



# Water Wheel

*Being one with all Buddhas, I turn the water wheel of compassion.*

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

## Gratitude and Change in the Year of the Tiger

by Deb Kyobai Faith-Mind Thoresen



Please join me as we collectively welcome in the New Year, 2022, the year of the Tiger!

Personally, I am grateful to be putting 2021 behind and though living in the moment, I am also excited about the possibilities that will unfold in 2022. What are you wanting to leave behind? What are you looking forward to? What is the moment for you?

What better image could there be for entering the new year than a Tiger? They are courageous, brave, charming, and endowed with good luck and authority. These attributes will be very foundational for this coming year as the Zen Center transitions the leadership into the Three Seats of Abbot (I'll continue), Head Teacher (Sensei Katherine Senshin Griffith) and Head Priest/Preceptor (Rev. Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert). Preceptor Lorraine Gessho Kumpf has also taken on the new position of Senior Resident, and will work with the resident community on training, with an emphasis on the *Sangha Sutra*, nurturing a sense of interrelationship and collective practice.

Roshi Egyoku will continue teaching as Senior Dharma Teacher, offering face-to-face and guidance to students. Our gratitude to her for her many years of teaching, visioning and leading is immeasurable. As she shared in her letter to the Sangha, though she may be moving, she is not retiring. We are very grateful to her for her continued teaching, mentoring and commitment to the Zen Center.

Our theme for the Fall Practice Period was Gratitude. Often, we're told to remember to be grateful for blessings or good fortune, but Buddhism teaches us to be grateful, period. Gratitude is to be cultivated as a habit or attitude of mind not dependent on conditions. Roshi Egyoku called this "Radical Gratitude," absolute and utter Grat-

itude! I ask myself, what happened to all the gratitude I have felt in the past? Where did it go? Do I believe that gratitude is dependent on feeling good right now?

How do I cultivate gratitude? When we do zazen, as Dogen Zenji tells us, we are not examining ourselves or trying to make personal improvements. We are sitting within Buddha's heart, releasing ourselves to that aspect of ourselves that deeply belongs to the universe and is grateful for it. When we bow and make offerings and chant sutras and dedicate them, we are expressing our gratitude that there is something and not nothing.

As Wendell Berry's poem so beautifully states in a chapter on Gratitude in *The Burning House*:

### The Peace of Wild Things:

*When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world and am free.*

May you find your place of rest and feel free to live this very life – Now!

*Sensei Faith-Mind is the Abbot of ZCLA.*

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# Oh, Those Bones!

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



I've begun sorting through my personal belongings in preparation for moving to my new home. Most of what is in the Pine House remains. I am documenting those items so that there is a record of its history before all of that fades into obscurity. I don't have many personal items, if you don't count the books. Like ZCLA's bookkeeping, which has many small amounts to track,

I also have many small items to reckon with. Among these are a stack of over thirty spontaneous 8x10 inch paintings from 2013.

Looking at these paintings, I recognize the liminality of those years when Roshi Bernie asked me to return to "heal the sangha"—the threshold from whatever had ended to whatever was emerging. It seems that I am in such a threshold now. And yet, isn't life always "in transit?" Although Zen folks shout "right here, right now," this so-called moment is ungraspable; always in motion, not necessarily moving from one place to another.



*Through the portal we go! Do not be afraid.*

I thought to use a few of the paintings to give a fleeting glimpse of my experiences at that time. I often encourage practitioners to express their energies by picking up crayons, allowing the energy to move their hands and give shape and color to itself, without any expectations for what might appear. It's a great practice of non-thinking and so much healthier than rumination and other neurotic habits that people default to. What appears is always a surprise, unconscious, and in the moment. There is nothing in particular that I recall about the year 2013, so I reflect freely upon these paintings. I hope you enjoy them, too.

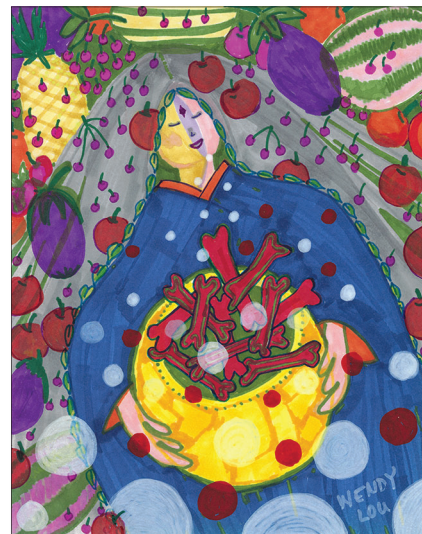
If there is one word that sums up my time here, it's "bones." I have been sorting through the bones of ZCLA.



*Sorting bones requires strong flexible hands.*

In the early years, the bones were the wreckage left by scandals of the past and present, the death of our founding Abbot, the emotional and psychological wounds of the Sangha, the deterioration of buildings and grounds, and the detritus left behind by those who left in a hurry. There were so many bones from the first thirty years! The bones were calling, begging me to pay attention to them. It's daunting to live in the dung heap.

