



APRIL - JUNE 2020

MESSAGE FROM JAKUSHO KWONG-ROSHI

Dear Wisteria Wind and Sonoma Mountain Sangha,

In light of the severity & danger with the COVID 19, Sad to say — It is prudent that we postpone & shut down all SMZC activities from March 17/Tues. to 31st/Tues. We will reassess at the end of the month. This means cancelling Study Group/Tues., Workfest, Buddha's Birth Sesshin & Ceremony along with our morning & evening Zazen. Thursday Interviews should be changed into phone calls. I encourage everyone here to sit alone in their rooms for the new Zazen schedule & Maintain strict Sanitation habits as in hand washing for 20 seconds, coughing & sneezing into your elbow. If you feel sick stay home & if you have a fever you should see a doctor.

The government is instructing us to avoid gatherings of more than 10 people for the next 15 days. This is to flatten the curve of the quickly-spreading Virus. Also avoid eating out, restaurants, food courts, shopping trips, & social visits, & esp., visiting hospitals or nursing homes & care facilities....

Buddha's First Noble Truth — Impermanency — meaning nothing lasts forever.... Remember within the midst of the Panic/Fear there is Silence/Calmness — As revealed in the Skandhas — the fabrication of the self which makes for scattering — WITHIN this — There is the fact of bundling/gathering; This is the Principle of the Dharma. Just like the Sandokai — the Intimacy of the Relative/Absolute — WITHIN Darkness there is Light, But do not look for the Light.

From this Profound Insight of Silence, springs forth Wisdom & Compassion, which inspires us to maintain our Calmness & Steadfastness within the fire of COVID 19, which is also bringing/ helping everyone to come together to do RIGHT. The Depth of the Dewdrop is the Height of the Moon remains Forever So..... Take good care of yourself which in all ways includes others....

Life/Strength Nine Bows,
 Jakusho 寂照 Kwong
 Abbot, Sonoma Mountain Zen Center — Genjoji



TATHAGATA ZEN

The following Dharma talk was given by Kwong-roshi on February 14, 2020 during Winter Ango Sesshin at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center.

Coming to zazen this morning, at the Abbot's door I saw the hoof prints of a deer that came right to the door. And then another set as it went back down the hill. You could see the vibrancy in the mark it had left. You could see the activity, the dynamic activity of this deer or buck.

This little book I'm holding is by Joshu Sasaki-roshi. If you have this little book, you will not understand it. So I will not give it to anybody. Maybe 70 pages, privately printed. That's all it is.

I'll just read you a little bit about Sasaki-roshi himself, from the afterword. It tells about when he came to America during the '60s, and I remember this publication from that time. It came from the Lama Foundation (some of us may remember the Lama Foundation), and was published with the title *Buddha is the Center of Gravity*. You may have seen it. It was Roshi's thoughts, but the translation was unedited and uneven and rough. The following quotes are from the afterword of this little book, written by one of his students:

"His complete attention had been on giving five thousand Dharma talks, more than eight hundred sesshins, two hundred and fifty thousand zazen periods, and all the dokusans that he had offered to his students. Roshi used to tell us that his teacher, Joken Soko, had once told him that if you teach a thousand students and get one good student, then you will have succeeded. Roshi apparently took this to heart. In sesshin after sesshin he manifested the unique form of Rinzai teaching he came to call Tathagata Zen."

We call it the Tathagata, or Nyorai in Japanese. Nyorai means just this. Nyorai. Come. Just you, Thus cometh. Not you the person, but this—the suchness of you—cometh. That's Tathagata Zen. Nyorai Zen.

I had no idea what a profound meaning *nyorai* had. When I was in Japan, I wrote a poem and used the word *nyorai*, and I gave it to Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi. He looked it and said, "No, no, no good. Don't use that word!"

[Roshi reading from book, with frequent interjections.]

"A teaching that is experientially grounded..." [whether Rinzai or Soto Zen and doesn't matter. It's Zen and it should have this flavor. Tathagata Zen. It's grounded because of your direct experience with reality. It's not philosophy, not psychology.] "A teaching that is experientially grounded is grounded in the moment to moment direct experience of zazen. Philosophically dense..." [Super dense when you read it. I think Sasaki-roshi's jisha gave it to me five years ago. I looked at it, but it was so dense that I put it down. You won't understand it.]

"Philosophically dense and singularly innovative within Mahayana tradition, hinting at a secret lineage. And in addition, to Confucius, implying that he did not create, only transmitted." [This is our Zen: don't create anything, but transmit.]

"Joshu Sasaki-roshi developed his philosophy in a myriad of talks, including hundreds of lectures he gave at the thirty-seventh seminar on the sutras, where he gathered scholars to discuss the future." [That was an annual event that began in 1977. These were all oral teachings.]

Over the years, [this is the editor] with visits over tea, I would find Roshi writing tiny Japanese kanji characters in a narrow lined notebook. When I asked him what he was writing, he would reply, "Roshi writing book." He then placed the sheet of paper on which he was writing into a cardboard box and shoved it underneath his bed. This sheet of paper joined hundreds of papers just like it. With no sign of the manuscript for a long while, one afternoon just five years ago, while having tea after sesshin, I asked Roshi what happened to his book. And looking up with his characteristic mischievous grin, he snapped in perfect English, "Roshi burned it." (Laughter.)

Yesterday we talked about this book quite a bit. And today there'll be some more. This little book is equal to all the volumes and volumes of American translations of Zen. It is. Everything is in here.

This is in the footnotes. "*Bukyo* [*Bu* is Buddha and *kyo* is study, or teachings] is usually translated as Buddhism or Buddhist teaching. This passage emphasizes the literal meaning of teaching given by an awakened being, and downplays any association with a particular religion." This is what we should remember. We call it Buddhism, but it's not just Buddhism. It downplays any association with any particular religion.

When we were in Japan a few years ago, we had a chance to have an audience with Aoyama-roshi, with whom Kashin studied. And I must have just gotten the book then, because the idea of Tathagata Zen was on my mind. She asked if we had any questions. I said, "Can you talk about Nyorai Zen, Tathagata Zen?" She spoke in Japanese, and there was a translator, but all I remember is hearing the steady tone of her voice. That was Tathagata Zen. It was just the steady tone of voice. It remained at that tone. I don't know how long we were there. Maybe it was 40 minutes. It was wonderful. That was Tathagata Zen.

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..... BLESSING of GOODNESS & KINDNESS for your CARE

Last Wednesday I forgot to tell everyone that, traditionally, on the third day of sesshin, when you finish the third day, you get a second wind. The third is the most difficult day. Then after the third day, something's transformed, and you get this second wind. I hope it's true. Something happens.

So I'm excited to present this to you. I think in this latter part of my life, all these pieces are coming together.

"In China Buddhist teachers use the Cantonese word *ngoi* and *ga* in Japanese to indicate this one-sided itself.."

[What we know as a self, what people generally know as a self. And he calls it the one-sided self, because there are two sides. There are two sides that make one. Most people—one out of a thousand, will know the two sides of Zen. I find this book really interesting because it's exactly about what the Tathagata is. Translated, it means coming and going—two opposite activities. And through zazen, they become one. That's the only way they become one. I can, I can't. I'm scattered, I'm concentrated. One is the birth of the other. If you just take one side, it's impossible.

Coming and going are dependent on each other. In the *Sandokai*, there is darkness within light and there's light within darkness. But don't look for them. It has to be there. Light has to be there so there can be dark. It has to be there. The other (the dark) has to be there so there can be light. So that's the freedom. It's the tension of duality; between good and bad. Female and male, dark and light—it's that tension; one is the birth of the other. You become attached to some idea, but you can't hold that idea all day; it's impossible. You would die. The opposite is the liberation. And I think that's why he called it one-sided Zen; we only have one side. And of course, the perfect unity of the two sides is zazen. I mean, real zazen—when you give up the self. You give up your self-centeredness, you give up all those bad things because on the other side are the very good things that you have. It's really wonderful. This is the best antidote in the universe. And when we chant Buddha's name, these are aspects of the Buddha—like what we recite in the meal chant: Dharmakaya, Sambogakaya, Nirmanakaya. And Maitreya, Sadarma Pundarika Sutra. Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara. Even the Heart Sutra is included.

