



Water Wheel

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

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

A Period of Itself

by Katherine Daiki Senshin Griffith



That life does not become death is a confirmed teaching of the Buddha-dharma; for this reason, life is called the non-born.

That death does not become life is a confirmed teaching of the Buddha-dharma; therefore, death is called the non-extinguished.

Life is a period of itself.

Death is a period of itself.

For example, they are like winter and spring.

We do not think that winter becomes spring, nor do we say that spring becomes summer.

From Dogen Zenji's *Genjokoan*

It's been two years since the Covid-19 lockdown, and the Zen Center is gradually reopening to in-person activities. Impermanence is a core Buddhist principle – but the changes occurring in our lives and across the world seem more palpable than ever.

We have lots of questions about time: When will this pandemic be just an endemic? When will we get back to normal? When will the war in Ukraine end? Is the Cold War era over? When will in-person activities be safe? Is it too late to stop the climate crisis? When will my Zen Practice lead to peace of mind?

The true nature and actual experience of time is what Dogen Zenji is examining in the above passage from the *Genjokoan*. Each thing has its own time, its own dharma point that can only be expressed in the present moment. But what really is the present moment? It can't be captured. Yet how much of our time is spent in thinking of something outside this so-called moment. So much energy and dedication is needed to be present; it's a primary focus of our practice. But this "present" is elusive. As soon as you note it, you are out of it.

Regarding the present moment, Shokaku Okumura in *Understanding Genjokoan* points out that it's empty with

the length of zero and just a geometrical line without any width that separates past and future. The present is the only reality we experience, and in it the entire past and the entire future are reflected. If there is no actual unit of time that is the present, then the present doesn't exist, so time doesn't exist. He goes on to say:

"And since everything is always changing at each present moment everything arises and perishes over and over again: each moment everything is new and fresh."

What Dogen Zenji is pointing to is: time is being and being is time, which he later writes about in *Uji* or *Being Time*. Fundamentally, each dharma position can only be experienced in the present, ungraspable moment, which has no length. Reality unfolds within this present, ungraspable moment. In our zazen and lives, we sit in it, giving ourselves wholeheartedly.

It's ironic, Zen practice emphasizes staying present, and now we find there is no present. With what mind do we grasp the ungraspable present, right now? This seemingly impossible task could be another Bodhisattva vow: Present moments are ungraspable, I vow to be present. There is no here and now, I vow to be here and now.

I can't label "now" because it's gone when I do. But I can be fully with my breath. In out, in out. Riffing off of Dogen Zenji, the In Breath is complete in itself, in the state of being In Breath and has its before and after. The Out Breath, is complete in itself in the state of being Out Breath and has its before and after. But do not suppose

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE ... and more!

- 3 Imperceptible Mutual Assistance by Carol Schmitt
- 4-5 Sangha is the Practice by Sensei Shogen
- 6-7 Dana Booklet January 2021 - December 2021
- 8-9 Medical Work & Zen Practice by ZCLA Members
- 10 First Bows by Myoki Beltran-Hernandez
- 11 When One of Us by Patti Muso Giggans

A PERIOD OF ITSELF (Continued from page 1)

that Out Breath is after and In Breath is before. It's just In Breath. Out Breath. Complete in themselves. I can breathe in and out with an internal: "now now," like a soothing "there, there" – only it's really "here, here." Just this, just this.

Dogen Zenji is showing us a new view. When life comes, just live. When death comes, just die. Or when the last In Breath doesn't come, just die. I'm reminded of the Catholic *Hail Mary's* "Now and at the hour of our death." Each now could be the hour of our death. Each now is a period of itself.

Seeing this, we can experience our lives fresh and new. Just seeing what's before us. It's amazing when we do settle, how the simplest things really pop. Whatever comes up in your life – just be it, experience it fully – then you can take the next appropriate action.

When we experience something wholeheartedly, there is no problem. This moment, this moment. Living fully in each fleeting moment without referring to the past or future. Just being one with the absolute aspect of existence.

In our ordinary view of time and cause and effect, all things eventually die. But from the absolute perspective, there are no fixed entities, no "you" that can be said to exist or perish. Only one seamless reality.