In the West, we don't have an opportunity to handle actual bones. When a body is cremated, the funeral home grinds the bones into dust so that they are unrecognizable. In contrast, in Japan, the tray which carries the body into the cremation oven re-emerges from the oven with the bones. The family gathers around and, two by two, each person holds one side of a pair of long chopsticks and picks up a bone and places it into an urn. It's intimate—you and whose bone it was, you and the other person holding half of a chopstick pair, and you and life As.It.Is.



*When engaging the ritual of bone sorting, be sure to sing and use a beautiful bowl.*

In the Denkoroku Case 45, Zen Master Keizan Zenji writes, "Even without cosmetics, no ugliness shows. We  
(Continued on page 3)



# OH, THOSE BONES! (Continued from page 2)

naturally admire the ornaments of lustrous jade bones<sup>1</sup>.” Indeed, there is no need to cover up anything! We are always intimately entangled with the messy shitsticks of life.



*There is no need to cover up anything.*

In koan training, we realize that shitsticks themselves are the lustrous jade bones of ancestors and are not to be denied. When you can't find the bone, start stripping down to the bone. How else can we truly know buddha, the ingredients of the day, and how best to live? Bones are pulsating life force. It's not always pretty, but it's real.

There is an archetypal story of the Wild Woman who scours the desert for the bones of wolf. When she collects them all, she lays them out in the shape of wolf and sings them back to life. Although I did not know this story during those intense years of bone sorting, these paintings tell me that I knew that gathering and sorting though the bones of ZCLA was the sacred work that needed doing in order to breathe new life into its being.

Bone sorting is lonely work. This painting evokes for me how utterly lonely it was at times. An owl traverses a bitterly cold forest; its feathers are covered with snow, its eggs are frozen and cracked. Everything is barren and dripping with ice. Bone sorting takes place in the depths—you hold



*Be prepared to be lonely.*

the very pieces and shards that are left behind, that are entangled within the messiness of the situation, of others and of your interior world. This is the loneliness of the solitary, when only you yourself can handle the bones that come to you. It is not someone else's work (or someone else's bone!).

Bone sorting means facing the shadows: the parts that we keep buried, the parts of the Zen Center that people ran away from, the parts that people say are “not Zen.” The shadows have personalities and characteristics that are eager to be heard. They don't need to be sanitized or purified—only met and held. The narratives emerge. Did you know that there are innumerable ways to tell a story? Listen well. Are you held captive by the repetitive story? By the story that people expect? Can you re-imagine and weave an all-encompassing life-affirming narrative?



*You must master the art of befriending.*

One day Chien Yuan<sup>2</sup> took a hoe to the teaching hall and crossed back and forth, from east to west and west to east. Shuang asked, “What are you doing?” Yuan said, “I'm looking for the relics (bones) of our late master.” I remember Maezumi Roshii cried once when he said these lines. He said, “It's too much.” Indeed, it is. Shuang said, “Vast waves spread far and wide, foaming billows flood the skies—what relics of our late master are you looking for?” (Continued on page 11)



*Life and death intermingle.*

<sup>1</sup>The Record of Transmitting the Light: Zen Master Keizan's Denkoroku, translated by Francis H. Cook, Center Publications, ©1991, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup>The Blue Cliff Record, translated by Thomas Cleary and J.C. Cleary, Shambala, ©1991, p. 317.

# You Are My Teacher

by Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran



*Huang Po, instructing the community, said, "All of you people are gobblers of dregs; if you go on traveling around this way, where will you have Today? Do you know that there are no teachers of Zen in all of China?"*

*At that time a monk came forward and said, "Then what about those in various places who order followers and lead communities?"*

*Huang Po said, "I do not say that there is no Zen; it's just that there are no teachers."*

*Case 11 Huang Po's Gobblers of Dregs from the Blue Cliff Record*

The turning of the year brings turnings at Zen Center of Los Angeles. Our beloved teacher, Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao, to whom I bow in great gratitude, is transitioning from her role as Head Teacher to that of Senior Dharma Teacher and Roshi Sama, as we are affectionately calling her. Her long cultivation of the ZCLA field has brought forth teachers and students who will carry on the practice of Zen Buddhism here on Normandie Mountain.

It's a fine time to reflect on the roles of teachers and students in this practice beyond words, this teaching of the unteachable. Huang Po's rhetorical slapping down of our conventional ideas of teaching and being taught demands that we confront this relationship directly.

Huang Po, Obaku in Japanese, flourished in ninth century China and is in the third generation of masters descended from Hui Neng through the illustrious ancestors Mazu and Baizhang. He is said to have been seven feet tall and had a knot on his forehead from all his bowing. It's reported that he wore a tiny hat, which he said the universe fit within.