Those are names of Buddha, but not just Buddha. This is about yourself. That's the whole point. The liberation of yourself. It is beyond religion.

So here we are:

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“In China Buddhist teachers use the Cantonese word *ngoi* and *ga* in Japanese to indicate the one-sided self. In this way, when it is manifested as a self-biased towards only one type of activity, and it asserts itself, this self-assertion is what we call self-centeredness, because the self-centered self considers the incomplete consciousness as ‘I.’ This self is the incomplete consciousness. It does not understand where the true self exists. The self evades its grasp. As explained below, the self includes guest, or servant, on the outside, which corresponds to the activity of life—the relative, the light. This self includes both guest or servant on the outside (the objective world)—which corresponds to the activity of life, and the host or master on the inside (the absolute)—which is the activity of death.” [Roshi chuckles.] You have to give up the self. The activity of death is the death of the self.

“So it is taught in Tathagata Zen: return to the standpoint of the ‘I am’ self and produce the awareness that you’re enveloped by the guest outside and by the host inside.”

[Host and guest: host is the absolute, guest is the relative. Genjo-ji is the absolute—the name of this temple. Sonoma Mountain Zen Center is the relative—location, physical location. The vertical is the absolute; the horizontal is the relative, the conventional. Host and guest. Guest outside and host inside.]

“When the self dissolves the ‘I am’ perspective and takes its original standpoint, because it has dissolved the incomplete self, the incomplete self is now standing in the position of the original self. And its home has disappeared as an object of Zen study/examination. However, standing in the position of the incomplete self, because it is enveloped by the luminous, one-sided Brahma on the outside and the dark—Brahma—on the inside, the situation of incomplete wisdom is evident. Since this is the case, because of both the activity of karma and Brahma of guest and host, the self will not become free. Freedom is attained by the true self when that self manifests the condition in which the host inside and the guest outside are its content.”

That is, when the subject and object have unified through zazen. I didn’t how to connect impermanence to karma. But that’s how Buddha discovered karma. The first Noble Truth is that there is suffering, which is caused by impermanence. If you don’t understand impermanence, you will suffer. It’s the truth.

“All things are subject to karma” is the second Noble Truth. Actually this is a universal law. It is Dharma. Dharma is sometimes called law. And really it is the law; it is the principle of the universe. That’s why Einstein liked the Dharma of all the religions.

All things are subject to karma. No one can escape karma or impermanence. This is the dharma of dependent origination. So—When, *when* [BAM] there is *this*—Bill—there is *that*—the Zendo. When *this* appears—when ‘I am’ appears, the *that* appears. When there is not this person [Bill], there is not *that*, the objective world that we’re enslaved by. When there is no longer *this*, there is no longer *I am*. There is no longer that. You’re free. And you remember, Dogen said that originally things have no I or me or mine. They weren’t created. We created this concept. And that’s why we suffer, between subject and object. That’s why there’s all the suffering in the world.

This book is not about abstract concepts, but grounded in our moment-to-moment direct experience. Moment to moment. Because everything is changing. That’s the nature of impermanence. Even the moment is changing. But it’s grounded, in that direct experience. So that’s pretty good. That fits right in to what I’ve been teaching.

This part is about Siddhartha before he became Buddha. *Totai* is a word used in this book and it means ‘the nature’—the true nature, becoming present and tangible. How it manifests itself as present and tangible.

“It is said that when Buddha was still Siddhartha, he identified this function of karma as the activity of impermanence. Although Siddhartha had obtained the wisdom according to which one must return to the standpoint of the original self, after having eliminated attachments to Atman [Atman is the true self], he still could not obtain wisdom that would allow him to speak and teach to people a way to understand the activity of impermanence.”

He had the wisdom, but he still couldn’t teach it, or instruct people. In the Rinzai school, in the koan system, there’s a stage that you pass, at which point you’ll be able to verbalize it. You’ll be able to teach.

“Yet he was convinced that there is no truth aside from the activity of impermanence. This is why he made a strenuous effort to attain the wisdom that would allow him to teach the law of impermanence. The more someone is burning with strong belief, the more that belief gets reinforced.”

You have to have that resolve. The strong belief and resolve—and it’s not that you choose it, it chooses you. [BAM] You find yourself resolved and unsatisfied with what’s happening in the world. So strong belief strengthens your resolve. Or it weakens your resolve [chuckles]. But it’s up to you.

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“The more someone is burning with a strong belief, the more that belief gets reinforced. There is nothing as excruciating as when this belief consists in the wish to obtain the wisdom to explain a certain law. And this wisdom does not even begin to emerge.” [This is agonizing. It’s there, but you can’t verbalize anything.]

“Siddhartha experienced this agony. He was wondering why he couldn’t obtain the wisdom to explain a certain law that he personally really believed. This was because the self who was currently living had not experienced truly running into debt.”

You know, Siddhartha lived in a palace. He was blessed in his life. He had never felt any lack of attention, never been neglected or deprived of anything. He’d never been destitute.

“It is told that he thought this was the reason why his self could not obtain the true wisdom, to understand the activity of impermanence. Accordingly, he made the resolution that through whatever means, he had to experience the activity of impermanence. It is told that this is how he decided to become an itinerant monk. Be that as it may, he probably would not have become an itinerant monk only for this reason. I think that he must have had a much stronger reason. In any case, the Tathagata Zen approach has handed down the narrative that he became an itinerant monk. And after having spent approximately six years absorbed in practice, he achieved the wisdom to explain the activity of impermanence.”

[PAUSE]

Buddha gave his first teaching in Deer Park, which is in Bodhgaya. When you go to Bodhgaya, you can feel the energy there—the power of the place, the aliveness, the vibrant energy—with or without any people there.

The Buddhist teaching includes the teaching of the five skandhas, which we chant every day in the Heart Sutra. The five skandhas. Tathagata Zen considers this the fundamental teaching.

So I have written a little about the skandhas, since we chant them every. Form is the material element and the other four are the mental elements.

And nowhere in these five skandhas can you find a self. There’s no self to be found in these five skandhas. These five skandhas are the fabrication of the conditioned self we grew up with, which causes suffering. There’s no self to be found here. It’s amazing how humanity could overlook this and create so much suffering. And this is the end of suffering. This is liberation. You know what dualistic suffering is: like and dislike, angry not angry; attachments, desires; wants, self-centeredness. Living forever. Permanency. That’s what most people live by, permanency. Until someone dies... but they still want to live by permanency.

What is interesting about skandhas is that there is that same tension of opposites. The Sanskrit word ‘skandha’ is translated as aggregate, meaning a collection of disparate things linked together. Skandhas can also dissipate, disperse, scatter. The Chinese term ‘*un*’ means ‘bundle’ as a noun, or as a verb. It also means bundle up, tie up—like you tie your oryoki bowls.

You have two opposite activities [acting together] and that’s Tathagata Zen. This is what we should embrace. With the thing that is scattering, the opposite of scattering must be happening. The light within the dark, the dark within the light. It’s got to be there, because it can’t only scatter. The moon and the sun. The dark and the light. Both have to be there. This is the way the universe works.

I like this paradox, the opposites. They go together, because if they didn’t go together, we’d all be dead, I think. Literally.

The Chinese character ‘*un*’ means to bundle up. It’s kind of nice; you don’t hear people use that phrase here, do you? What?

[Student: They use it in Canada.]

You hear it in Canada. In America, I don’t think so. I guess not in California. That’s why we don’t hear it. [Laughter.] But I think of a little baby all bundled up; or of something cozy and comfortable, loving and warm.

So you scatter, then you bundle up. You scatter; you bundle up. It’s a paradox. They go together. But what happens to people is that they scatter. Then they attach. They don’t know the dynamics. The paradox of all of that. This is a paradox. The two are opposite, but they act together. What’s the word for this?

[Student: Dialectic.]

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Is that what it means? The two in opposition is dialectic. Okay. Good. It seems that to bundle up can also mean the activity of unifying the mind to a single point.

“That is, in Tathagatha Zen, if one fully embraces the thing that is scattering, the opposite of scattered must be happening (the opposite of the commonly held meaning of bundling) ... because when the mind is scattered, the activity of bundling is present. Learning to practice, the opposite activity must also be done...” [This “learning to practice” means *zazen*—what else? That’s how you find out that the opposite of scattering must be happening. This is the practice of unification.]

