

Introduction: Buddhism has always been a religion that I have been curious to learn more about. The Midwest Buddhist temple offered me to visit their site, have interviews with the people from their community, and attend their services in order to expand my knowledge. I have grown being Christian my whole life, and coming as an ambassador of Ignatian values in this engaged learning project I made sure to portray the values of respect for the religion and practices that I am learning about and made sure that the people whom I interacted with, or the classes I attended felt comfortable both for them and for me.

Abstract: The Midwest Buddhist temple in Chicago is a school of Buddhism that showcases the Buddhist tradition. They give out a variety of Buddhist teachings and their ways of life. For my THEO 299 Asian Religions class, I was asked to visit a local Asian Religion site or community and engage with the site by interviewing religious leaders and practitioners to have a first-hand experience about how the religions are practiced. In order for me to expand my knowledge on different traditions aside from my own, I decided to visit this temple in order to learn more about the Buddhist way of life and engage in what their story/practices and how it has evolved overtime.

Methods and Research Design: I began by doing research on the variety of Asian religious sites given by our Professor Dr. Yarina Liston. After some research, the Midwest Buddhist Temple caught my attention the most due to all the services and activities they had to offer. I contacted the temple and their Reverend, Todd Tsuchiya, helped me schedule a visit. **My visit consisted of the following activities: 8:30am - Zen Shin meditation service with Eli Brown / 9:30am - Tea time - Interview with Minister's Assistant Ellen Dunleavy / 10:30am - regular family service**



VISITING THE MIDWEST BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Location: Midwest Buddhist Temple, 435 W Menomonee St, Chicago, IL 60614

Interview with Ellen: Ellen Duvely, the minister's assistant, has been practicing the Buddhist tradition for over 20 years. Everything began when she visited Hong Kong for vacation. In Hong Kong she visited a monastery where there was a giant statue, and without any background on the religion, she began to cry the second she touched the statue. She told me she felt like she wouldn't have to worry anymore, she had a great feeling of joy and that that would happen to her every time she went to Asia and visited a temple



Some Questions & Answers:

- **What is the best thing about coming to this temple?** The best thing according to Ellen, is that you can be yourself. At the entrance of the temple there is a sign that says "come as you are" showcasing that the temple creates an inclusive environment
- **What are the core beliefs of Buddhism?** Four Noble truths, the eightfold path we don't really practice says Ellen, the more you experience the better. You can't really succeed alone, you can meditate forever and probably not going to achieve anything



Conclusion: The Midwest Buddhist Temple is a place where people can go and be themselves, their practices and traditions help people get through their everyday lives. I could learn many things from visiting this community like how Buddhism portrays a great sense of community, how it definitely creates a change depending on where Buddhism is practiced and how it is based on personal experience and learning.

What is the importance and role of meditation in Buddhism:

- Meditation is not a part of Jodo Shinshu or the temple's practice; it's an extra add-on that helps some people but their main practice is just living and listening. Jodo Shinshu: a person was up on a mountain where there were many religious things going on, like not eating for 6 weeks, and he noticed that was not working for him so he made it be about ordinary people and made it be democratic so you did not have to be meditating all the time.

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