Imagine you're an itinerant monk in ninth century China. Travel is hard and dangerous. You've committed your life to the Way, contending with the pitfalls and vines that our busy minds create on the path. You've heard that this Huang Po is the real deal, that here is a teacher to clarify the Way. You finally make your way to the monastery and there you are, an earnest practitioner, in the hall with many other monks. The towering Huang Po fills the hall with an electric presence. And what do you hear?

"All of you people are gobblers of dregs; if you go on travelling around this way, where will you have Today? Do you know that there are no teachers of Zen in all of China?"

How would you take this? You could decide to be insulted – I'm no gobbler of dregs! – and leave in a huff. Or you might crumple into a ball of fear that all your shortcomings that you think are a big problem have been caught out. But let's set that reactivity aside and hope we might choose to be curious. What about these dregs? What words am I gobbling up? What spent bits do I energetically stuff myself with, dregs that have had their essence leached out of them? Why do I do this?

We do it all of the time and not just in this specific sense of gobbling up others' words. How often do you doubt yourself, seek outside of yourself, replacing moment after moment with your ideas or other's ideas about the moment? Grasping for the essence we think is outside of ourselves, the lively action of right now becomes dead dregs in our mouth.

Huang Po's chastisement continues: "If you go on traveling around this way, where will you have Today?" If we are going from teacher to teacher, book to book, if we are going on pilgrimage, if we are coming to ZCLA regularly (one day we will again!), if we are doing any of this with the idea that we are not worthy, that we need expertise, that there is something we need to GAIN, then we are gobbling dregs – the wine's essence is far away!

What about this "Today"? He isn't talking about where we are on the calendar, he's talking about you and me. He is saying Stop! Stop thinking that what you seek is outside of you! Stop thinking someone can give it to you! He's saying, "Look, it's right in front of you. It is things as they are. Just see it." Not so easy!

Huang Po goes on to make sure he has thoroughly stolen away the idea of a teacher giving you anything, asking "Do you know that there are no teachers of Zen in all of China?" No teachers of Zen – this from the disciple of Baizhang/Hyakujo, from the teacher of Lin Chi, the founder of the Rinzai school! What's this rascal up to?

A good teacher isn't there to give you something, they are there to take something away. They're like a bloodhound sniffing out what you are holding onto. In Zen literature, teachers are repeatedly called thieves because they steal away the things you think you need. The teacher is there to keep pointing out again and again what it is you are holding onto, what is putting a gauze between you and this life. Your life! A teacher doesn't give you a thing, they

*(Continued on page 5)*



YOU ARE MY TEACHER (*Continued from page 4*)

only help you to take things away so you can taste the wine of your true life and never thirst again.

After Huang Po announces that there are no teachers of Zen, a monk gets up and asks the obvious question: “Then what about those in various places who order followers and lead communities?” In other words, okay, what about you, Huang Po, what are we doing here in this hall with you today?

He might have answered by chasing them all out of the hall with his staff, but he instead replies: “I do not say that there is no Zen; it’s just that there are no teachers.” This Zen he’s talking about is not the physical manifestations of practice; it’s the essential truth of reality. A teacher can’t give you a single bit of that. How could they ever give you yourself?

Even the idea of one person and another isn’t an immutable fact. Seen from one perspective there is no teacher and no student, from another there is teacher/student happening. Not a “teacher” over here and a “student” over there. Just like there isn’t a “tree” over here and a “bird” over there. There is bird/tree happening and there is teacher/student happening and that changes constantly. But in another perspective, yes, there is teacher and student, but it is never the case that the teacher is giving something that is missing from the student.

When the moment calls for it, the teacher may verify our alignment with our true nature, which is expressed as only we can individually express it. They may help catalyze our practice through trusting, open interactions that demand integrity from both people. They may let us bump around and be stuck as needed, or they may unsentimentally cut off our whining, our self-involvement, all of the ways we get lost in our wandering mind.

In his wonderful guide to Dogen Zenji’s “The Mountains and Waters Sutra,” Shohaku Okumura Roshi recalls that Uchiyama Roshi often said, “The teacher is not a caretaker or a babysitter.” He adds, “He never took care of his students; he just carried out his own practice wholeheartedly.”<sup>1</sup> Isn’t that kind? In the end, the most you will ever learn from a teacher is to just be around them a lot and absorb the teaching of their presence.

It’s your steadfast faith in yourself and your capacity and your faith in another’s self and their capacity that form the sinews of how the teaching is transmitted. There is no way for teacher and student to play their roles, there

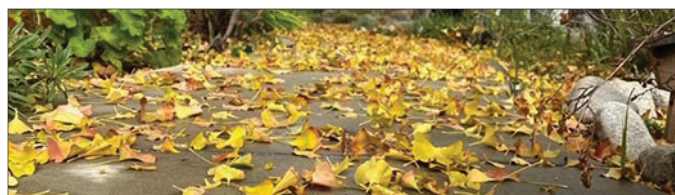
is no way to bring forth the depths of our reality without this faith. Our learning together, our practice together is not a machine with inputs and outputs. It’s an alive arising together with all our messiness, all the things we think are bad, all the things we think are good – all the things! All the things are the teacher.