Life and Death are concepts of Time. From the relative perspective of cause and effect, we can say: "I was born, I got older, I got sick, I died." But Dogen Zenji is referring to "no birth, no death." Various translations of this are non-born, non-extinguished; no arising, no perishing; unborn, undying; no becoming, no non-becoming; no appearance, no disappearance. But in this one moment, without referring to past or future, there just is.

What Dogen Zenji is saying is: "life and death is Buddha's Life." That our life in samsara is none other than nirvana. Your life just as it is, is the life of a Buddha. On zoom. In person. Healthy. Sick. New or old job. War or peace. Aging, pandemic, injustice, confusion is the way. Practice is Enlightenment.

Though each of us experiences what is directly before us, we all perceive things differently. A five-year-old child, an angry teen, someone with dementia. All bring their causal conditions to the perception. But really, there is only that fleeting so called instant.

When the sun rises and sets every day, it's similar but always different. Watching the light change in the zendo, the shadow of the leaves hit the wall so beautifully. Moments later, the shadows are gone.

Our Zen Practice employs skillful means to remind us of the different elements of time. We're reminded of the One Boundless Seamless dimension when we chant:
All karma ever committed by me since of old. Due to my beginningless...
When the jikido hits the clappers and we freeze, then claps again and we move, we are reminded of the aspect of time that has its independent existence, with its own before and after. Completely wholeheartedly manifested.

But most of us spend quite a bit of time zig zagging in our heads, getting caught and entangled in our thoughts and distractions, missing the large view, snagged in the petty. Not seeing even the minutia as wondrous.

So, what about the past and future? It's said that if we don't learn from history, we are bound to repeat it. And if we don't think ahead, we won't be ready for when disasters come – like this pandemic. Or when and how to reopen. We can reflect on the past and learn. Reflecting on the actions of our society and ourselves, we can make better intentions for the future.

But how much of our thinking about the past or future causes us unnecessary stress, worry, anxiety or fear. Worry, anger, guilt can be helpful in small doses when paid attention to and dealt with. I worry I'm not ready, so I prepare. I fear getting sick, so I wear a mask. I regret having hurt someone, so I apologize. I'm confused, so I seek clarification. But if stressful states of mind linger, it can be a sign that something isn't being faced. It's extra, and you're not with what is going on in the present.

A way I test my mind state when I'm stressed is I ask myself "What would it be like if the project were done?" or "if I were on vacation?" What would it feel like to be complete right now just as is? Wholeheartedly at one with this period in itself.

How can this new way of looking inform our lives? I invite us all to see for ourselves what it's like to continually be with each period in itself, and experience what T.S. Eliot describes:

*"At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from
nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance."*

Sensei Daiki Senshin was installed as the new Head Teacher on April 10.

Imperceptible Mutual Assistance

by Carol Ryuzan Koshi Schmitt



What makes the ineffable real for you? It was my first practice period at Tasajara, January 1993. In the sutra book was a two-page excerpt known as “jijuyu zammai” from Dogen Zenji’s fascicle *Bendowa*, translated by Abe and Waddell. We would chant it in rotation with other sutras during morning service. There was a phrase in

it, “imperceptible mutual assistance,” which penetrated me deeply and has been my cherished companion ever since.

There was a woman in the practice period from Yugoslavia who wanted to practice her English, and I heard that the Abbot had recommended to her that she memorize that sutra.

That seemed like a good idea to me, so I memorized the whole two pages. By this time, however, the translation in the sutra book had changed to Kaz Tanahashi’s translation which reads: “Because such broad awakening resonates back to you and helps you inconceivably. . . .” Also good. In any case, Kaz’s is the translation I memorized, but “imperceptible mutual assistance” stayed deep within me.

The sutra says, “Because earth, grass, trees, walls, tiles, and pebbles all engage in buddha activity, those who receive the benefit of wind and water caused by them are inconceivably helped by the Buddha’s guidance, splendid and unthinkable, and awaken intimately to themselves. Those who receive these water and fire benefits spread the Buddha’s guidance based on original awakening.”

And later, “Grass, trees, and lands which are embraced by this teaching together radiate a great light and endlessly expound the inconceivable, profound dharma. Grass, trees, and walls bring forth the teaching for all beings, common people as well as sages. And they in accord extend this dharma for the sake of grass, trees, and walls. Thus, the realm of self-awakening and awakening others invariably holds the mark of realization with nothing lacking, and realization itself is manifested without ceasing for a moment.”

