

A Visit to the Buddhist Temple of Chicago

Joshua Kliment, Dr. Yarina Liston

Department of Theology, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL

Spring 2023, Undergraduate Research Symposium

Abstract:

After learning about the holy doctrine and scriptures of many east Asian religions, I settled on learning more about Buddhism through visitation and study of the Buddhist Temple of Chicago. There is a particular focus on the practice and personal faith of each specific individual and the relationships between the individual, Buddhism, and Chicago/the US. I dive into the history of the temple and how it has grown to be a core factor in the community.



Special Thanks to Bill, Glen, Rev. Nakai,
and The Buddhist Temple of Chicago
1151 W. Leland Ave, Chicago IL, 60640
773-334-4661

Introduction:

The Sunday morning of April 2nd, I attended a service at the Buddhist Temple of Chicago. I researched the customs and etiquette of the temple prior to visit and was excited to experience it firsthand. The Buddhist Temple of Chicago actively practices the Pure Land Tradition.

Service:

- Lead by Rev. Nakai
- Shotsuki-Hoyo
- Chanting in both English and Japanese
- Altar decorated with note cards dedicated to deceased friends and family
- Incense offerings
- Bang the Gong often
- "Our deceased loved ones brought us all to this service"
- Preached inclusivity and importance of acceptance

Interviews:

Bill

- Temple President
- Raised Catholic
- Buddhism helped him learn more about himself
- Emphasized the inclusivity of Buddhism
- British colonization of Buddhism and the "Victorian Veil" that was laid onto Buddhism

Rev. Patti Nakai

- Temple Minister
- Studied Buddhism at Ōtani University
- Discussed the multiple ways of becoming a minister
- Met Pope Francis
- Japanese language barrier in university study

Glen

- Temple Treasurer
- Enjoys interacting with students and welcoming them to the temple

Conclusion:

My visit to the Buddhist Temple of Chicago enlightened me towards the personalized practices of members of the Buddhist faith in the United States. Gone was the subtle veil of exoticism, as I had discovered a newfound respect and appreciation for Buddhism. After the service, we all gathered in the main area for tea and happy discussion; there was a strong sense of community. Its one thing to learn about in classroom, but to go to a temple and experience an in-person service is irreplaceable.