Our practice together is the heart of the sangha. It isn’t a charismatic teacher or a brilliant speaker or a focus on strict rigor for its own sake. Your practice, when it is genuine, when you care enough to keep digging and pressing and challenging yourself, that is the pearl, the practice of the Buddhas. The Venerable Taizan Maezumi Roshi says in the collection of his talks *Appreciate Your Life*, “Have trust in your life as the Way itself. Have trust in yourself as Shakyamuni Buddha himself. I want you to appreciate this. This is not a sophisticated teaching. Your life is ‘Shakyamuni Buddha and I are practicing together.’ Please have good trust in yourself.”<sup>2</sup>

We must be careful not to impose our ideas about what a teacher should be and what a student should be. The relationship is one of the deepest mutual respect, each temporarily in a role, playing the most important game, which is to create the space together for life to come forward as freely and authentically as we can and to appreciate that as the full gift of the universe, the ground of our being together. Not me over here and you over there, not this one who knows and this one who doesn’t, but rather two people together in a dance that has gone on forever and will continue forever. And, of course, there are no people, no dance; no student, no teacher. If there are no teachers of Zen, there are no students of Zen. Then what?

You are my teacher; I am your teacher. We are all students. Let us bow to one another in that spirit. This is fundamental to our being in community, to being a sangha. In the end, it is our faith, commitment, and daring that allow the teaching to blossom and renew here on Normandie Mountain and in all the ten directions.

*Preceptor Earth-Mirror is a member of the ZCLA Board and Director of the Beyond Coal Campaign at the Sierra Club.*



<sup>1</sup>The Mountains and Water Sutra: A Practitioner’s Guide to Dogen’s “Sansuikyo” (page 194)

<sup>2</sup>“Shakyamuni Buddha and I are Practicing Together,” *Appreciate Your Life* (page 124)

## Remembering Hojo-San

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao

Roshi Junyu Kuroda (Baigaku Junyu Daiocho, 1940-2021), a younger brother of Maezumi Roshi and a member of ZCLA's Founding Family, died from prostate cancer at Kirigaya-ji, his temple in Tokyo, on November 9th at the age of 81. Although Hojo-san had written to some of us about his illness, my body registered his death slowly, like small waves washing over me, gently realigning me to this new reality. He was our last link to this generation of the Kuroda Family.

I had the privilege of meeting Maezumi Roshi's brothers, three of whom had their own temples, including Koshinji, the family temple at Otawara. They all had strong personalities, were confident and ambitious and devoted to the Buddha Dharma. My first meeting with Junyu, who went by Junpu in the early years, was as a young priest who came to ZCLA with his brothers, whose dominating personalities barely made space for their younger brother. Over the years, however, the young Junpu became the mature Junyu, who built Kirigaya-ji into a thriving temple serving 2,000 families. He also built Fujidera, a small temple near Mt. Fuji.

Hojo-san was dedicated to serving Maezumi Roshi and his Dharma work in the West. He came to ZCLA to help establish temple forms in the early years. He created the beautifully carved calligraphed plaques hanging in the front gaitan that announce the Zendo activities—before the sauna accident in which he lost his fingers. He later took up the calligraphy brush again. For decades, Hojo-san hosted Maezumi Roshi every April on his annual visit to family and colleagues. How can we know how much his contributions eased the way for Maezumi Roshi, who once told me, “I can do my work because of Junyu's support.”

Like his brothers, Hojo-san was an exceedingly generous and complex person with a sensitive and fierce spirit. I recall being with Maezumi Roshi when the call came from Japan that Junyu had suffered a terrible accident in the sauna. Many years later, Hojo-san recounted to me that he remembered his brothers gathered around his hospital bed discussing his funeral. Although it was likely an understandable conversation given his condition, Junyu was furious at the memory of it even years later! Nevertheless, he often had a twinkle in his eyes regardless of how chal-

lenging his life was. Later, he would say, “I have no extra, no luggage. Just I am I.”

Hojo-san's indomitable spirit is evidenced in a photograph of him nearing the end of his life that was shared by Roshi Tenkei of Zen River in Holland. The photo shows Hojo-san blessing a young boy. One can see death encroaching into Hojo-san's face and something else, too: the fierce focus of one who is living vow. Maezumi Roshi once told me that when they were kids, his mother would say repeatedly to them, “When you grow up, do something for the Dharma.” Roshi reflected, “Imagine saying that to a kid? We did not even know what the Dharma was.” And yet, in this mesmerizing photo, one can see the impact of her words and how deeply it had penetrated into her young son.



