pure Land masters of our tradition, who states the following:

"I have collected true words to aid others in their practice for attaining birth, in order that the process be made continuous, without end and without interruption, by which those who have been born first guide those who come later, and those who are born later join those who were born before. This is so that the boundless ocean of birth-and-death be exhausted."

Our tradition is one in which each of us comes to the teachings, guided by those before us—whether family, friends, or simply those we randomly come in contact with but whose influence leaves a mark on us.

It is from those who feel deep gratitude and indebtedness that they can't help but share Namo Amida Butsu in what ways they can—whether it is becoming a minister, or a Dharma School teacher, or donating what they can in money or in body so that there can be a space, a school, a temple, so that others who come after can also have an opportunity to learn and be guided with wisdom and compassion.

We each become part of this cycle of being guided and guiding others so that, eventually, all beings attain Nirvana, liberation from suffering.

Because the teachings are true, they provide insight into our true natures and offer guidance to peace, so even in the face of great difficulties, we can continue on and continue to pass on what we have learned



Photo by Joy Zavala

to others.

We of today benefit from those who came before and guide us even now, not in physical presence but in remnants of other things they left for us—memories, letters, books, this building and the teachings that continue to be shared here.

I'm deeply grateful to Rev. Gyodo Kono and the founding members and families that created the Midwest Buddhist Temple community and kept it going through the good times and the bad. That they all felt something in the Buddha-Dharma was crucial to preserve and pass on, so that each of us could also receive that gift.

And speaking of Rev. Kono, although I passed away before I was even born, I am also a recipient of his great kindness in sharing the Shin Buddhist teachings. Thanks to the Rev. Kono Memorial Fund, I was able to receive financial assistance to study at the Institute of Buddhist Studies and live at the IBS dorms. It opened me up to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Dharma in its many forms, and led me to see so many paths of inquiry and curiosity and sharing I hadn't considered before.

By living at the dorms instead of only attending classes online, I was able to connect with my cohort and other students from different traditions within the GTU, visit other temples and churches, learn from ministers

and lay folk alike. All of that helped me to see where my strengths and weaknesses and interests lie to continue both my own education and how to share what I've learned and experienced with others so that they too can walk their paths supported by the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

To know through experience, the great wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha embraces me always without prejudice or discrimination, and never abandons me, to see myself as I truly am, flaws and all, and because of that accepts me just as I am.

It led me to Japan to complete my ministerial training and kyoshi certification, earn a second master's degree so that I could study the Jodo Shinshu teachings more deeply within the classical Japanese and Chinese Pure Land texts to understand the historical development of universality within Amida Buddha's vows.

And here I am now, at the Midwest Buddhist Temple, to give back to the temple and Sangha what I can and pay it forward to those who come after.

While reflecting on all whom we are remembering in June and whom we are indebted to, let us put our palms together in gassho:

*Namo Amida Butsu
With kindness and gratitude
beyond words.*

oishii / recipes from mbt friends

Finger Jell-O

Ingredients

- 1 (3 oz.) pkg. lemon Jell-O
- 2 (3 oz.) pkgs. Jell-O (any other flavor)
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2½ cups boiling water
- 1 pkg. Knox gelatin, dissolved in ½ cup water
- 1 pint vanilla ice cream, softened

Directions

1. Dissolve Jell-O and sugar in boiling water. Combine dissolved Jell-O and gelatin mixture. Add softened ice cream and mix. Pour into 8"x8" pan. Chill until set.

2. When set, cut into small squares.

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.

*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*



Photos by Nicole Sumida and Rich Taura
Dharma School kids and parents
prepare a delicious Hawaiian brunch
for the Sangha.

Reflection and gratitude

Wrapping up an incredible Dharma School year

By Jennifer Toguri

As the 2025–26 Dharma School year comes to a close, we are filled with deep gratitude for our incredible Sangha. Thanks to the dedication of our six volunteer teachers: Alex Vincer, Allison Hagio, Andrew Rowland, Gardiner Funo O’Kain, Jason Matsumoto and Jennifer Toguri, the guidance from Rev. Ron and minister’s assistants, the support of Dharma School parents, and the enthusiasm of our 25 wonderful students, it has been a year of connection, learning and growth.