That was it. The image of trees, grass, tiles, and pebbles all showering me with dharma all the time filled my heart. And common people radiating it back for the sake of grass, trees, and walls fills me in a way I cannot describe

in words. Dogen’s poetry reaches far closer to the ineffable than I can. Everything is empty and everything is awake. Breathing in, breathing out.

I was a beginning student at the time, and later began to learn about dependent co-arising, how everything arises together, that there are no separate selves, no separate entities of any kind, that things arise together and in their interactions co-create one another. “Imperceptible mutual assistance” was my introduction to this fundamental teaching of the Buddha, and I bow to it.

This is not to say there is not sorrow or suffering in the world. Of course there is, and plenty of it. Poignancy is both beautiful and sad. Loved ones get sick. With Covid, it’s harder to connect with people. The world might seem disappointing right now. But for me, Buddha nature is stronger. Joy is stronger, as long as I don’t overlay my supposed worries, problems, and craziness on top of it. As I walk in my neighborhood, I touch the trees and thank them for the ways in which they support me, and for the ways in which they support one another.

In speaking about the *Bendowa*, I heard Roshi Egyoku say, “Dogen Zenji situates us in a generous universe.” Beautiful. I don’t know the causes and conditions which enable me to have faith in this generous universe, but I am grateful for them. I aspire to let go of everything within me which resists being in relationship with all of creation, with everything that is going on, and then to let go of it all. Whoosh!

The Sixth Ancestor, Hui-Neng, tells us, “You will attain liberation when you meet the good friend inside your own mind.” The phrase “imperceptible mutual assistance” has been the good friend I aspire to meet.

I personally don’t recommend studying or analyzing the “jijuyu zammai.” If you would like, please, just read it. Recite it out loud again and again. Memorize phrases that speak to you so that you know them by heart. That way you will always have them with you. May you enjoy them.

I am reminded of when Tianhuang said to Longtan, “When you greet me, I bow.”

Thank you very much for reading this.

Carol is a former ZCLA resident, currently living in Kansas City, MO.

Sangha is the Practice

by Mark Shogen Bloodgood



It is well worth investing in a Sangha. If you sow seeds in arid land, few seeds will sprout. But if you select a fertile field and invest your wonderful seeds in it, the harvest will be bountiful. Building a Sangha, supporting a Sangha, being with a Sangha, receiving the support and guidance of a Sangha is the practice. We have individual eyes and

Sangha eyes. When a Sangha shines its light on our personal views, we see more clearly. In the Sangha, we won't fall into negative habit patterns. Stick to your Sangha. Take refuge in the sangha, and you'll have the wisdom and support you need.
Thich Nhat Hahn

Most of us are quite familiar with this idea of Sangha. It is one of the Three Treasures, along with The Buddha and Dharma. We vow to take refuge in them.

Sangha (samgha), is a Sanskrit word commonly translated as "community" or "order." That literally means "that which is struck together well," suggesting something that is solid and not easily broken apart. In one sense it is the historical followers of the Buddha. In another, it can be considered as all Buddhist sanghas consisting of monks, nuns, and novices. In a wider sense the sangha also includes lay followers. Expanded even further sangha includes all sentient beings.

I have had the opportunity to bear witness to the birthing of a sangha, San Luis Obispo Zen Circle (SLOZC), and the maturing of a sangha (ZCLA). It's been a fascinating journey.

The idea for forming a zazen group in San Luis Obispo was originally suggested by Sensei Dokai Dickenson some twenty years ago as we sat together in the Sangha House at ZCLA. She said, "Why don't you start a sitting group?" "What? I'm too new in the practice," I replied. (I had not received Jukai at the time) She said, "Well, sit with it..." I did. The seed was planted.

Roshi Egyoku suggested I meet with Sensei Shingetsu Guzy to discuss how her Valley Sangha was operating. I'll never forget that meeting. Sensei was so encouraging and informative. She said I should consider it as a gift of the dharma for others.