*Hojo-san, nearing the end of his life, blesses a young boy. (Photo courtesy of Roshi Tenkei/Zen River)*

After the passing of Maezumi Roshi, Hojo-san came into his own as a Dharma teacher. He trained and transmitted the Dharma to monks from Japan, Holland, Brasil, Poland, and Peru. He linked across sectarian boundaries, a characteristic I believe he inherited from his father, Baian Haku-jun Daiocho. He generously signed my Soto Shu registration papers for Zuise in Japan after Roshi Bernie left the Soto Shu. In 2004, he enthusiastically hosted a pilgrimage to Japanese temples and sights for ZCLA members. Hojo-san was a benefactor, teacher, and example to many of us in innumerable ways which will continue to reverberate throughout the years. We are deeply grateful.

Shortly before his death, he wrote this poem:

*Eighty two years,  
Some were good, some were bad  
Like this! Like this!  
In my dreams I am a pilgrim, like Sudhana!  
The Dharmakaya never dies  
The True Man lives forever  
—Kirigaya Junyu, a ragged Zen monk*

*Please read Hojo-san's obituary as posted by the White Plum Asanga at <https://whiteplum.org/news/>.*

# Zen Guiding Words: Being Present for a Parent's Passing

by Sandra Seiju Goodenough



My Dad died peacefully at home on September 29 at the age of 95. He was married to the love of his life, my mother, for 73 years.

When my Dad took a turn for the worse in home hospice in mid-September, I flew to Connecticut to be with my parents. I had nine days and many sweet moments with my Dad before he

passed. During these last few days my siblings and I took turns reading to him from his writings about his youthful exploits including driving across country in a Model T, nicknamed the Black Spasm, with my Uncle in 1946.

I was scheduled to give my Personal Practice talk the third week of September but the day before my scheduled talk, the hospice nurse informed us my Dad had entered into the active dying process. I emailed Sensei Senshin to ask if I could postpone my talk. She readily agreed and forwarded me the Zen Guiding Words to use for my Dad as I wished. I find the words very moving, but I did change out the words “mind” and “emptiness” and replace with “Spirit.” I knew “Spirit” would resonate for my family and especially for my Dad since he had written about his own thoughts on Spirit.

My Dad was unconscious for about 24 hours before he passed away. My mother, sister and I went into sit with him after dinner and he took three deep breaths with long pauses in between and then stopped breathing. Gradually his heart beat stopped and his body began to cool. Since it was after 8pm we decided to wait until the following morning to call the hospice nurse.

Right after he passed my sister, mother, the caregiver and I laid our hands on my Dad and read the Zen Guiding Words. The caregiver then said a prayer – we learned he is a Deacon in his Pentecostal Church. After lighting every candle in the house and placing them with my Dad in the living room we read the Guiding Words again a couple more times as family members came and went. The next morning my mother and I went to sit with my Dad for the last time until my siblings arrived. When gathered, we read the Guiding Words again, and my parents pastor came and said a prayer for him and for the family.

My Dad's Celebration of Life Service was held on October 17 in the church where my parents have been long standing members. My Dad was a deeply thoughtful and spiritual man in his later years and what resonated most for him was the Holy Spirit or even just spirit and he had written about his personal musings and understanding of the “Spirit” as I mentioned earlier. I read from his writings as part of the service.

The next day my mother, siblings and spouses and the Pastor buried my Dad's ashes in the cemetery next to the church. I brought copies of the Zen Guiding Words which we all read together and then the Pastor said a prayer. The burial spot is cozy, my Mom will eventually be right next to him and they are surrounded by many friends from Church.

The Zen Guiding Words are very beautiful and certain lines in particular resonate for me. Some of the words capture the essence of my father: “Beloved man, honored man, noble man! You have lived for a time as a unique and wonderful human being.” There is a journey and forward movement that is happening: “Now you are making the transition between this life and what will come forward next.” The Guiding Words include an important role for those left behind who love him: “Go forward to the great light in faith and in grace, supported and guided by all those who have protected and loved you through this life.” The words are uplifting and expansive: “Recognize your original dwelling place by its qualities: pure clarity, bright luminosity and vast spaciousness.” Finally, the words are comforting, peaceful and serene: “Go forward in love, in beauty and in grace. Go in peace. Go in peace.”

The Zen Guiding Words have helped us – we all appreciated having something meaningful to do and say that lends comfort to my family, and we believe my father as well, wherever the next stage of his journey has taken him. The Zen words and Christian prayers read at a time of passing blend seamlessly together, and my family, all life-long Christians, found the Guiding Words to be a source of solace, and a meaningful way of saying goodbye. When I called my Mom recently she was still reading the Guiding Words on her own.