In May, the Dharma School families hosted our popular appreciation brunch, where the wonderful and busy kitchen gave way to a delicious meal served with bright smiles by

the youth. We also thank the Dharma School students for stepping up to contribute to the Gotan-e service to celebrate Shinran Shonin’s birthday.

We are very excited to welcome Rev. Aki. They have already shared some incredibly exciting ideas for next year’s Dharma School. We are so grateful for their immediate support and can’t wait to keep this collaborative energy going into the next school year.

We appreciate any input and welcome volunteers to support our Dharma School. Please look for announcements later this summer for the coming school year. Thank you all for making this year so memorable!

buddhist women's association

Association welcomes Aki Sensei

By Jeanne Toguri

We hope you are enjoying the summer weather. My garden is in bloom with various colors of flowers, and my vegetable garden is growing nicely with all the rain we have had over the course of many weeks. Weeds, too, are growing much to my dismay.

Take advantage of all the different activities of the city, the farmers’ markets, street festivals and art shows. We have Bon Odori and our Ginza Holiday Festival coming soon so please join us then.

The Buddhist Women's Association would also like to welcome Rev. Aki Rogers to MBT and look forward to working with them.

Here is an update on our recent donation to the 48th BCA Federation of Buddhist Women's Associations conference, which will be held in October: We have sent a donation rather than a sponsorship.

Acknowledgement of donations:

- Molly Sakamoto
- Jeanne Toguri, in memory of her mother, Dorothy Watanuki
- Jan Nishimura and Jackie Hemmer, in memory of Asako Nishimura

Dates to save:

- Sept. 27, 2026: Annual BWA Luncheon and General Meeting
- Oct. 2–4, 2026: 48th BCA FBWA Conference in San Diego. The conference theme is “To Remember as We Build for the Future.”
- Sept. 11–12, 2027: 18th World Buddhist Women’s Convention at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort in Honolulu, Hawaii.

If you are interested in more information, please contact the MBT BWA.

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

'Everyone is accepted, just as they are'

The following is from a Dharma message that was shared on June 21, 2026.

By Rev. Aki Rogers

Good morning everyone and welcome to our LGBTQIA+ Pride and Father's Day service.

Before I get into my Dharma message today, some folks were asking how to address me. Is it "Reverend Aki," "Rev Aki," "Sensei Aki," "Aki Sensei?"

Well, to be honest, Reverend Aki sounds a little weird to me because I'm not a holy person nor someone to be revered. I'm not above anyone else. In our Shin Buddhist tradition, venerable Shinran, the founder of our tradition, stated that, for him, the teachings of Pure Land Buddhism were about "on do byo, on do gyo."

"On" is a respectful prefix. "Do" means same or all together. "Byo" meaning friends and "gyo" meaning practice. So, altogether, these words in Japanese mean "friends practicing the same teachings together."

He sat on the same level as his fellow Nembutsu practitioners—not above them on a raised platform as is traditional in other Buddhist schools.

Rennyō Shōnin, the eighth head priest of Hōgan-ji, reinforced this idea as well, getting rid of a raised platform that had come into the tradition—removing it, so again, he was back to sitting level with the fellow practitioners.

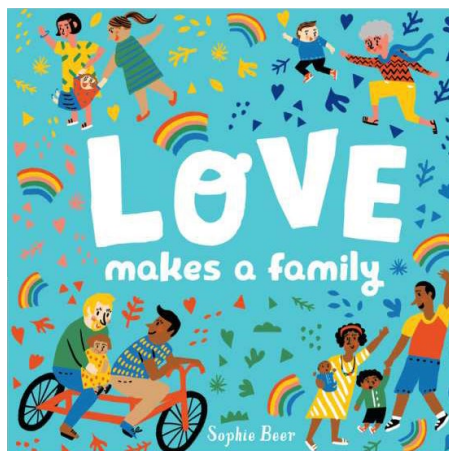
So I'm just a teacher, maybe with a little bit more formal training and education. But maybe many of you may have more experience and insight than I do, regardless of your age. And I learn from you all too. So, I prefer to be called Aki Sensei—which is just calling me teacher Aki, except in Japanese the title comes after rather than before like it does in English.