“This is how it is understood in Tathagatha Zen, which emphasizes practical learning. But I don’t think the other traditions even mention this explanation. In other words, Tathagatha Zen considers that the skandhas concentrate their own scattered conditions in one point, and conversely, that the skandhas also mean the activity of scattering this condition of single pointed concentration. This is why one could say that the activity of the skandhas is identical to how Tathagatha Zen envisions the activity known as Zen.”

This dialectic makes me excited. What does it feel like to you? Isn’t it something? I mean, it’s a huge revelation that when your mind scatters, you bundle (thoughts) up [laughter]. There was one student who suffered depression, but she kept one thing in mind: that things are not permanent. And eventually depression goes away—unless you attach to it and it becomes your identity. And in fact, it’s a kind of negative entertainment that you keep it going. And that’s what it is.

You know, the Aryans were the aboriginal people of India. I’ll read this one part—it’s a little bit off the topic, but still connected.

“The word Dhyana can be regarded as the spiritual legacy of the Aryans—the aboriginal people of India who have now disappeared. An indication that seems to be substantiating this view is the term Dhyana. This refers to unique religious technique used for spiritual cultivation, which was destined to be learned and practiced even by those belonging to the slave class. Dhyana is a word translated from Chinese as ‘undisturbed cogitation.’ ” [‘Undisturbed cogitation’ is Dhyana in Chinese. It means quiet thinking. It’s nice, simple, quiet. Like what we experience in the zendo.]

“So it refers to how the condition of a scattered mind gets concentrated into a single point; it can also refer to how this is learned in practice. [This is what we do.]

Thus coming and thus going.

‘Thus coming’ doesn’t mean just coming. It means ‘thusness’ or ‘suchness’—which is you. “Thusness (or suchness) comes.” That’s *Tatagata*. And at the same time, *ta ta agata* means “thusness going.” There’s a different spelling: there’s a double ‘a’—as it’s written, or pronounced—so it’s ‘ta ta a gata.’ It also means buddhas and bodhisattvas in the past have come, and they have gone.

There are many meanings. I forgot which one is coming, and which is going, but *ta ta a gata*—maybe that’s the one that’s going, and *ta ta gata* is the one that comes.

[PAUSE]

Tatata: this means understanding things as they are—no projection, no knowledge; understanding things as they are. *Tatata*.

“*Tatata* identifies with emptiness in all cessations of dichotomies.”

So, you know, the practice we do is actually the most refined and elegant and dynamic practice that humankind has. When we’re in *zazen*, there’s no objective world. We don’t meditate on any object. So that’s already a big thing. For most people there’s objective world—unless we have ideas or thoughts. But later on, there’s no subjective world. And there will be four worlds. One is no subject. Second one is no object. The third one is no subject or object. And the fourth one is subject and object present. Those are the four positions in Rinzai and Soto Zen. That’s your realization.

[PAUSE]

“Thus *tata agata* is the vibrant activity that encompasses everything as its content. It is for this reason that the meaning of *tatha-agata* has been translated into Chinese as the all-victorious one. This all-victorious one is simply called Tathagata. I believe you have now understood what kind of Zen is meant by speaking of *thus-coming* and *thus-going* Zen, or Tathagata Zen.”

“It has been handed down that Shakyamuni turned to his disciples and called himself the all-victorious one, and the Tathagata. It is necessary to understand the meaning of these two expressions to study Zen. The six years of practice Siddhartha spent in the woods were dedicated to the practice of *ta ta agata*. Once he had gained the wisdom allowing him to know *ta ta agata*, as mentioned above, Siddhartha succeeded in expressing in words the activity of Tathagata.”

Thank you. ❖



SHUSO – MICHAŁ 'TOTAI' CZERNUSZCZYK

“Once you present yourself,
you are brand new.”



“What is presenting? To forget great enlightenment.
What is brand new? To be greatly enlightened all of a sudden.
Tell me now! How so? Do you get it?”

Dogen Zenji,
Eihei Koroku, Vol. 8 Eshu Eihei Zenji Dogen Osho
Shosan, part Hogo (Dharma Words)

SHUSO INTERVIEW WITH TOTAI CZERNUSZCZYK

by Katsuzen King

In mid April Totai answered these Winter Ango questions from Katsuzen King, editor of Mountain Wind.

This was your first experience as Ango Shuso. Did it give you a different perspective on anything? Was it what you expected? What were the major challenges?

I would say that it changed everything. For example, before my experience with Zen texts was that they are quite heavy and very serious. Now I perceive them as full of joy and encouragement. How come? Maybe during Ango I had to trust them. I just had to jump in the middle of them. I couldn't hold back any longer.

I also experienced a new kind of feeling toward my Dharma fellows doing Ango. I had very warm feelings toward everybody, something very intimate; it was if I knew each one of them very well, very deeply.

Has this month of practice affected your view of the sangha, or of SMZC itself?

I realized how difficult it is to come here and leave, and not to get attached, and to say goodbye. I mean, people seem to matter so much when they are at SMZC. Everybody has their place and position. And everybody works so hard. But then there is this moment when one has to leave and let go. Die, in a way. That's tough. "Coming with empty hands, going away with empty hands," as they say.

You've been a long-distance member of the SMZC sangha for a number of years. Can you tell us about your connection here and also about your practice in Poland, where you live?

I'm sorry to say this, but I think the Dharma is the only meaningful direction in our life. I'm saying 'sorry' because we try so many other ways and we fail since they don't work. And some of us don't even have that much luck in hearing the Dharma. We cannot rely on anything else, but at the same time to put our whole trust onto it and follow the path takes courage and a letting go of common sense to some extent. We cannot rely on our thinking mind that much—and that's scary, isn't it?

Your theme was taken from Dogen Zenji's Eiheï Kōroku. Can you talk about the theme and how you decided on this particular writing?

Now, as I'm thinking about it, I realize these are the words that I connect to falling in love. Or being delighted by people. From the beginning, when Roshi asked me to be Shuso, I knew I wanted to have a theme that would bring lightness into confusion. Forgetting great enlightenment and being greatly enlightened at the same time. Expressing that we don't really have to search somewhere else and for something else.

Does my answer explain anything?

Did most of your commentary during meals center on writings by Dogen or did you also read from and comment on other texts?

Not exactly. I was mostly quoting Suzuki-roshi commenting on Dogen. I see this as a part of Suzuki-roshi's great gift for us—bringing Dogen's teachings to the West, so they could take root in the United States and then be taken by Kwong-roshi to Poland and Iceland. Without Suzuki-roshi's commentaries we would be unable to understand Dogen's words at all. He made the writing alive and up to date. What I mean is that when we put our robes on, chant our strange texts, and go to the mountain to practice, we may think that we separate ourselves from life, that we escape. But it is exactly the opposite. That's what Dogen's—and Suzuki-roshi's—words show: that this practice, even though started twenty-five hundred years ago, is something about our very life.

I also read on hopelessness from Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche in Lion's Roar.

You were one of the four sangha members who received 'monk ordination' during this practice period. Can you say a little about how it was for you to be ordained while serving in the position of Shuso?

Busy! I had to give my first public talk on the day of the ordination. In English. To say something, something that would make sense. Gosh! And then to get ordained. No place for thinking. In fact, the whole month was like that for me—it feels like it happened in some other spacetime continuum. I'm not sure if I was even there at all.

How did your interaction with Roshi go during the month? Did he give you much instruction or direction regarding your role as Head Student?

This is the most important question for me here, and thank you for that! We can perceive all these elevated and sophisticated Buddhist expressions (such as 'Flower of Dharma' or 'Eternal Mirror') as just figures of speech taken from Japan or the Far East. Or the fact that Roshi is always referred to as Roshi. Why is he called Roshi, even by himself? Or, that we think we are talking on the relative level now and that there is an absolute level some other time. Or, it is me here and Roshi's over there. But it is not so. Who is there to be taught or guided by Roshi? Who is this person Roshi? Maybe there is just the teaching?

I'd like to share a story with you: many years ago, Roshi asked me to bring him some coffee after lunch. It was raining heavily. I got the cup, the tray and the umbrella, and off I went to find Roshi. First, I walked to the dokusan room. I knocked on the door, no answer. So, I walked down to Roshi's studio thinking he might be there. Nobody. Back to the dokusan room. OK, Roshi was there, he just didn't hear me knocking. So I was standing there saying, "Here's your coffee, Roshi," and passing to Roshi the tray full of water, with cold coffee, half mixed with rain. And I still remember Roshi's face at that moment—full of warmth, if a bit confused.