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*Seiju is a ZCLA member and an Instructor for our Intro to Meditation classes.*



# Reflection: StillPoint Training and Zen Practice

by Betty Jiei Cole



In May, I and nine others formally graduated from a two year StillPoint training program as spiritual directors. For all of that time we ourselves were directees with experienced spiritual directors, for most of it we also served as intern directors with directees of our own, practicing with each other and mentored by more

experienced directors. “Spiritual companionship” is another term for it and seems to me to suit the spirit of our work together best. But what is this tradition of spiritual companionship I have stepped into? As a formal role, it has antecedents in many spiritual traditions, a person ready to listen attentively and help hold space for another’s quest. Now it has become a field increasingly aware of and welcoming to people who may think of themselves as completely without a religious home and identity, people of interreligious sensibilities, or people within a religious tradition but feeling a kind of inner restlessness or stirring toward some sense of life being lived more largely than what at first meets the eye. The spiritual director helps hold a space with the directee for inner listening, exploring, and wondering. Especially given the insistent noise and barrage of contemporary culture, the press of constant selling and demanding and rushing to do or escape doing, the opportunity to be still and honor the quieter stirrings together is a priceless gift. As Zen students we taste this deeply in our practice together, but for most people, not so. And even in our own tradition, this kind of communication and companionship may not be too much part of our experience. For me, it has been new and wonderful.

More than anything else, spiritual companionship is listening together. Learning to listen in a more whole bodied way to another’s journeying in this way is opening another door for our core practice—taking the backward step into not knowing mind, bearing witness, and loving action. I realized as I was starting the program that this was a

discipline that might wean me from an overreliance on the teaching and helping personae I had so honed in 37 years of teaching and community organizing: listen more, act less, open more, fix less. Breathe. Wait. Sense. Ask. Listen.

The whole second year of training really focused on learning about our own habitual patterns, shadow aspects of our own personalities that tend to trigger reactivity and skew perceptions. We read in psychology and counseling, yes, and also were actively journaling, analyzing and remembering our life stories, warts and traumas, repeating tendencies in how we tend to respond to challenges and uncertainties. The practice of bringing the examples of our sessions with directees to mentors focuses primarily on noting our own feeling and body responses to what comes up from the session with the directee. For me, doing this has been another arena of “seeing through” and “letting go,” a central practice.

The whole interactive process enlivens my sense of co-created life together. Living all of this in the broad context of Zen practice is a real gift.

The training program that I found, or that found me, StillPoint, is a contemplative ecumenical organization several decades old, part of a much larger international community of people consciously extending in

two directions, inward to the ground of being and spirit, and outward to others from whom to learn and to serve. For me it’s been a great pleasure to find people from Catholic, Hindu, Protestant and mixed backgrounds as fellow seekers. I have realized how much my own way into Zen practice tended to focus on individual effort and in some ways to isolate me in some sense of a rarified search. At this point in my life, embarking on the two year training program with several teachers, mentors and other trainees has been a great relief from my imagining that I’m to “go it alone.” It also continues to be a powerful antidote to the press of catastrophic news; there is a whole world of people moving and networking like a stream of white blood cells or nerve centers towards healing and connecting.

*Jiei is a long-time ZCLA member and Coordinator of the Monday night Meditation Group in Pasadena, CA.*





## 2021 Fall Practice Commitments

We acknowledge the following 108+ practitioners who made formal practice commitments for the 2021 Fall Practice Period.

### ZCLA

Alan Taigen Turton  
 April True Flower Ford  
 Ben Ehrlich  
 Betty Jiei Cole  
 Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran  
 Bill Tetsui Press  
 Bob Kanzan Swan  
 Brian Sotetsu Huff  
 Chris Daian Fields  
 Christopher Genzan Hackman  
 Cynthia Romanowski  
 Darla Myoho Fjeld  
 Dave Fushin Watson  
 Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen  
 Diane Enju Katz  
 Diane True-Joy Fazio  
 duVergne Gaines  
 Dylan Banto Neal  
 Eberhard Konin Fetz  
 Eleanor Jōen Heaphy  
 Ellen Reigen Ledley  
 Frank Genku Martinez  
 Geri Meiho Bryan  
 Glenn Gikai Davis  
 Hannah Seishin Sowd  
 Jack Kuykendall  
 Jacque Rabie  
 Jane Radiant-Joy Chen  
 Jenny Jusen Bright  
 Jessica Oetsu Page  
 John Chastain  
 Jolene Beiser  
 Jonathan Kaigen Levy  
 Katherine Senshin Griffith  
 Kathy Myoan Solomon  
 Lisamarie/Lumi Windwalker  
 Lorraine Gessho Kumpf  
 Mak Muan King  
 Mary Frankos  
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 Nan Reishin Merritt  
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 Tracy Lin Payne  
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 Eishin Jose Fonseca  
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 Geraldo Oliva da Fonseca  
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 Gary Kōshin West  
 Geoffrey Kanjo O'Quest (& ZCLA)  
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 Julia Seirin Norstrand  
 DeWayne Gojitsu Snodgrass  
 Jim Dojun Hanson  
 Lane Kyojin Igoudin  
 Jacqueline Drummond

### Zen-Center Bambushain (Zhulinci), Aachen, Germany

Andreas Seijun Rampelt,  
 Diana Mowat  
 Eva Jiun Neumann (& ZCLA)  
 Kirsten Jansen





# Painting the Blue Medicine Buddha Mural

by Sacha Joshin Greenfield

The Medicine Buddha mural was conceived by Roshi Egyoku in spring of 2021, who suggested we paint the mural after hearing about Anish Kumar's artwork. The original drawing of Medicine Buddha was made by the thangka artist Anish as an offering to the Sangha. Every step has been a collaborative process: residents repainted the wall of the Nilotpala garage as a blank slate. We drew a grid on Anish's drawing and on the wall, then transferred the design square-by-square. After the drawing was complete, painting proceeded slowly but surely. Rev. Jitsujo offered a workshop on painting with perspective. I coordinated painting days, with a few residents (and sometimes, other members and friends) painting at a time.