However, it was also pointed out to me that many of you may feel more comfortable calling me Reverend Aki—not out of reverence, but out of respect and acknowledgement for my training and teaching. So, I appreciate that and I'm am OK with being called Rev. Aki as well. So, whether it's Aki Sensei or Rev. Aki, both are OK.

All right. So, just to clear that up.

So now getting back to the dharma message for today. So, again, today we're celebrating both LGBTQIA+ Pride month, which is June, as well as Father's Day, which is today.

For some of you, you may be asking yourself: What does Buddhism and especially our tradition of Shin Buddhism have to teach us about LGBTQIA+ acceptance?



Were there even LGBTQIA+ people when Shinran was alive or, even before that, when Shakyamuni Buddha was alive?

Or you may be wondering: What does Buddhism teach us in relation to being fathers or having fathers?

Venerable Shinran quoted the following passage from Tz'u-min, a Chinese Pure Land monk and scholar on, in the chapter of practice in the "Kyogyoshinsho."

He quotes: "Amida Buddha in the causal stage made the Universal Vow. When beings hear my name and think on me, I will come to welcome each of them to my land. Not discriminating at all between the poor, the rich and well-born. Not discriminating between the inferior and the highly gifted. Not choosing the learned and those upholding pure precepts. Not rejecting those who break precepts and whose evil karma is profound. When beings just turn about at heart and often say the Nembutsu, it is as if bits of rubble were turned into gold."

So, again, this is from Tz'u-min, a Buddhist monk and scholar that came before Shinran Shōnin himself.

And it's clear that Buddhist monks and scholars before Shinran already had recognized the non-discriminative nature of Amida Buddha's compassion and wisdom, and had written poetry and ritual recitations praising Amida Buddha for such wisdom and compassion.

Tz'u-min himself lived from 680 AD to 748, some 500 years before Shinran.

And Shinran felt this understanding of Amida Buddha was important enough to include in this passage as support for his own understanding of just how universally accepting Amida Buddha was of who needed to be embraced and accepted just as they are.

I'd like us to keep this passage in mind as I share with you this children's book titled "Love Makes a Family."

Love is waking up bright and early.
Love is baking a special cake.
Love is knowing where everything is.
Love is finding the biggest puddles.
Love is lending a helping hand.
Love is watching from the front row.
Love is playing on the weekend.
Love is making things better again.
Love is washing away the day.
Love is reading one more book.
Love is chasing away monsters.
Love is a kiss before bed. Good night.

So whether you have one parent, two moms, two dads, a mom and a dad, or another wonderful caregiver, there is one thing that makes every family a family, and that's love.

So just as this book shows, families come in all different shapes and sizes.

Whether it's one parent, two parents, one mom, two dads, maybe it's auntie and uncle, maybe it's grandma and grandpa, maybe it's foster parents, maybe it's adoptive parents.

All families are families. And all deserve love.

And with this, I'm again reminded of Amida Buddha accepting everyone just as they are. No standards of who's better, who's worse. Everyone is accepted just as they are.

So going back to the passage from Tz'u-min, I want to go over it a little bit more.

So the first line goes "Amida Buddha in the causal stage made the Universal Vow."

Here Tz'u-min is referring to Amida Buddha before they became a Buddha when they were still Dharmakara Bodhisattva and thinking about "How do I become the best Buddha ever?"

And we might be going, wait, he really thought that? Wanting to become the best Buddha ever? Yes, he wanted to become the one who helped everyone else who was forgotten about.

And he made the Universal Vow. This Universal Vow is the 18th Vow or the Primal Vow. The vow that says: Just think on me and say my name, even 10 times. And you will be born in the Pure Land.

Right? So again, when beings hear my name and think on me, I will come to welcome each of them to my land.

So not just that you're welcome, but that Amida Buddha comes to you and says, "Come with me." Right?

And, again, not discriminating at all between the poor and the rich and the well-born.

Because, even like today, centuries ago,

acceptance

Continued from page 12

people had hierarchies. People thought if you're rich and well-off or if you're a king, you must be the best person. And if you're a lowly farm worker or someone who struggled, you must have done something bad and deserved the difficulties that life threw at you.