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I'm telling this because I'd like to show you how difficult it is to find Roshi. At least, for me. But at the same time this is exactly finding him! Roshi is the reference point, like the altar in the Zendo. I'm very grateful I could experience his guidance throughout the month of Ango, and grateful that it is so all-pervasive.

The closing Dharma Encounter can often seem like a major hurdle for the Sbuso. Can you give us a sense of how you experienced the closing ceremony?

Yes, that was difficult. I didn't want to pretend anything. I had to let go of trying to be someone wise and of clinging to my habitual way of downgrading myself. And 'letting go' is different from 'stopping myself from.' Maybe I tried to be wise, without attaching much to it. Maybe I was a fool, but that was fine.

I liked the ceremony a lot. How was it for you, all of you who participated in Ango?

Finally, do you have any thing else you'd like to add?

Nine bows to everyone I had the honor to sit with this Ango.



Total shaves Jinbun...



In the bathhouse to begin shaving our heads...Jan. 31, 2020

REFLECTING ON OUR “LEAVING HOME” CEREMONY

by Genzen Ed Cadman

On February 1st, 2020, Jesse, Peter, Michał, and I left home. In other words, we became ordained as Soto Zen priests in the Leaving Home ceremony, *Shukke Tokudo*. In the afternoon ceremony, the four of us received our gifts of passage from Kwong-roshi. Family and friends joined us in the zendo to support us and send us off, as, one by one, we bowed and knelt before Roshi to receive our new robes and bowls, and to hear him whisper our new names.

Jesse was first, then Michał, then Peter, then I followed last. I liked having the young go first. Jesse and Michał, besides being wonderful Shusos just in their early 40s, will have decades ahead to serve the Dharma. Peter and I in our 70s have years, not decades. We are leaving home after years of building our home, our zen practice. As I waited for my turn, I could feel all the hundreds of days I had spent here in this Genjo-Ji zendo, sitting, walking, chanting, eating, cleaning, and sharing. On the altar, the white camellias of Kashin's flower arrangement glowed with my memory of all the flowers which had been arranged and offered over the years: the quince and daffodils in February, the dahlias in August, and the azaleas for Rohatsu. What was new was that looking around to the audience, I saw faces who had never been here before. My sister, brother, cousin, nephew, and dear Dharma friends from Seattle and from Napa, among other visitors, were all gathered here for this one time. I was so happy and honored that they had all come to wave goodbye as we received our Dharma provisions and took our first steps as priests. Though I was leaving home, here in this zendo I was literally rejoining my family and joining the Sangha of ordained priests from Sonoma Mountain and Wisteria Wind who had inspired me along the way.

Jesse was the first to bow before Roshi and lean his head in to have Roshi shave off the final few hairs. Last night in the bathhouse, Michał and Jesse had partnered up to shave each other's head, as had Peter and I. When we were done, a dust bin full of (gray) hair was swept up and spread out onto the grounds to compost back into Sonoma Mountain, as is the custom. We had let go of our hair and the facade we had been projecting from all the years of hair and style. And now, for the ceremony, Roshi would finish shaving off the few hairs we had left.

With one or two swipes, Roshi had shaved each of us completely bald. Next, stage by stage, he offered us our new robes and bowls which first he circled three times in a cloud of incense. He gave each of us our new kesa. And for the first time, we chanted together the “Verse of the Kesa” with the kesa instead of a rakusu balanced on top of our shaved heads. “Limitless is the robe of liberation...” we chanted there together with all the Sangha. For this ceremony of leaving home, we would from now on wear a robe to signify our liberation, our vow that in the years we have left, guided by “the Tathagata's teachings,” we would keep walking on through a “formless field of benefaction” to save all sentient beings.

My deep gratitude to Kashin who sprung up to assist me in tying on my Kesa. We had some prior practice in securing our robe, but here I was all thumbs trying to remember the fold, the special knot, the “Z” and Kashin was an angel.

Our final bow in front of Roshi was to receive from him our lineage paper. As we reached into the incense cloud to receive the calligraphy of names which links us to all the previous generations, Roshi whispered to each of us our new Dharma name he had created. Jesse became “Jinbun,” Michał became “Totai,” Peter became “Kanzenchi” and I became “Genzen.”

Genzen!

After all the congratulations were given and group photos were taken, Roshi gathered the four of us together to explain why he had renamed us. Years ago when we first started steady zen practice, we each had been given Dharma names to inspire us to merge with the vastness of existence. “Ocean,” “Sky,” “Way,” and “Spirit” were all parts of the old names we had received as Jukai students. Now Roshi gave us names to inspire us to keep present here and now on our journey. Roshi explained to me that my former name “Daiki” or “Great Spirit,” was now “Genzen” which means: Manifesting/Actualizing what is here in front of me.

To be Genzen is to be here, serving the Dharma which is always right in front of me. ❖





February 28 Religious Studies Overnight

Professor John Nelson of University of San Francisco's Department of Theology and Religious Studies annual group visit to SMZC. A group of undergraduate students from USF dived into SMZC's practice program to experience Zen firsthand.



June 6 Saturday Community Dharma Talk

11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Online Dharma talk will be given by Jakusho Kwong-roshi
SMZC Abbot, following zazen.

June 6 Online Introduction to Zen Workshop: Returning to Forms & Rituals of Everyday Life

12:30 – 2:30 p.m. An introduction to the basics of Zen with
instruction. This workshop will be taught by Zen student
"JinBun" Jessie Brunette

June 13 Saturday Community Dharma Talk

11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Online Dharma talk will be given by "Uji" Mikolaj Markiewicz.
Leading teacher of Kannon Zen Center, an SMZC affiliate, in
Warsaw, Poland, following zazen.

June 11 "Returning to the Ground of Being" Three-Day Online Sesshin

Join us for a special time of practice to let go of the conditioned
self in order to resume our original nature. June 11 – 14. Online.
It will be open to everyone. Donation on a sliding scale. Any
amount is valued. For more info and to sign up, please email to
office@smzc.org.

June 20 Saturday Community Student Talk

11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Online Student Talk will be given by David "Koten" of SMZC,
following zazen.

June 27 Saturday Community Dharma Talk

11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Online Dharma Talk will be given by Nyoze Kwong, Vice Abbot
of SMZC, following zazen.

July 4 "Moment to Moment" One-Day Sitting Online

This retreat is an introduction to Zen training and an
opportunity for beginners and experienced sitters to plunge
into the heart of Zen practice. Retreatants will experience
a moderate schedule of zazen (eight periods of sitting
meditation), samu (work practice), oryoki (formal meals) and
sutra chanting.

July 10 Temple Stay: Rest in a Restorative Environment and Experience Soto Zen Buddhism at SMZC (TBD)

Temple stay is an opportunity to experience the rituals and
spiritual practice of authentic Soto Zen Buddhism. Take the
backward step and illuminate the jewel within yourself. Friday,
July 10 – Saturday, July 11. Non-member: \$90

July 11 Saturday Community Student Talk

11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Online Student Talk given by Erik "Zenjin" Shearer, following
zazen.

July 18 Saturday Community Student Talk

11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Online Student Talk given by John "Kaian" Jennings, following
zazen.

July 25 Saturday Community Student Talk

11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Talk will be given by Zen student "Genzen" Ed Cadman,
following zazen.

July 27 - August 22 Summer Ango Practice Period

SMZC's Summer Practice Period begins. Gosia Sieradzka will
take the position as Shuso (head student). She is a student of
Kwong Roshi and a sangha member of Kannon Zen Center,
SMZC's affiliate in Poland. Opening ceremony begins Monday
evening at 7:30 p.m. (More schedule details to follow...) Online

August 1 Practice Period Shuso Talk

11:00 a.m. Online Zendo
Head student Gosia Sieradzka will give the talk online at
11:00 a.m. following 10:30 a.m. zazen. Gosia is a student of
Kwong-roshi. Ango July 27 – August 22 (Detailed schedule to
follow...)