Medicine Buddha represents our intrinsic capacity for healing, an appropriate energy for coronavirus times. She is especially associated with healing of worldly ills. While Medicine Buddha is traditionally depicted as male or androgynous, we have emphasized her feminine aspect: she has softer facial features, a more prominent chest, and painted nails. We may even give her makeup! This choice appreciates the feminine and mothering quality of healing. It feels aligned with the Zen Center's trend of making the feminine visible and heard in a patriarchal tradition.

The mural has been a great exercise in not-knowing. Even though we started from a drawing, many color and other design decisions were made along the way, through experimentation. People of all painting experience have



participated. The goal has been to incorporate as many hands and energies as we can. We learned the great power of white paint: no choice is permanent, and we can try anything and change it later if it doesn't feel right. Through this trial-and-error process, the mural has unfolded in unexpected and ways. Out of many small adjustments, additions, and mistakes, Medicine Buddha is appearing.

*Josbin is a ZCLA resident.*





## Your Gifts are Received with a Heartfelt “Thank You!”

To all those who worked on the Blue Medicine Buddha: Sacha Joshin Greenfield, Roshi Egyoku Nakao, Gemma Soji Cubero, Dharma-Holder George Mukei Horner, Jitsujo Gauthier, Brian Sotetsu Huff, Hilda Bolden, Craig Genji Miller, Tim Taikan Zamora, Jolene Beiser, Valerie Richards Geri Meiho Bryan, Dan Ejo Wilner, Dave Randall, Chris Daian Fields, Jessica Heinze, Tom Yudo Burger, Ty Jotai Webb, Melissa Gericke, Lilly Brodie, Jennifer Chan, Jemma Wolcott-Green, Preceptor Lorraine Gessho Kumpf;

To Mark Shogen Bloodgood and the San Luis Obispo Zen Circle for Sharing their Sunday Zazen with ZCLA for the past two years;

To Sensei Darla Myoho Fjeld for leading the Sangha Forum and the fall Precept and Jukai Classes;

To Julia Seirin Norstrand, Diane Enju Katz, and Chris Genzan Hackman for leading our Day of Reflections;

To Dharma Holder Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert for leading the Living-Serving: Bodhisattva Archetypes class series;

To those who helped with Day of Dead and Obon Service: Sensei Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen, Sensei Katherine Senshin Griffith, Sensei Myoho, Preceptor Gessho, Dharma Holder Mukei, Robert Diaz, Bob Doetsu Ross, Reeb Kaizen Venners, Daian, Nan Reishin Merritt, Joshin, Soji, Sandra Seiju Goodenough, Diane True-Joy Fazio, and Ejo;

To Roshi Egyoku for serving as Preceptor for Ryan Sozan Schneider's Jukai;

To Dharma-Holder Mukei for leading the ceremony for New Residents and to Rev. Dharma-Joy for the cookies and tea in the garden;

To Zoom Host Steward Rev. Dharma-Joy, Zendo Steward Mukei and Resident Steward Kaizen for their steadfast service all year;

To all those who helped with the Head Trainee Hossen for Nem Etsugen Bajra;

To our Fall Sesshin leaders: Roshi Egyoku (Golden Wind); Sensei's Faith-Mind and Senshin (Rohatsu); Sensei Myoho (Year-End); Preceptor Gessho (November Zazenka);

To those who gave Fall Dharma & Sesshin Talks: Roshi Egyoku, Senseis Faith-Mind, Senshin, Shogen, Myoho and Peter Levitt; Preceptors: Dharma-Joy, Mukei, Earth-Mirror,

(Continued on page 12)

## OH, THOSE BONES! (Continued from page 3)

There is an alignment with life when bones are put right. Nothing is hidden; all is seen through. In the painting on page 3, the nest is overflowing with both bones and vibrant eggs. Feathered ancestors swoop in, tugging the life-giving blood vein among branches full of seeds. Although times are difficult and life is a struggle, there is a pervading sense that we ourselves are held in the nest and that what is needed to be seen will reveal itself in time.

I am and will be forever grateful for those who have sorted bones with me. Thank you for everything.



*When you are bone tired, return to rest in the mycelium.*

Roshi Egyoku is ZCLA's Head Teacher and Head Priest. She will become the Senior Dharma Teacher upon installing the new Head Teacher and the new Head Priest in 2022.