We gathered some folks, mainly a few interested students from my yoga class and friends from the White Heron Sangha (WHS), a local non-denominational Buddhist group. We started meeting in an optometrist's office, sitting in the reception area. The kinhin path led down the hallway past the exam rooms and back through his eyeglass display area. When the back doors of the office were open you could hear the soothing sounds of San Luis Creek below. In those early days, it was two periods of zazen with kinhin in-between followed by discussion or a book study.



San Luis Obispo Zen Circle Jukai 2017

As the years passed, our group moved to different locations. Eventually we found our way to our current Thursday evening "home" at Crow's End. It is a secluded 6-acre property nestled in an oak canopy forest in the quiet hills of Squire Canyon. Perfect! Now we listen to crickets on warm summer evenings and croaking frogs after a rain.

Throughout these formative years I continued my own practice and studies with Roshi Egyoku spending most weekends at ZCLA. Eventually ordaining in 2012, I began adding more to our SLOZC Thursday evening program: Service, Evenings of Reflection, Practice Talks, Sutra copying, Atonement Ceremonies, and Zazenkais. Then annual services: Buddha's Birthday, the Parinirvana, Bodhi Day, and Year End ceremonies. A number of us made road trips for sesshins at ZCLA and Yokoji.

There was an interest by some members in receiving the Precepts. Classes were taught. My wife, Karla, volunteered to guide the rakusu sewing and in November of 2017 we had our first Jukai ceremony. Six members received the Precepts. That seed, planted so many years ago, blossomed. We were officially a Zen sangha!

(Continued from page 5)

SANGHA IS THE PRACTICE *(Continued from page 4)*

We added an early morning zazen offering on Tuesday mornings at an Aikido dojo. Then we secured another venue for Sunday mornings at the White Heron Sangha Meditation Center.

The week following the Covid-19 stay-at-home order we had all our SLOZC programs offered on Zoom. Using Zoom we actually expanded our offerings. Later, we invited ZCLA Sangha members to join us via Zoom on Sunday mornings. Eventually, we began meeting again in person, masked, and taking proper precautions, while continuing to offer Zoom participation. In November of 2021, in this hybrid environment, we had our first Hossen as Geoff Kanjō O'Quest finished his year as Head Trainee.

I must admit that, over the years, at times I got discouraged. Our SLO Sangha is so small. We haven't seen a lot of growth. My ego gets in the way, wishing for a larger sangha, wishing for a brick-and-mortar facility. I would get frustrated schlepping the Zendo and Buddha hall gear twice a week. I load and unload the gear at the "hermitage," where Karla and I live. Often much of the setup at Crows End or WHS is done alone or with just one or two others.

Dogen Zenji spoke to the inner attitude we should maintain in this process: "When we make a vow to found a temple (sangha or a monastery) we should not be motivated by human sentiment, but we should strengthen our aspiration for the continuous practice of Buddha Dharma."

In Living by Vow, Roshi Shohaku Okumura wrote, "We don't need lofty temple buildings for our practice. We don't need a formal zazen hall. When we vow to establish a dojo, monastery, or sangha, we should not forget this. The number of buildings or people is not essential. The critical points are practice and aspiration."

So I remember what Sensei Shingetsu told me all those years ago, that this was an offering of the dharma. Sensei Nagacitta Buckley (Uncle Nagy), one of my mentors in my prison work, always taught me to "just show up." That's what I do. And the tedious setting up and tearing down I now consider as part of my personal exercise program. On meeting days, I routinely get in over 10,000 steps! LOL.

Thay's words at the beginning of this article may sound, perhaps, a little "flowery" or idealistic. From our Day of Reflection chant sheet we recite: "I take refuge in the Sangha. I vow to embody Harmony, the interdependence of all creations." In our Atonement Ceremony we recite: "Being one with the sangha...Let harmony pervade everywhere."

So is there always harmony in the Sangha? No. And this was true even in Shakyamuni's day. There are two famous schisms in the time of the Buddha. Devadatta, Buddha's cousin, tried to take over the sangha proposing that the Buddha retire. He is also said to have made three abortive attempts to bring about the Buddha's death: by hiring assassins, by rolling a rock off a mountainside at him, and by arranging for a mad elephant to be let loose in the road at the time of the collection of alms.

In the Kosambi schism, the Buddha used a mediation of sorts, known as *adhikaranasamatha*, "covering over with grass," where there is agreement to leave past transgressions and begin anew. It didn't work and the Buddha abandoned the insurgents.