August 8 Practice Period Shuso Talk

11:00 a.m. Online Zendo
Head student Gosia Sieradzka will give the talk online at
11:00 a.m. following 10:30 a.m. zazen. Gosia is a student of
Kwong-roshi. Ango July 27 – August 22 (Detailed schedule to
follow...)

August 9 "Actualizing the Way" Seven-Day Sesshin

A multi-day retreat for experienced sitters. Manifest Zazen mind
in an intensive schedule that includes prostrations, ten daily
periods of meditation, chanting, mindful work practice, Dharma
talks, and private interviews with Kwong-roshi. Days begin at
4:45 a.m. and end at 9:00 p.m. Begins with Sunday 6:00 p.m.
oryoki dinner.

August 22 Ango Closing Ceremony — Revealing the Self

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. "REVEALING THE SELF" 10:30 a.m. Online
Zazen; 11:00 a.m. ceremony. Participants will ask Shuso Gosia
Sieradzka (head student) dharma questions to reveal the truth
of practice. We encourage all members to close the practice
period with us. Open to the public. Online

August 29 Saturday Community Student Talk

11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Online Student Talk will be given by Zen student Mike
Persinger, following zazen.

RESIDENT REPORT – MARCH, 2020

by Susan Gesshin Frey

March 18, 2020

FACING THE UNKNOWN (TOGETHER)

Today was a big wake up call to the Coronavirus pandemic that is affecting the whole world. Just this evening Sonoma county issued orders for everyone to stay in our homes—to “shelter in place.” It is hard to believe that until last week we were not really aware of the problem—we had of course heard of it, but it hadn’t touch us personally. Even though two weeks ago, on March 4th, California declared an emergency and a member emailed an example public notice for best personal sanitation practices in public places—and we posted this procedure—still we were not really taking it in. It was not until we went to buy toilet paper last week and Costco HAD NONE that we were shocked! Then we realized we should have even more formal sanitation procedures in place for the 1-day sit that Saturday, and we had a very hard time finding any disinfectant wipes. The situation worsened in the next two days, and by Monday the 17th there were 7 bay area counties on home restriction. Roshi suspended all of our public programs and gatherings, including morning and evening zazen in the zendo. Of course, he asked us to keep sitting on our own. In his letter to the sangha he explained “maintaining our calmness and steadiness within the fire of COVID-19... is helping everyone to come together to do RIGHT.”

Most importantly, Roshi reminded us that taking care of ourselves IS taking care of others.

So, we have put that directive into place. As residents sitting the same schedule in our individual rooms. We still meet for soji temple cleaning at 8:45am (because keeping things clean IS essential), and we are continuing our full samu schedule, working in the garden, sangha cabin, shop building, etc. About five of us are having lunch together, albeit sitting further apart than normal, and we bring lunch to Shinko and Roshi who remain in their home at this time, due to their higher risk status. We are restricting our travel in and out to just what is necessary, and we have strict sanitation guidelines in place. Roshi is holding weekly dokusan interviews by phone only.

Now, we are DIRECTLY experiencing how each matter is important, how each thing we do affects others. We are all participating in this larger activity by whatever decision we make. In a strange sense, there is an enhanced sense of community amidst the “social distancing.” We are facing the unknown, but we are doing it together. “In darkness there is light.”

WINTER ANGO HIGHLIGHTS: MONK BOSUNG SUNIM VISITS SMZC

An early student of the Korean zen master Seung Sahn Sunim, BoSung was for 17 years a lay abbot in Seung Sahn’s order and is now a monk in the Chogyee order of Korean Buddhism. Bosung visited us from Busan, South Korea for this year’s Winter Ango sesshin. His light presence was joyful, unabashedly honest and filled with true compassion—a real person. I have a vivid memory of him laying down the tenzo’s bowing mat when he was server during our oryoki service. He just did it without any self, and that action was illuminating. They say that Suzuki-roshi was known for the way in which he folded his Zagu (bowing cloth). It is wondrous that such a simple action can transmit the Dharma.

Coincidentally, through their mutual connections with Seung Sahn, both Kwong-roshi and Bosung Sunim had spent considerable time with Maha Ghosananda, a Cambodian monk who led the rebuilding of Buddhism in Cambodia and who dedicated himself to world peace and humanitarianism through selfless action. After sesshin was over, Bosung showed us some short but poignant videos of Ghosananda, including a clip from Korea in 1980. It featured a 45-year old Kwong-roshi, Maezumi-roshi and his brother Junyu Kuroda-roshi, SeungSahn Sunim, BoSung and Maha Gosandanda—all walking and chanting in a large Kido (Korean chanting) formation. Kwong-roshi and Bosung shared stories about Ghosananda with us. Both of them recollected that “he always gave the same talk” about selflessness.

Maha Ghosananda passed in 2007, but because of BoSung’s visit we touched his Aliveness.

ORDINATIONS

It was only a year ago that Ed Daiki Cadman was our Shuso, and during this winter’s Ango Daiki received ordination along with 3 others, including this winter’s Shuso, Totai Czernuszyk (last summer’s Shuso), Jesse Brunette, and former Shuso Peter Pocock. (See ‘Reflections’ article on pg. 10). Shuso Michal “Totai” Czernuszyk practiced here as a resident many years ago when Kuun (Jurek Dmuchowski) lived here in the 90’s. (Kuun received transmission from Kwong-roshi in September last year). Shuso Totai was right on the spot with his present and inquiring mind.

continues next page

JAPANESE STUDENT COMES FOR ANGO

Fumiya (Bunzai) Chiba, who just turned 20 years old and is a first-year student at Komazawa University of Buddhism in Japan, stayed at Genjoji for the Winter Ango practice period. Bunzai's father, Rev. Koji Chiba, is a well-known scholar of ancient Buddhism and also teaches at Eihei-ji. Bunzai inspired us with his proficiency at playing the drum for Oryoki meals and the Shuso ceremony. In fact, his temple is known for its drumming practice! Bunzai expressed his wish to return to Genjo-ji for more practice after he completes his University studies.

Other Ango practitioners joining us were: Guy Ekkett (see resident update below), Michael Lopatecki, Annie Hammang, Sheryl Hamilton, James King, Michael McCulloch, Damon Navas-Howard, and Sebastian Heilmann, who was visiting from Germany. Peter and Nancy Pocock, Ed Daiki Cadman, and Michael Lyons came for the week surrounding the ordinations.

SOTO NUN VISITS SMZC

Yuko Wakayama Yamada-Sensei visited us for 3 days from Shogaku-ji temple in Tokyo, Japan along with the Abbess of Shogaku-ji, Senshu Yamada-roshi. In 2017 Kashin Kwong met Yuko through her training at Aichi Senmon Nisodo.

In addition to her temple life, Yuko works through the international department at Eihei-ji head temple giving teachings on the Denkoroku (short biographies of lineage ancestors compiled as a teaching by the 54th ancestor Keizan Jokin). Yuko Yamada-Sensei gave a talk about her own life, which seemed to fit right in with the teachings of the ancestral lineage. Her demeanor was very alive, determined, fresh and inviting. She showed us that the true heart of Practice is neither male nor female.

RESIDENT UPDATE

Guy Eckett, a Zen practitioner of some 14 years, who hails from Devon, England, came for all of Winter Ango and half of March to check out our residency training program. He traveled here directly from Toshoji temple in Japan, where he had been practicing for 2 months prior. He just departed today (March 18) for a planned stay at a Soto Zen temple in Mexico City (which just happens to be led by an acquaintance of Nyoze Kwong). Guy has plans in place to apply for a 6 month US visa to stay at Genjo-ji as a resident in training. We are very much looking forward to his return!

Annie Hammang has extended her stay here at Genjo-ji for the near future.

Michael Lopatecki is currently staying here to help complete the sangha cabin along with Angus Atwell.

Jundo Farrand is still in residence here for the near future and is still working in Petaluma.

Susan and Koten remain in their normal positions as gardener and work leader.