## The Corner of Disorder

by Sunshine\*

\*autocorrect Senshin

## ZCLA Affiliated Groups

**The Monday Night Meditation Group (Pasadena, CA)**  
*coordinated by Betty Jiei Cole*

**The San Luis Obispo Zen Circle (CA)**  
*led by Sensei Mark Shogen Bloodgood*

**Empty Hands Circle (Campinas, SP, Brazil)**  
*coordinated by Christina Tchoren Carvalho*

**Wild River Zen Circle (Nevada City, CA)**  
*led by Sensei Jeanne Dokai Dickenson*

**The Valley Sangha (Woodland Hills, CA)**  
*coordinated by Marc Dogen Fontaine and  
 Michael Jishin Fritzen*

**The Westchester Zen Circle (CA)**  
*led by Roshi Kipp Ryodo Hawley*

## Outreach Groups

**CMC Buddhist Fellowship Group  
 California Men's Colony (CMC)  
 (San Luis Obispo, CA)**  
*led by Sensei Mark Shogen Bloodgood*

*Contact [info@zcla.org](mailto:info@zcla.org) for information.*

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**Our mission** is to provide training and resources for realizing the oneness of life, to maintain the precepts, and to embody the Three Tenets of Not-Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Taking Action. **Our vision** is an enlightened world free of suffering, in which all beings live in harmony with each other and the earth, everyone has enough, deep wisdom is realized and compassion flows unhindered.

*Founding Abbot: Taizan Maezumai Roshi  
 Abbot 1995-1999: Roshi Bernard Glassman  
 Abbot Emeritus 1999-2019: Roshi Egyoku Nakao  
 The Seats: Abbot, Sensei Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen;  
 Head/ Resident Teacher, Roshi Egyoku Nakao*

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## Sangha Rites of Passage

**New Members**  
*Kevin J. Simms*

**New Residents**  
*Ben Ehrlich  
 Craig Genji Miller*

**Preceptor**  
*Peter Eihei Nanfu Levitt  
 October 9, 2021*

**Dharma Holder**  
*George Mukei Horner  
 October 28, 2021*

**Jukai**  
*Ryan Sozan Schneider  
 November 6, 2021*

**In Memorium**  
*Roshi Junyu Kuroda (Baigaku Junyu Daisho)  
 January 5, 1940 - November 9, 2021*

## A Heartfelt “Thank You!”

*(Continued from page 11)*

Gessho and Elizabeth Jiei Cole. And to Seiju for her Personal Practice Talk.

To Dharma-Holders Dharma-Joy, Jitsujo and Kaigen and Senseis Myoho and Senshin for leading our Wednesday night Explore Your Practice;

To the Three Seats Transition Circle: Patti Muso Giggans, Sensei Faith-Mind, Mary Rios, and Preceptors Earth-Mirror and Gessho; and the Program Steward Hiring Committee: Senseis Faith-Mind and Senshin, Rev. Dharma-Joy, Mary Rios and Frank Genku Martinez.

To those who held our End of Year service positions: Sensei Faith-Mind, Rev. Dharma-Joy, Taikan, Dharma-Holder Mukei, Joshin, Soji, Yudo, Rev. Jitsujo, Meiho, Sensei Senshin, Preceptor Gessho, Rev. Jonathan Kaigen Levy, Sensei Myoho, and Kaizen;

To our 4th Quarter Security residents: Kaizen, John Kyogen Rosania, Preceptor Gessho, Joshin, and Sotetsu.

To our 4th Quarter Jikidos: Taikan, Soji, David Randall, Joshin, Sotetsu, Kyogen, and Kaizen.



# Zen Guiding Words

Beloved person, honored person, noble person!

Pay attention now!

You have lived for a time as a unique and wonderful human being.

Now you are making the transition between this life and what will come forward next.

Just as the elements of the body – earth, fire, water and air – are now dispersing in

order to re-enter the cycle of creation and destruction,

So also the elements of the heart/mind (wisdom and compassion, creativity and joy)

will dissolve and merge with the Whole Universe,

Re-emerging in accord with the great Law of cause and effect as the life of new and

precious beings.

As the heart/mind is emptied of memory and experience, of personality and self,

You may experience many phenomena: wonderful, unusual and even alarming.

Do not be afraid!

Remember that these are all marvelous and mysterious manifestations of the One Great

Mind which is your true mind.

Do not be disturbed or distracted by these phenomena.

Go forward toward the great light, in faith and in grace, supported and guided by all

those who have protected you through this life.

Go forward into that great darkness, which is the emptiness of our Original Nature.

In that darkness all things dissolve and become free from karma.

Recognize your original dwelling place by its qualities:

pure clarity, bright luminosity, and vast spaciousness.

You are released now from all earthly concerns and ties.

Go forward to rejoin your original home, at one with emptiness and that great energy of

creation.

Go forward in love, in beauty and in grace.

Go in peace. Go in peace.