But for Amida Buddha, this does distinction does not matter.

Not discriminating between the inferior and the highly gifted. So, again, it doesn't matter whether you're smart or not, whether you have intellectual disabilities or are the brightest person on earth.

None of that matters when it comes to attaining birth in the Pure Land.

He goes on to say: Not choosing the learned and those upholding pure precepts.

So this refers to the monks, especially the scholar monks. Because in order to be a well-thought of monk, you had to study for many years and you had to be able to recite the various sutras, be able to give commentaries or explanations of the sutras, and you also had to uphold many precepts. Things like not killing others, not engaging in misconduct, not engaging in intoxicants.

But also Amida Buddha says, "I'm not going to reject those who break the precepts and whose evil karma is profound."

Even during Shinran's time, he started seeing questionable attitudes of Buddhists around him. Even the Buddhist monks—that maybe they had a mistress on the side, so they weren't upholding the precepts of celibacy. They weren't holding to no drinking alcohol. When no one was looking, they were drinking. But also for the average everyday person, where this was normal to drink after every meal or with every meal.

To engage in what we would call different evils—whether it was telling a lie, whether it was stealing or cheating just to survive, right? Amida Buddha does not discriminate against anyone regardless of how good or how bad they are.

And, again, our normal attitude, though, as human beings is to make these discriminations. To see people as good or bad, as right or wrong, as better or worse than others. And, oftentimes, we use ourselves as the comparison.

Oh, I'm better than they are. Oh, I'm not as bad as that. Right? And it all comes back to ego of me.

Why should someone else get something better than what I get? And we, oftentimes, don't realize that's how our minds are thinking. And so we create these binaries—these categories of good, bad,

right, wrong. And when we create these binaries, we have no room for the in between, the gray. Instead, everything must be black and white.

But that is not reality.

And so, at the end, Tz'u-min closes out his passage saying, after learning all that he could from the sutras about Amida Buddha, he realizes that Amida Buddha tells us: "When beings just turn about at heart and often say the Nembutsu, it's as if bits of rubble were turned into gold."

And this moment of turnabout of heart, what does that mean?

It means hearing the Dharma and realizing the truth of the Dharma. The truth that I, myself, am embraced just as I am. And not just me, everyone else too.

It is that moment of shinjin awareness that, because we are so flawed, that we are unable to perfect ourselves in this life, that is precisely why the 18th Vow or the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha exists—to help all just like myself.

And when we talk about turning bits of rubble into gold, we don't mean literally that rubble becomes gold and that everything becomes the same.

It's not like everything looks exactly alike, exactly like gold. But, instead, it means that all the differences, exactly as you are, are treasured as if gold.

The piece of rubble is still a piece of rubble. But it is now valued just the same as gold.

Not distinguishing between, oh, rubble, it's junk. Gold, that's precious. But they're the same, equally valued.

And how do we know this? We see the transformation of people throughout many of the stories within our Buddhist tradition—whether it's from general Buddhism from the time of Shakyamuni Buddha to Shinran Shonin himself.

For example, especially since today's father's day, I want to share a couple stories about fathers in the Buddhist teachings.

So the first one is Siddhartha Gautama himself. So this is the man who becomes the historical Buddha who lived in India more than 2,500 years ago.

While he was a prince, he got married to Yasodhara, a princess. And together they had a son.

He named his son Rahula. Does anyone know what Rahula means?

Impediment. So impediment, fetters, chains. This is the name he gave his son.

How many of you would appreciate your father giving you a name like that?

Didn't think so. So, what is that like to be a son, to know that your father named you, that you were a burden to him? It doesn't

feel good, right? To say the least.

And then your father eventually goes away, abandons you and your mom to who knows where. He didn't leave a message going, "Hey, I'm going on an adventure to improve my spirituality." He just left.

So, now, not only have you been named this terrible name, you've been abandoned by your father.

How would you feel when he comes back all of a sudden and now wants to be in your life?

Probably like, nah, I don't need you. You left me for so long. Right? Because that was over six years that Siddhartha was practicing to attain enlightenment.

And, yet, Rahula ends up becoming one of the 12 main disciples of the now Shakyamuni Buddha—Siddhartha having attained enlightenment. Why?

