

## Community Spirit and Service Award

# Buddhist Church of Florin - A Pillar, Center, and Anchor for the Community

By Andy Noguchi and Twila Tomita

In 1919, the 97 Japanese American pioneers who founded the Buddhist Church of Florin among the strawberry and tokay grape farms would have been astounded it is still going strong 104 years later! Today, the Buddhist Church of Florin is a crucial pillar, center, and anchor for the Florin community.

It has provided vital support, been a central gathering point and a community mainstay. Especially after the unjust confinement of Japanese Americans in WWII concentration camps and their dispersal, the church has been the glue connecting, reviving, and helping the community to flourish.

The Buddhist Church of Florin's mission is to share the wisdom and compassion of the Buddhist teachings and practices with the greater community. It's part of the Buddhist Churches of America, the oldest and largest Buddhist organization in the West and belongs to the Shin or True Pure Land sect.

The church has blossomed into a respected Buddhist center with church services, children's Sunday Dharma School, Buddhist study classes, active Buddhist Women's Association, and the hugely-popular Summer Obon Festival, which honors those who have passed away. It always welcomes new members and the Next Generation.

Over the decades, it has greatly strengthened the community by developing diverse programs, reaching out broadly, and forging partnerships. These have included:

**Cultural Programs:** Japanese Language classes since the 1920s, continuing with a class by Reverend Noritaka Imada. Obon dance and festival since 1933 and New Year's Mochi rice cake making. Sponsoring martial arts since the 1980s with Kendo, Judo, and now Kyudo kai archery. Taiko drumming begun in the 1990s

**Sports Programs:** Youth Basketball program, golf tournaments, adult volleyball, and even pickleball today.

**Community Programs:** Japanese food bazaars, Florin Community Reunions in the 1980s, and senior lunch programs from the 2000s.

**Programs in Partnership with the Florin JACL:** Time of Remembrance events for 20 years from the 1980s, Manzanar Pilgrimage since 2006, Obon Dance and Mochi Madness Workshops since 2008.

- **Buddhist Church of Florin is located at:** 7235 Pritchard Rd, Sacramento, CA 95828 916-383-1831  
Website: [www.florinbuddhist.org](http://www.florinbuddhist.org) Facebook: [www.facebook.com/florinbuddhist/](http://www.facebook.com/florinbuddhist/)



**The Buddhist Church of Florin Obon Festival honors loved ones who have passed. Pictured there in 2008 are 4 generations of the Ai Tanaka, Judie Miyao, Cheryl Miles, and Michelle Takeda families. (Photo by Ace Blakkolb)**