Over the years, the precepts, our ethical guidelines, were developed. Having many monks and nuns living together in community, through trial and error, they were established. The number of precepts vary by tradition. The basic Theravada tradition has five. Mahayana monks had 250. Mahayana nuns had 348.

The human condition lives on in our modern sanghas. We have the 16 Bodhisattva Precepts as crafted by Dogen Zenji to guide our ethical behavior. Sensei Daishin Bukshazen often spoke of living in community being like a rock tumbler- sharp edges knocking together being smoothed and polished. We have Atonement ceremonies, which date back to Buddha's time, to facilitate bringing ourselves back into alignment with the precepts. Nevertheless, we still witness intermittent scandals and conflicts. As a result, at ZCLA, under Roshi's guidance, we have our Sangha Sutra.

In the *Pali Upaddha Sutta*, it says: "Ven. Ananda said to the Blessed One, 'This is half of the holy life, lord: admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie.' The Blessed One responded: 'actually it's the whole of the holy life. When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, and comrades, he can be expected to develop and pursue the noble eightfold path.'"

I could not have done this practice on my own. I practice with the help of my teachers and my dharma brothers and sisters. It's difficult to have the self-discipline to practice on your own. And so much easier to practice with the support of others.

I have made enduring friendships; I have learned patience along the way.

Sensei Shogen is the guiding teacher at the San Luis Obispo Zen Circle.

DANA BOOKLET

January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021

Dear Sangha and Friends of ZCLA,

We are so grateful to all of you for your sincere practice and devoted service during this past year. The people whose names appear in this Dana Booklet have given of their time, energy, material goods and money.

We achieve nothing alone. We experience this when we deeply realize the interconnectedness of all of life. Each year, the Zen Center relies on our Dharma Training Fund and Annual Appeal to ensure that we can offer regular zazen, trainings,

programs, sesshins and zazenkais and maintain our buildings and grounds. This year, your generosity allowed the Zen Center to improve our virtual offerings. There are also sixty donors who have joined the Zen Center's Legacy Fund, donors who have remembered the Zen Center in the form of future bequests.

With deep gratitude,
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Temple Development Steward

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Medical Work & Zen Practice During Covid

Three ZCLA members in the medical field reflect on their experiences of pursuing their Zen Practice during this pandemic.

Jacqueline Drummond is a pediatric anesthesiologist. During the pandemic, she worked at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center, and then at Cedars Tarzana Medical Center.



It is hard to remember the details of the past 24 months, there are so many. To explain my experiences, I am using the analogy attributable to Carol Buchner, Maya Angelou, and others:

“They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” There were so many teachings from my unique experiences working in a hospital during a pandemic. Here are some reflections in no particular order or importance.

Where did I get refuge and the tools to embrace the unknown, isolation, and overwhelming sadness attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic? For the vastness of the practices at ZCLA, I cannot stop extending blessings to the person who assisted my discovery of ZCLA in June 2019, and to the generosity and creativity of members of the Center, in creating a ZCLA virtual sangha, since March 2020. The virtual Zen Center transformed my home into an extension of the Zendo and enabled me to navigate a challenging daily journey amidst physical isolation. Sitting in zazen, taking time to hold each other's practice and sufferings, extending the merits across the world, and the special dedications of our chants and services were important to me. The big paradox was that I was isolated yet felt more connected than ever. Truly there is no doubt in my heart that I made it through each day because I had the generous support of my Teachers and my Sangha – they kept the teachings alive. My practice became stronger than ever.

Having the experience of fear for my life at work. I love my profession which gives me the opportunity to assist in the restoration of the well-being of others, while maintaining the oath of Do No Harm. And yet, during the pandemic the question that stuck in my mind, was how to do it without harming myself. My very first patient with Covid that I had to treat in the operating room, evoked conflicting emotions. I could not hide underneath the armor of my personal protective equipment my fear of being in such close proximity to her, and the threat to my life that the virus imposed during our interaction. Without much time to reflect upon it, nor other options, I just went ahead and

worked professionally. After she recovered uneventfully, I was able to attend to my fears, and human instinct for survival to not get infected with Covid.