We don't actually ever get the why. But let's think about it. What would it take if you were that child to be so unlovingly named and then abandoned for six years of your life? What sort of apology—but is it just apology? Or it's the doing and living that apology. And so Shakyamuni Buddha must have learned through his experience to not just apologize—but in Buddhism, we talk about the three courses of action: our words, our thoughts and our actions altogether must be aligned for it to be true. So not only did he say he was sorry, he was thinking how truly sorry he was for abandoning his child and wife and then he lived it every day to prove that it was true. By sharing the teachings and by being a good father like he should have been from the start?

So even within our Buddhist tradition, we have stories of people who were not the greatest parents at the start but, along the way, through awakening and through the teachings and their experiences, learn how to become better people.

Another story I'd like to share with you is about King Bimbisara and Ajatasatru.

So, King Bimbisara and his wife Queen Vaidehi wanted to have a child and they kept trying and trying and to no avail. Then they went to a holy person who said, "When I die, I'll be reborn as your child. So, just wait a little bit longer." Well, this holy man didn't die right away.

And King Bimbisara and Queen Vaidehi are like, "When's he gonna die? When's he gonna die? We want our kid."

So, King Bimbisara decides: You know what? I'm going to help him along.

He sneaks up and kills the holy person to hurry up his rebirth to being his son.

Yikes, right? He kills someone rather than waiting the natural course.

Well, sure enough, shortly after the

see acceptance, page 14

acceptance

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Yikes, right? He kills someone rather than waiting the natural course.

Well, sure enough, shortly after the aesthetic dies, Queen Vaidehi becomes pregnant and has a child. They named their son Ajatasatru.

But after a while, they start thinking about, wait, what evil we caused in order for him to be born. Maybe the child will be evil when he grows up. They become so scared of their newborn son that the king takes the son and decides, "I got to get rid of the kid before he can cause any harm." And so he throws him off a cliff.

The kid miraculously survives with only a broken finger. And when he realizes that the child is still alive at the bottom of the cliff, he goes down, rescues him, brings him home, and they raise him as their son with as much love and caring as they can.

Again, wow, what kind of father are they teaching us in Buddhism, right?

He kills a holy person and then tries to kill his own son because he realized the evil that I did in killing the holy person might be transferred to the baby and the baby might become a monster when he grows up. So, I'm going to kill that too. What the heck?! Right?

But somewhere in there, he realizes what he's done wrong. And when that baby survives, he decides he's going to raise him as best he can. So even with good

intentions leading to bad doings, bad doings leading to good intentions, there's always a chance for change. There's always a chance to do better.

And I think that's one of the cores of our Buddhist teachings and why these stories are important—to remind us that, hey, there may not be a specific sutra and line that says do this or don't do this, but through the stories, we can learn some lessons along the way.

Even for myself, I had difficulties with my own father. He wasn't the greatest—wasn't the worst either. But especially as a kid and, then, especially as a teen, you think, sometimes, my parents, what the heck, they don't know what they're doing.

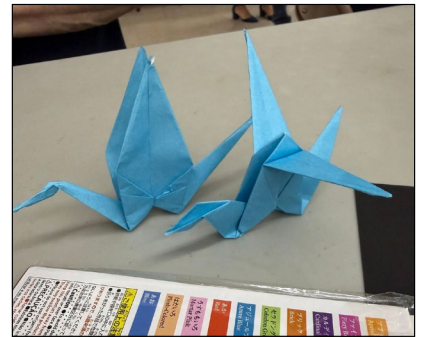
And it's only later, when you can step back and reflect and go, "Oh, they may not have been as loving as they could have been, but they were doing their best. They were trying." Right?

So today on Father's Day, it may be difficult to see your children growing and doing things that maybe you don't agree with, maybe you don't understand and you feel lost. But what can you do?

Accept them as they are and love them through it. I think that's part of our Buddhist teachings—when we hear what Amida Buddha does for us to accept us just as we are, flaws and all, that we try to pass that on to those around us, too, and love them just as they are.

So I'd like to end here today. So if you'll join me in gassho.