Greta Canton is still here daily to hold the office together and to keep us moving forward. ❖



SANGHA NEWS & MEMBERSHIP

by Erik Zenjin Shearer

SANGHA NEWS

This past Tuesday morning, I woke up at my usual hour for morning zazen. After donning my robes, arranging my zafu, lighting a candle and incense, and doing prostrations, I settled onto my cushion and opened up the laptop on the table beside my zabuton. After making sure I had the right link, I logged into Zoom to find a wall of practitioners quietly adjusting to a new form for our zazen. The Sonoma Mountain Zen Center Sangha was online for the first time, waiting for the bell to start morning together. For the next 30 minutes, I was able to sit with sangha members from across the world. Despite the newness of the medium, the feeling of sitting with the sangha was centering and deeply moving. Seeing Roshi, Shinko, Nyoze, and Kashin and participating in practice with larger Sangha through our new Online Zendo is providing an anchor in what has been a turbulent month in all of our lives.

The new Online Zendo at SMZC meets for morning zazen Monday through Saturday from 6:30–7:00 a.m. PST. Evening zazen begins at 7:30 and concludes at 8:00 p.m. PST with the Four Vows. All members, friends, and guests are invited to join us in practice. Information about logging in, online forms, and guidelines, can be found on the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center Website at <https://www.smzc.org/online-zendo>. In addition to the new morning and evening practice schedule, everyone is invited to join for regular Saturday community practice, with zazen starting at 10:30 a.m. and a dharma talk at 11:00.

On April 4, the greater Maha Sangha gathered online for the 47th annual flower festival celebrating the birth of the Buddha. Over 100 people logged in and participated in the ceremony, including members from Poland, Scotland, Denmark, Iceland, Canada, Japan, and the United States. It was almost overwhelming to see everyone together in one virtual space. It was hard to say goodbye and log off at the end of the ceremony.

SMZC will continue to offer online programming for the foreseeable future while we adjust to a world that continues to reinforce the lessons of impermanence and change. Future online offerings will include larger gatherings for special events and smaller, less formal get-togethers and discussion groups. Please watch for announcements through email, on the SMZC website, and on our Facebook and Instagram pages. We are committed to providing time and structure for our Sangha to maintain connections to each other and practice together in these new spaces.

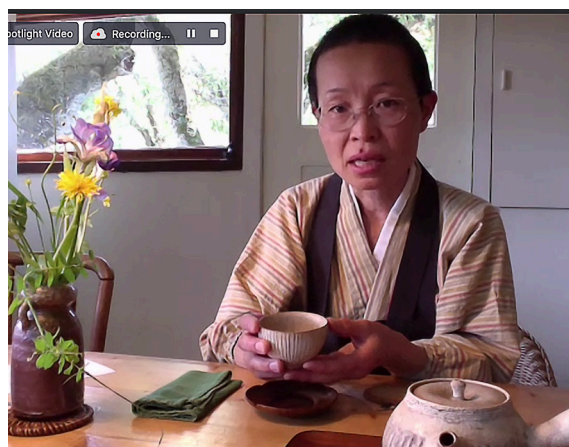
Thank you to everyone who has been able to participate so far. If you are interested in participating, but aren't confident in using technology to connect, please reach out. We are happy to help you get set up. You can contact office@smzc.org or you can reach out directly to me at eshearer@me.com for assistance.

MEMBERSHIP

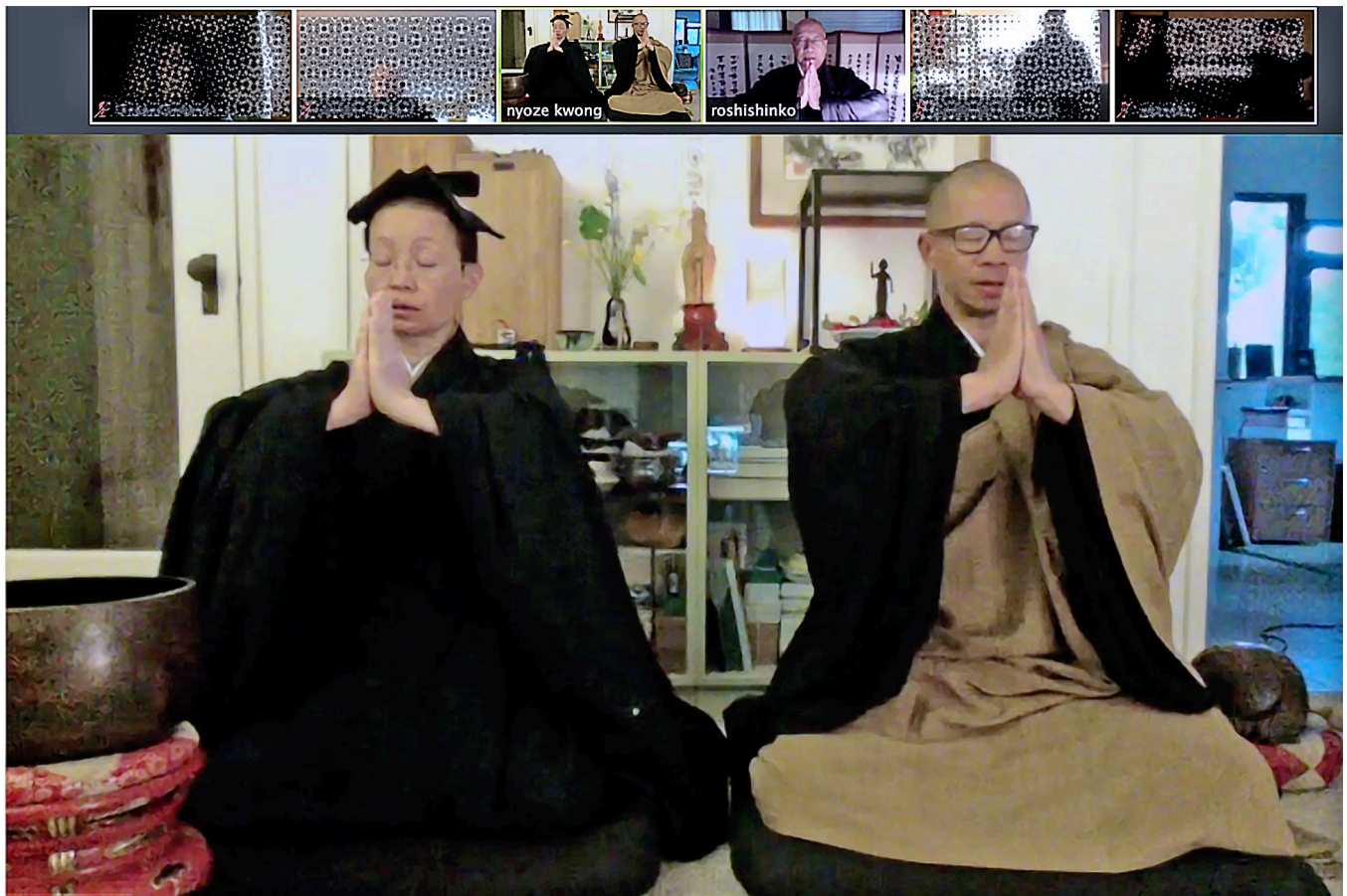
Annual membership renewal letters were sent out in late January. We are following up through email as well. Membership dues are a key part of our annual budget and provide critical stability for SMZC. Your dues are more important than ever as the Center is missing significant revenue from the loss of in-person hosting and programming. Please respond to the annual letter as soon as possible and consider increasing your membership level. Please contact office@smzc.org if you have any questions about membership payments. Thank you for your continued generosity and support. ❖