To be a direct recipient of the universal language of LOVE. During this pandemic, several members of my biological family faced and unmasked the suppressed visceral pain that has tainted our lives through the social structure of white supremacy. And the mystery of how this language of love was and continues to be behind the massive and diverse expressions and support towards Black Lives Matter.

Zen practice is the pillar to support my experiences. The process of opening to others and embracing no-self to become one with everything, has truly become my life aspiration. Through ZCLA, I witness the continuum of the practices dating back centuries. I have found my teacher, Roshi Ryodo Hawley. I am part of a Sangha and other supportive groups with a constant invitation to hold to my aspiration to be in the present moment, to experience it for myself, and for the benefit of all beings.

I will end with an adaptation of a prayer, taken from the book *My Grandfather's Blessings*, by Rachel Naomi Remen, MD: “I am Grateful for the Universal Wisdom that has kept me alive, sustains me, and continues to bring me to Wholeness in this lifetime.”

Ann Anmyoho Seide is a physician working in the Los Robles Hospital in Thousand Oaks as the Palliative Care Specialist.



It's difficult to say what aspects of my work have not been impacted by the pandemic.

There's the impact on my physical health: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) leads to skin rashes, panic attacks while fully gowned/masked/gloved, dehydration when working shifts in which I'm repeatedly gowning/de-gowning and have little time to drink.

The palliative care department has seen a huge increase in number of consults, and in addition to the usual

(Continued on page 9)

MEDICAL WORK *(Continued from page 8)*

strain of caring for dying people, there's now the added stress of families who cannot visit and need to yell at us and blame.

The nurse I work with has had to take leave periodically for mental health issues, and will likely retire early, which will mean the dissolution of the whole Palliative Care Department. The corporation behind our hospital had not been supportive of expanding the team before the pandemic, and their lack of support was reinforced during it.

Our office, even more so during the pandemic, has become the place where other physicians, nurses, and social workers come to cry and unload their frustrations.

The stress of working in the hospital has led me to begin an outpatient consultative practice, and over the next couple of years, I think I will transition out of inpatient care completely.

Morning zazen is essential on days I go into the hospital. Participating in council practice has been particularly helpful in being able to speak about what I'm dealing with in my daily work without getting subsumed by it. My zen practice has also been indispensable to my grieving the loss of my parents to violent deaths last March.

In addition to my practice as a physician, I continue to find meaning in work I do with my husband, Jared Oshin Seide, through the Center for Council, which includes facilitating Social Connection Councils, designing and implementing the POWER program for law enforcement, and looking forward to in-person council trainings this year in France, Ireland, and Portugal (Covid-willing!)

Roberta Myodo Brehm *is an orthopedic physical therapist currently working at the Harry Truman VA in Columbia, MO.*



At the beginning of the pandemic, I had just been accepted for a year of advanced orthopedic training in

residency at the VA. The only way I could afford to live on a resident's salary was with my parents, but it meant that I risked exposing them to whatever I brought home from work. I had to sit a long time with the decision to either give up my dream of residency and keep my family safe, or take the risk knowing that it was my parents' risk as well. They encouraged and supported me to continue, for which I will forever be grateful.

I did the best I could to mitigate the risks. I removed all of my outer work clothes before coming in and made sure that anything I took to work was cleaned and/or bagged before coming in, and I showered immediately. Any time I was exposed, I wore a mask even inside the house, and we developed an in-house isolation routine.

My co-workers faced this same choice. More than one of them has children. In fact, my clinical mentor decided to send her young son to live with his grandparents. Since he is immunocompromised, and both she and her husband work as physical therapists, the risk of exposing him was too great. I still remember the sadness in her eyes when she talked about the latest Zoom call with him.

The work environment was an adjustment for everyone. Many of the veterans had difficulty getting used to the masking and found that it was an emotional trigger. The general state of the world, too, meant that everyone's mental health issues were exacerbated.

Even when I made the decision to continue working, it wasn't a closed issue. Was it selfish of me to expose my family to risk in order to pursue my dreams for my career? Was it selfish of me to be in this career at all? Did I even have another choice? At the beginning, at least, there weren't very many work-from-home options for physical therapists. Even if I returned to my old job in private practice, I would have the same risks, and patient volume was currently so low that my salary wouldn't allow me to move out. I would have had to change careers entirely. Some people did make that choice.