*Namu Amida Butsu.
Thank you.*



Tsuru countdown

Grandchildren of the late Asako Nishimura try their hand at folding cranes to help the temple reach its goal of making 500 origami cranes.



280 sandwiches made, delivered to unhoused

By Joy Zavala

Our hard-working crew made 90 sandwiches, and we had 190 sandwiches made by our generous volunteers at home on June 27.

We delivered 280 sandwich bags to Sarah's Circle, North Side Housing for Men, Lincoln Park



Community Services and Ewing Annex Hotel for Men.

We appreciate all of our energetic sandwich-makers, bag fillers, and delivery drivers who gave up their time on a beautiful Saturday afternoon to help provide meals for people less fortunate than ourselves

happenings

Continued from page 2

Ordway Theater. That is the theater that "Finding Her Beat"—the powerful documentary that follows an all-female taiko troupe and their do-or-die spirit—was filmed. "It was an awesome performance, and we're glad that we were able to see and experience it," says Yvonne. "We also saw **Kristi (Chikaraishi) Hsieh** while up there!"

Making the most of summer

Since the start of the summer, **Mari** and **Kailani Yu** have been busy with their summer jobs as camp counselors at local nonprofits in the Chicagoland area.

This month, Kailani (Yu) is excited to travel to the Philippines as part of the Filipino Young Global Leadership Program. She, along with 28 students of Filipino descent, will have the opportunity to deeply explore their Filipino identity and heritage, engage with youth leaders and participate in service immersion experiences in the Philippines. Kailani will also visit with family in Manila and Davao City.

Mari will participate in the ambassadorship program with the Center for Food Allergy and Asthma Research through Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. With her interest in health care, she's excited to connect with high school and medical students, researchers and professionals and learn more about opportunities that align with her interests.

Beyond these pursuits, Mari and Kailani continue their taiko and hula practice and spend time with their friends as much as possible. Summer goes by quickly!

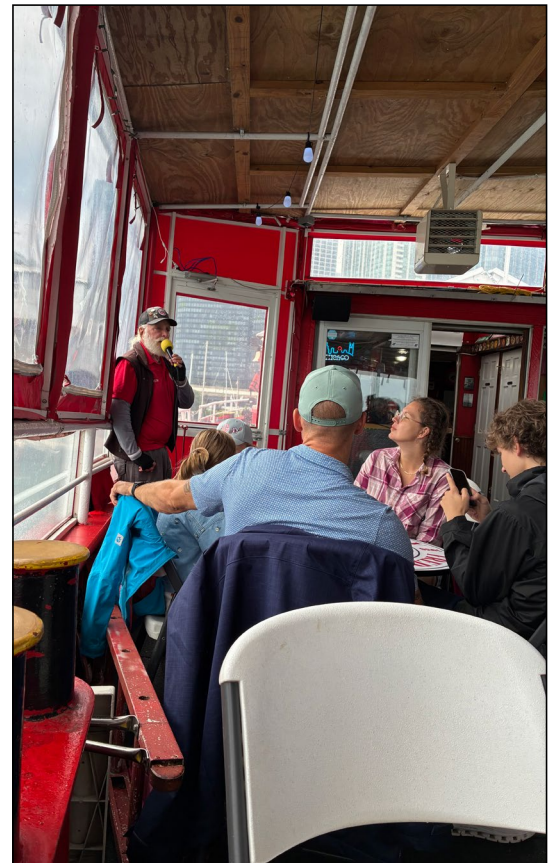
Japanese Heritage Night

June 17th was Japanese Heritage Night at Wrigley Field as the Cubs took on the Colorado Rockies. It rained all day but, at 5 pm, the skies cleared and it was



Left: This photo mural of Heart Mountain is the first piece of exhibitry going up at the Japanese American National Museum and will serve as a backdrop to JANM's Heart Mountain barracks, says Lisa Doi.

Right: Cliff Long shares stories on the Chicago Fireboat Tours.



Photo, left, from Lisa Doi. Photo, right, by Kiku Taura

a beautiful evening. Seen at the game were MBTers **Greg** and **Nancy Rivera** with 7 other family members; **Elaine Miyamura** with **Carl** and **Harumi Ichikawa**, **Erika Kono**, **Megan Nakano**, and **Ryan Toguri**. About 500 members of the Japanese community enjoyed the Cubs' 8-to-6 win.