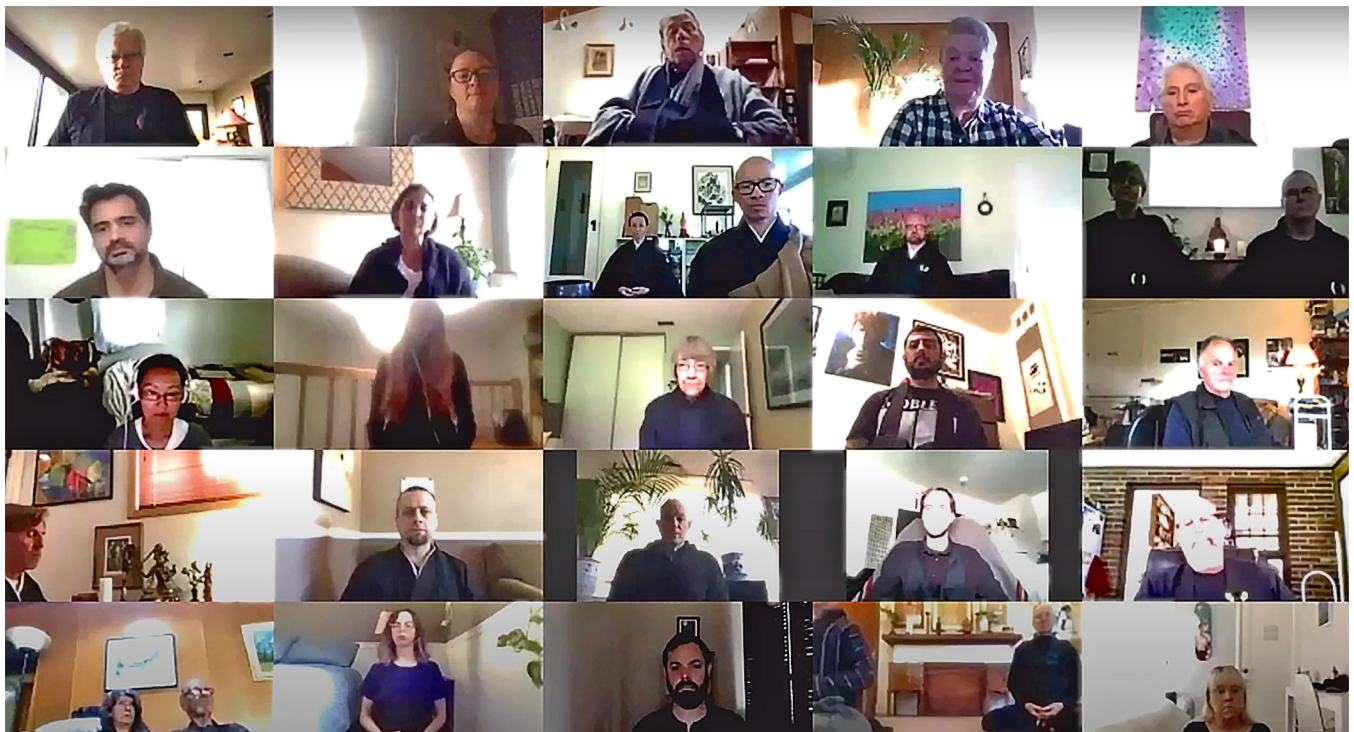
47th Annual Flower Festival on Zoom



Spirit of Tea on Zoom



SMZC on Zoom



DEL RAY ZEN

STEPS INTO THE NEW

by Peter Kanzenchi Pocock

On Saturday, March 14, the Del Ray Zen Community stepped out of the old and into the new. We had finished morning zazen with about half our usual number, and as we put away zafus, zabutons, instruments, and the altar, the sense grew among us that this would be the last in-person zazen for a while. A quick conversation brought unanimous agreement.

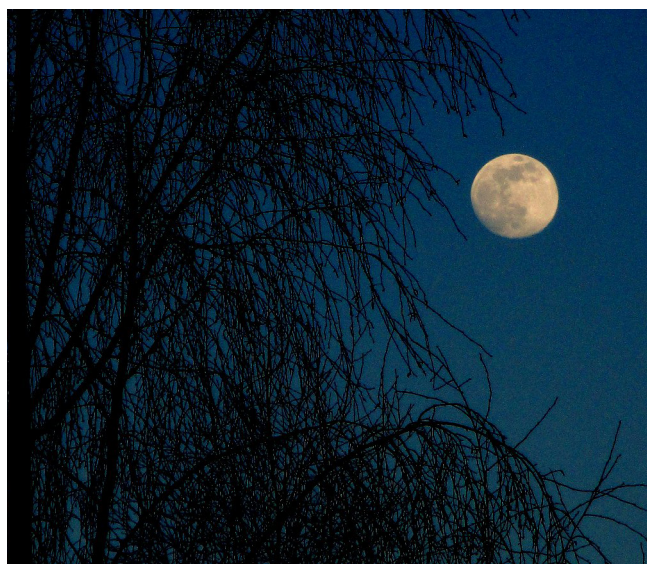
We entered the Covid-19 era on the following Wednesday, launching a trial run of virtual zazen with six participants. It worked well enough to commit to a regular schedule: by the next Saturday we gathered online for our accustomed zazen and service, followed by conversation.

Eight of us took part that day, and seven the next Wednesday evening—now a new weekly part of our calendar.

Logistics are still in development, but the basics are firmly in place. Instruments have been transplanted to the small meditation room in Nancy and Peter's house, where the online gatherings are hosted on a laptop with webcam. The session opens a few minutes before scheduled zazen, introduced by a recorded bonsho striking the minutes and ending with a rolldown. The rest of the session proceeds just as it has in the zendo—though cramped space requires bows in gassho in place of prostrations!

By late March the usual liveliness of our neighborhood had all but disappeared. The continuity of sangha gatherings helped members adjust to this new reality, according to all reports. The smiles as they greet each other, pulling out coffee and pastries after Saturday zazen, tell the same story.

Now there are links to our practice sessions on the Del Ray Zen website (delrayzen.org). We welcome all comers to join us—when it works in their time zone—and we're happy to share what we've learned with anyone interested in similar action. We're all getting a rich reminder of impermanence—and the importance of working with it, together. ❖



Polish Moon

KANNON SANGHA NEWS – POLAND

by Gosia Myoju and Erik Konpo

We are writing this article during the time of national quarantine. It has been exactly a month since we were locked down in our homes. We suspended all the activities in our local zendos. Thanks to the efforts of the Board and our teachers, we came up with a new form of practice together. Every day at 6:30 pm we sit together, and each day the practice is led by a different person. We send the practice leader a text message when we join the sitting and afterward to say thank you. So far, there have been an average of 20 people participating from all over Poland. Once there were even over 30 people! On Saturday, we sit four rounds of zazen together and we listen to a talk given by teachers or students via Zoom. It is a wonderful way to connect, and as it turns out, to get to know each other better.

We had to cancel our annual Spring Sesshin that was to be led by Uji and Krzysztof Tenkyo (longtime sangha member from Gdansk). Instead, Tenkyo led two rounds of zazen in the morning and two rounds in the evening for a week, and on one of the Saturdays he gave a talk via Zoom. We also have been having online seminars on important Soto texts, in collaboration with a translator of Dogen's work into Polish. This has been initiated and overseen by Michal Totai.

Roshi and Nyoze were planning to come to visit Poland in May. During this visit, three longtime students were to be ordained. That got postponed of course, but the monk and nuns-to-be are continuing working on their okesas and robes.

Bankyo, who lives in Kąciki (our summer center) is doing well. His two four legged friends – Pufec and Jasiak are keeping him warm and happy. We hope we will be able to sit our annual Summer Ango in our forest temple this year too... with the lovely sounds of cranes nearby..

Some of us participated in the joyous Buddha's Birthday Celebration that was organized by SMZC last Saturday, and we were delighted to see so many brothers and sisters in the Dharma from all over the world and connect with Kwong-roshi.

More than ever, we can recognize the value of practice, which enables us to meet one another truly beyond time and space, and appreciate the stable foundation it provides... Please stay safe and healthy.

From Warsaw to you,

Gosia Myoju and Erik Konpo ❖



Kannon Sangha on Zoom

THE STORY OF NATTAGI ZEN CENTER IN ICELAND

by Zenki Traustason

When I first started to practice zazen with the Icelandic Sangha in the 90s, we were practicing in the Theosophical Society in downtown Reykjavik. It was a wonderful large house, but it was not ours so we had to set up the zendo—altar, zabutons, zafus—and take it down each time we came together to practice.

I have good memories of that setting, but it was always a dream to have a place of our own, a place to practice. It was a distant dream but at the same time a very clear vision for the sangha.

Oskar Daian and Helga Kimyo-roshi were the ones who kept the dream alive in the beginning, and they had the courage to dream big. They told me that the Dharma would always find a way, and they didn't give up. But some of our more realistic sangha members were skeptical—we had no money, so how would it be possible to buy a building when we could hardly make the rent at the Theosophical Society?

Before we were able to buy our own place, we went through several different locations, including sitting in the living room of one of our members and in a small attic in downtown Reykjavik. The longest period was the time we rented an affordable place from the City of Reykjavik. It was in the poor outskirts of the city, the Harlem of Reykjavik so to speak. But as before, we had to put up the zendo and take it down each time we met. Towards the end someone broke in and tried to burn down the house. Some of our things were stolen or ruined. I guess we were lucky to keep most of the zendo intact; however, many of our books were lost.