It was my Zen practice that helped keep me grounded during this time. I realized that the risks I was worried about had always been there. I have previously treated patients with dangerous contagious diseases (like MRSA, VRE, and C-diff), and one change of clothes and shower later, I would still see my parents. There is no way to live without killing other living beings, and there is no way to completely avoid risk to myself and my family. It was my responsibility to manage the risks in the best possible way. Once that was done, I had to detach from the outcome.

First Bows

by Karina Myoki Beltran-Hernandez



Wearing the weight
Of the White Plum
Wondering—
“What am I ignoring?”
When,
Stepping lightly,
Working hard
Not to feel the pain,
I realize —The depth
Of my delusion

Zen practice found me at a crossroads. My second year in college, I was faced with a choice: stay three-thousand miles away from all that I was running from or return home and bear witness to my family’s pain? I chose to come home.

Luckily, one of the last courses I took was on Zen in America. When I boarded that final flight home, it was with a heavy heart and a heavy suitcase—cramped with every Zen book in my possession. Those books and the sitting instruction therein, became the cornerstone of my practice.

Over the years, I remember pulling up the ZCLA website, curious but afraid of what I might find here. What if it was too formal? What if I was practicing incorrectly?

What if it was exactly what I was looking for? What if? What if? What if?

I let fear keep me away, until I found myself at yet another fork in the road. Embittered by the outcome of my choice to return home, full of not-knowing, I asked myself one question: “What would be different if I hadn’t come back?” The answer came easily: “My practice.”

That weekend I attended my first Intro to Meditation class. As I walked through those gates, I was Fear. Before I could decide to turn around, from the bushes alongside the Sangha House, there emerged a wondrous gatekeeper. His joy put me at ease as he asked me how I’d heard of ZCLA, and his sass, as he directed incoming cars, made it easy for me to answer honestly. When I told him it had taken me ten years to get here, his reply was, “Well, what took you so long?”

Since that fateful Sunday morning, I’ve been fortunate enough to deepen my practice through Tenzo service, Zoom-hosting Intro to Meditation classes, studying sutras with my peers, and now by serving as ZCLA’s Program Steward. I look forward to offering my practice in service to the Sangha and upholding the Four Vows, zafu to zafu, with you all.

Myoki is the new ZCLA Program Steward.

The Corner of Disorder



Open
or Not
Open?

*Who is it that
comes and goes?* 🐱

When One of Us

by Patti Muso Giggans

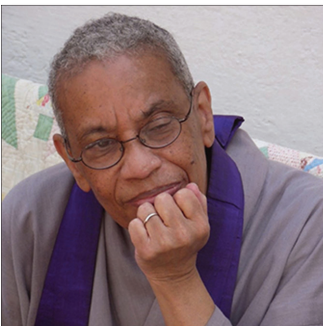


When one of us departs
Into the great unknown
This news stops us in our tracks
Our daily routine like driving in
traffic, drinking our coffee, texting our
ETA
Is disrupted with the urgency of breaking
news at Eleven
The shock of it explodes the
moment wide open

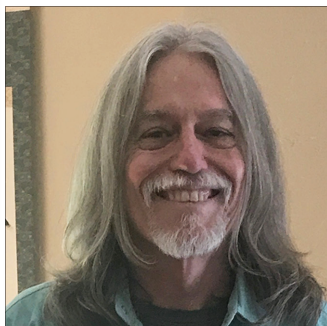
Pop, pop, pop, pop,
Bubbles of aches explode in the heart

When one of us disappears
Into beyond the beyond,
Minutia of memory burst and catch in the throat
Although I haven't seen you in a while,
The last time I saw you is now the last time I will ever see you
When one of us travels to that place of the beginning-less
beginning, unexpectedly.
And it's always unexpected, isn't it?
Even though there is nothing more promised than death
We are never ready for it, are we?
For his, for hers, for theirs, for yours, for ours, for mine
We didn't know that our last hello was our last goodbye

When one or another of us exits the world as we know it
Entering into endless time
The world as we know it, is altered
We may not be ready to say goodbye to the voyager
But we must get ready to carry this awww in the heart
Perhaps the solace is that life is the cocoon and death is the
butterfly



Roshi Merle Kodo Boyd



Jim Dojun Hanson

Muso is the ZCLA Board President and Executive Director of Peace Over Violence.