California bound

Lisa Doi, daughter **Lily**, **Eric Langowski**, **Mary Doi** and **Jac Cerney** will all be traveling to Los Angeles and Orange County in July so that Lily can meet the extended Doi family. "We're adding this on to a work trip I have to LA to JANM [the Japanese American National Museum]," says Lisa. "The new core exhibit that I've been working on since 2021 is coming along, and we're beginning to actually install the exhibit items! It's really exciting to see this project that we've been working on for so long

continue to take shape."

Joining the Cliff Fan Club

Kiku Taura writes to second the motion on **Cliff Long's** talents as a tour guide on the Chicago Fireboat Tours. Kiku brought her visiting friend **Michael** on the tour, and they were greatly entertained by Cliff's stories of Chicago architecture and history.

Sad news

We were saddened to learn of the passing of **Michael Takeshi Kudo** on May 18, 2026, after a long battle of lung and heart disease. Mr. Kudo, was born on April 20, 1949 was a computer programmer until he took over his family's business, Mike's Refrigeration, where he continued to serve the community in heating, ventilation and air-conditioning repairs.

While a devoted member of the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, Mr. Kudo was also

a supporter of the Midwest Buddhist Temple's Bulletin, advertising in the newsletter for many years. He was MBT's skilled and trusted technician, taking care of our HVAC systems for over 40 years. Two years ago, his Macgyver-like skills repaired our broken air conditioning on the eve of Ginza Holiday

He is survived by his son, **Michael Takeshi Kudo Jr.**, sister **Jean Kudo Imanaka**, nephew **Joshua Kudo Morales** and his children **Gavin** and **Peyton**, along with many cousins.

Happy birthday to...

Be sure to wish a happy birthday to our July birthday "girls" and "boys."

Rev. Todd Tsuchiya / July 8
Kohei Morimoto

Yarmolinsky / July 16

John Adachi / July 17

Jaxon Yamada / July 19

Phyllis Arima / July 22

pioneers

Continued from page 3

could from their childhood allowances. Truly, just as "it takes a village," it takes a Sangha.

The Pioneers Homecoming celebration was a joyous time for the Sangha to honor and thank our surviving "Nisei-era" members for everything they have done for MBT. The wonderful afternoon included a delicious lunch and a special program emceed by Board President Jason Matsumoto.

Jason highlighted the foundational role the Nisei played in creating MBT (then Midwest Buddhist Church) in 1944. Despite U.S. government orders restricting Japanese Americans from gathering, our founders recognized the vital importance of community and pressed forward.

Our current temple was built in 1971 at a cost of \$550,000 (equivalent to \$4.4 million today). There was never a mortgage! This beautiful temple stands as a testament to the vision of Rev. Gyodo Kono, our founding minister. A vision: a place to gather, to learn the Dharma, and to thrive together as a community for generations.

Today, there are 19 surviving Nisei-era pioneers. While not everyone could attend in person, their presence was felt deeply in spirit. We were honored to welcome and introduce the following pioneers who joined us in person:

- Shiz Hidaka
- Michi Hirota (represented by her daughter, Elaine Ogawa)
- Kay Kawaguchi
- Sachiko Masuoka (represented by her daughter, Yumi)
- Fumiko Matsushita
- Yoko Nakagawa
- Esther Takeshita

Harumi Ichikawa created a beautiful, thoughtful slideshow featuring historical photos from the MBT archives as well as photos of our honorees. It brought back so many wonderful and heartfelt memories. Harumi designed the "Domo arigato" slides—



Volunteers made a delicious lunch of shoyu wienies, a tofu dish, musubi and tsukemono for the Nisei-era pioneers and Sangha. The pioneers also received a lovely gift of cookies and a beautiful flower arrangement.

Photos by
Allison Hagio Conwell

since our Homecoming takes place after the beautiful Chicago spring, she wanted the slides to feel cool and refreshing, with lush greenery and hydrangeas. The accompanying music from Studio Ghibli, the Japanese animation studio, perfectly mirrored the day. The first piece, "Merry-Go-Round of Life," represented the journey of life, love, memories and the passage of time. The second piece, "Reprise," symbolized hope, growth, and new beginnings.