I remember one time when we were there sitting zazen, we were all startled when we heard terrible noise and rumbling from the roof. Someone was throwing stones at the house. It was definitely time to move again. After we left, the unknown vandals managed to burn down the whole house, leaving no trace.

It was something of a miracle that we were able to put together a down payment to buy our own house then. We certainly felt that the Dharma was finding its way. The banks were eager to lend money, keeping their machinery running. Little did we know that the economic collapse was just around the corner in Iceland. Helga Kimyo-roshi, Oskar Daian, my wife Gyda Myoji and I all mortgaged our homes and were able to buy a small place, which served us well for the next ten years.

In the spring of 2017, we decided to take another step and buy a bigger house. Again, we felt the Dharma finding its way: we didn't have to do anything special but to practice and keep the vision clear. Shortly after we had sold our old place and were looking for a new one, our long-term Sangha member Elin Steinhorsdottir died and bequeathed her money to Natthagi Zen Center, which was a big help. I miss Elin; she was one of the friendly people who welcomed me to practice when I first came to the Sangha.

To cut a long story short, we now have a beautiful place in the suburbs of Reykjavik. We have been working hard to renovate it, taking down walls and putting up new ones, and installing a wooden floor as well as painting and making general repairs.

The plan was to have everything ready for my Shinsanshiki, or Mountain Seat Ceremony. This ceremony was intended to be at the end of May 2020, performed by Kwong-roshi and Nyoze. I had already invited Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi and Docho-roshi, the Abbot of Toshoji, who was going to bring Shika-roshi with him. Shika-roshi would play the shamisen, a three-stringed Japanese instrument.

Needless to say, we have had to close Nattagi Zen Center because of the outbreak of Covid-19, and the ceremony has been postponed until we can re-open in October 2020.

I think that to have the courage to dream and to have a clear vision is more important than to have a plan. We were all very inspired when Roshi told us about his dream to build a new zendo for Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, in traditional Japanese temple style. He said it with a smile, rooted in a strong faith in the Dharma, as if the zendo were already here and it just hadn't materialized yet. The whole world in a single thought.

Because of the pandemic the Icelandic Sangha now has a modified practice schedule at home. We have a closed Facebook group for practicing members where we are in good contact with each other. We also have an open Facebook site, which is: "Zen á Íslandi" as well as a home page: www.zen.is.

Shortly after we closed, I gave a talk on Facebook Live. More people came to that talk than have ever come to our zendo. More than three thousand people have now seen the video on Facebook. This was quite a challenge for me and at the same time very interesting. The Covid-19 pandemic is pushing all of us to find new ways to express ourselves and, perhaps more importantly, how to be available to each other in this difficult times. It is good to remember that there is a Buddha in all situations.

In the spirit of Zen,

Zenki ❖



Nattagi Zen Center in Iceland



ZEN DUST NEWS – JUNE 1, 2020

by Janet Myoho Buckendahl

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well.

I have been ‘sheltering in place’ since mid-March and as SMZC has been closed, business at Zen Dust has been suspended. I have had several inquiries about mail orders but, unfortunately, I’m unable to process orders unless I’m at SMZC.

Hopefully we will be opening up in the not-too-distant future. Watch for any announcements on the SMZC website about Zen Dust and any changes to procedures and opening times.

I hope to see you all soon but, in the meantime, stay connected through Zoom. I have found this connection very helpful and am extremely grateful to all those who have worked so hard on the planning and operation of this program. ❖

EDITOR’S NOTE – JUNE 6, 2020

Dear Sangha,

During the past two and a half months, since the last issue of Mountain Wind, the Zen Center and our world, have experienced incredible and unprecedented change. As I write this message, our country is still reeling from the wide-spread protests, both peaceful and destructive. In the face of this pervasive social and political change, the Zen Center, in spite of the many challenges, has maintained its position as a beacon for our spiritual guidance.

This issue of the newsletter includes writing from the onset of the COVID-19 health crisis up to the present when many of the shelter-in-place restrictions are now starting to be lifted. The message that Kwong-roshi sent to the sangha in early March, featured on page one of this issue, set the tone for what we were to expect in the months that followed. Likewise, the Resident Report and Sangha News articles were written in the early days of the pandemic. Some of the information is dated now, but we wanted to give you a sense of what we were experiencing as we entered into a full shutdown of the Zen Center.

At present we’ve shifted all our activities to an online format. Just today Greta sent out our weekly listing of events which includes the Saturday Community Program with zazen and talk by Roshi, weekly meditation instruction, an Intro to Zen workshop, a 3-day sesshin, our Tuesday Night Study Group plus daily morning and evening periods of zazen. All of these are now available to you on Zoom. Although we’re not meeting in person, our online events have served to make the practice much more accessible to those living at a distance from the Zen Center. Our Saturday talks have brought together all our affiliate centers and members from many countries, which is the first time we’ve connected as a mahasangha in this way.

Although there have been benefits, we still face many challenges. The resident staff has been stretched to keep the center afloat, and our main sources of income, like many businesses and non-profits, have dwindled during the crisis. Please look to ways in which you can help support SMZC and our practice at this time. Also, be sure to stay up to date by checking the website and calendar for news and upcoming sangha events.

The newsletter staff sends its warmest wishes for your safety and continuing practice.

Katsuzen King

Mountain Wind Editor ❖



All Contributions Help
Maintain
The Buddhadharma!

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smzc.org

MEMBERSHIP



We invite you to become a member of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Our purpose is to offer Soto Zen meditation practice and its basic teachings to people of all religious faiths. The practice of meditation allows us to see beyond our one-sided perception of ourselves and the world, so that we are able to participate in society with clarity and peace. We are a lay residential practice center and a non-profit organization relying on membership dues, guest practice programs, Zen programs and contributions to sustain our operating cost. *Call or visit soon to join us in actualizing the Dharma!* ❖

ONLINE RESOURCES ~ DHARMA TALKS & EVENTS

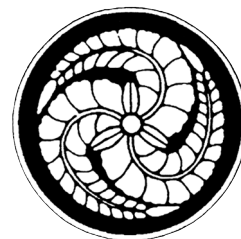
SMZC's website conveys the essence of our practice to others and invites their participation at the Zen Center. It is found at **smzc.org**.

A selection of Dharma Talks by Jakusho Kwong-roshi, and more, are available online in video, audio, and podcast formats.

Roshi's **Vimeo** channel offers several of Roshi's and Shinko's Dharma talks plus other notable events from SMZC. Please check it out! Just go to vimeo.com/smzc.

"The best" of Roshi's talks are available free through two websites — Podbean and iTunes. Access via **iTUNES** — Open iTunes on your computer; click "iTunes Store" in the left navigation column; click "Podcasts" on the top row; in the small box in the very upper right side shown with a "Q", enter "smzc"; hit the enter key on your computer; in the middle of the page with Roshi's picture, click on "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" under the heading "Podcast"; Roshi's talks then appear.

Access via **Podbean** — Go to www.podbean.com; in box at top right of page, enter "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" (not case sensitive); click "SEARCH"; click on "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" next to Roshi's picture or on the picture itself. **OPTION 1** — click on the "Listen" button beside any talk; **OPTION 2** (recommended) — click on smzc.podbean.com beside Roshi's picture; once in the site click on any "Listen" button. ❖



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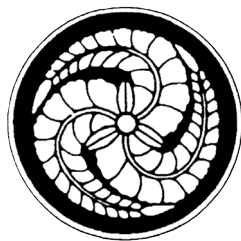
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Mountain Wind is available to all members of the SMZC sangha. If you are not a member of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center and would like to receive the newsletter, the cost for a one-year subscription is \$25. Please call the office to request a subscription, or visit online at smzc.org and donate via Paypal. When subscribing via Paypal, once you have made your donation please contact us and provide your newsletter format preference (print or electronic), and your contact information. If your subscription is due to expire, please renew. We also welcome submissions of poetry, prose and art relating to the Zen experience.



SONOMA MOUNTAIN ZEN CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

“FOR THE BENEFICIAL PROTECTION
AND AWAKENING OF ALL BEINGS”



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