Pandemic Special Thanks

Throughout the pandemic, there has been a core group of residents who have kept the sitting and service schedule going. They are the zendo steward, jikidos, zoom hosts, service officiants and those in service positions, the jishins, and those who have maintained altars and readied the spaces for sitting and service. Another area of responsibility is the electronic face of the Zen Center, in both running the staff offices and facilitating the conversion to virtual offerings. Residents have also helped to maintain the buildings, gardens and other grounds through volunteer cleaning, gardening, and other on-site maintenance jobs, planned and unplanned. Residents have also served to inspire each other through their work and through special projects, notably the Medicine Buddha mural.

We would like to especially acknowledge: **Geri Meiho Bryan, Gemma Soji Cubero del Barrio, Rev. Jitsujo Gauthier, Sacha Joshin Greenfield, Dharma-Holder George Mukei Horner, Preceptor Lorraine Gessho Kumpf, David Randall, Reeb Kaizen Venners, Tim Taikan Zamora, and non-resident Rev. Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert.**

Your Gifts are Received with a Heartfelt "Thank You!"

To our Day of Reflection leaders: **Sarah McCarron, Sandra Seiju Goodenough, and Peggy Faith-Moon Gallaher;**

To **Sensei Darla Myoho Fjeld** for leading the Sangha Forum and being Preceptor for the March 27 Jukai;

To **Rev. Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert** for organizing our Annual visit to Evergreen Cemetery and to all those who participated in the services;

To all of our Intro to Zen Meditation instructors and Zoom hosts: **Sandy Seiju Goodenough, Dharma-Holder George Mukei Horner, Frank Genku Martinez, Dylan Banto Neal, Chris Genzan Hackman, Peter Ryugen Sample, Diane True-Joy Fazio, Geri Meiho Bryan and Co-Stewards: Chris Daian Fields and Jessica Oetsu Page;**

To **Sensei Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen** for her Wednesday night Member's In-Person Open Zazen;

(Continued on page 12)

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 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 Maezumi Roshi
 Abbot 1995-1999: Roshi Bernard Glassman
 Abbot Emeritus 1999-2019: Roshi Ekyoku Nakao
 The Seats: Abbot, Sensei Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen;
 Head Priest/ Resident Teacher, Roshi Ekyoku Nakao*

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Sangha Rites of Passage

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 Marcia Rorty-Greenfield
 Nicholas Daisuke Saito
 Rebecca Waldorf
 Robert and Ellen Jagosz*

New Resident

Mike Radice

Jukai

*Hugh Jiken King
 March 20, 2022
 Stephen Yujin Carignan
 March 27, 2022*

Dharma Holder

*Lorraine Gessho Kumpf
 April 2, 2022*

In Memorium

*Roshi Merle Kodo Plum-Dragon Boyd
 December 23, 1944 - February 20, 2022
 Jim Dojun Hansen
 July 14, 1957 - February 20, 2022
 Martha Ekyo Maezumi
 July 11, 1947 - April 10, 2022*

A Heartfelt “Thank You!”

(Continued from page 11)

To **Sensei Katherine Senshin Griffith** for the Public-Face-To-Face;

To **Sensei Faith-Mind, Sensei Senshin, Program Steward Karina Myoki Beltran, Tom Yudo Burger, Preceptor Gessho, and Brian Sotetsu Huff** for organizing the Samu Saturday Fushinzamu and to ALL the people who came to help dust, vacuum, wash windows, pull weeds, sweep, rake, clean blinds, and much, much more! A HUGE thank you to all!!;

To **Rev. Dharma-Joy** for leading the March Chant Circle for Ukraine, and being Preceptor for the March 20 Jukai;

To **Dharma-Holder Mukei** for leading the Beginner's Mind Sesshin;

To **Rev. Jonathan Keigen Levy** for leading the Great Matter of Life and Death classes;

To **Rev. Jitsujo Gauthier** for leading the Parinirvana Zazenkai;

To **Sensei Myoho, Preceptor Lorraine Gessho Kumpf, Rev. Dharma-Joy, and Rev. Kaigen** for their Dharma talks.