You can view the slideshow [here](#) on MBT's YouTube channel.

To carry Rev. Kono's vision into the future, let us all strive to embody the mindset of our founders through dedication, gaman and dana (selfless giving).

see pioneers, page 17



save the date

JULY 5 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.

JULY 1, 3, 7 and 9 Anyone wishing to learn them before our annual Bon Odori Festival can attend open practices led by the MBT Minyo group in the MBT Social Hall at 7:30–8:30 pm for any or all Bon Odori practice sessions on: July 1, 3, 7 and 9, or on [Zoom](#).

Time: 7:30 pm. **Location:** MBT. **More information:** Contact the MBT Office, 312.943.7801.

JULY 11 Please join us for our annual Bon Odori, as we dance to express our gratitude to our ancestors. The MBT Minyo group will lead us in traditional dances during this celebration.

Time: Bon Odori, 8 pm. **Location:** MBT. **More information:** Contact the MBT Office, 312.943.7801.

JULY 25 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.

pioneers

Continued from page 16

As always, it takes a Sangha to bring these special celebrations to life! We owe a debt of gratitude to many who made the Pioneers Homecoming possible:

- Our honorees and their families: Thank you for your presence and your enduring legacy.
- The Kitchen and Cleanup Crew: Heartfelt thanks to Joy Zavala and her hard-working team—Jeanne Toguri, Jennifer Toguri, Gail Chase, Jim and Amy Chikaraishi, Lynne Matsumoto, Marcus Moore, Judy Sora, Rich

Taura, Allison Hagio-Conwell and Steve Arima.

- Desserts: Thank you to Amy Chikaraishi, Gail Chase, Jennifer Toguri and Joy Zavala for the sweet treats, and to Elaine Miyamura for the beautiful Pioneers Homecoming cake.

- Planning Committee: Deep appreciation to Elaine Matsushita, Harumi Ichikawa and Elaine Ogawa for their thoughtful coordination.

Next year, we will continue this celebration to honor and recognize the many Nisei who were dedicated to the temple in those early years and onward, but who are no longer with us.

JULY

at midwest buddhist temple

5
SUNDAY
10:30 am Monthly Memorial Service / Rev. Aki Rogers
11:30 am Ice Cream Social (see details at left)

11
SATURDAY
8 pm Bon Odori

12
SUNDAY
10:30 am Obon Service / Rev. Aki Rogers

19
SUNDAY
10:30 am Family Service / Joy Zavala

25
SATURDAY
11 am/noon Homeless Project Sandwich-Making (see details at left)

26
SUNDAY
10:30 am Family Service / Rev. Aki Rogers

28
TUESDAY
7 pm Niji Dharma



Clayton Hamano - President

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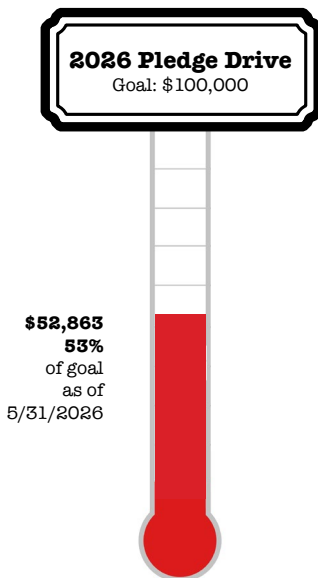
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What are the benefits of making a pledge?

- 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



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domo

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

Nokotsudo

Michael Omori

June Memorial

John Adachi
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Rev. Ron & Elaine Miyamura
Michael Omori

May Memorial

Allison Hagio-Conwell
Kaye Shinozaki

Memorial

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Terry Cichocki
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Obon

Lynne & Jerry Matsumoto
Teri Yasunaga-Blasco

Legacy Garden

Terry Cichocki (in memory of Dorothy Watanuki)
Jean Inouye (in memory of Dorothy Watanuki)
Linda & Michael Naito (in memory of Dorothy Watanuki)
Jeanne & David Toguri (in memory of Dorothy Watanuki)

Outreach Program

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