



Water Wheel

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

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

May You Live With A Great Vow

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



The ending of a calendar year and the beginning of another is a good time for self-reflection. Ask yourself checking questions and respond with straightforward honesty: How have I been living, in the words of Mary Oliver, my one precious life? In what ways did I grow and mature? In what ways did I fall short in the past year? Are there amends that I

need to make? What gratitude do I need to express and how? What are the areas that I need to focus on in the coming year?

Personal reflection is a life-affirming skill that we can all learn. I often assumed that self-reflection came naturally to people, but over the years, I have come to see that it is a skill that we learn and hone over a lifetime. Healthy self-reflection is especially challenging for those with an overactive critical voice. However, through consistent zazen, we can accept the critical voice as just one among the many voices that live within us. When this happens, we are more capable of productive and life-affirming self-reflection. We are able to ask constructive questions and allow ourselves to be guided by them.

In addition to my own self-reflection, I often reflect on the state of Zen Center. In 2017, the Zen Center marked its 50th anniversary year. Due to your great effort and skill in working together, we executed a marvelous celebration. The success of the event itself is acknowledgment and appreciation enough, with each of you reaping the benefits of your offerings, both seen and unseen. Hosting two hundred people, we created a palpable energy field so that the White Plum teachers could come home to reconnect, to be inspired by a greater vision of Dharma, and to be encouraged to reach beyond what each person feels she or he is capable of. The White Plum dharma family is strong and resilient, creative and gifted, and demonstrates unshakeable commitment to its deep-rooted vows to accomplish the Buddha Way.



Sujata offering a bowl of milk to the starving Siddharta before his enlightenment. Zen Center's Tree of Vows Mural.

For me personally, the sense of obligation to ZCLA that I have carried for the past two decades has lifted. What does this mean? It means that the work of re-establishing ZCLA, which I took on twenty years ago, largely as

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LIVE WITH A GREAT VOW (*Continued from page 1*)

an obligation to my root teacher Maezumi Roshi and my transmission teacher Roshi Bernie, has been accomplished. The Zen Center is now poised to go forward into the next fifty years. Owing to the collaborative hard work of many people, the Zen Center's foundational fabric is strong. During the past twenty years, we have woven consciously the many threads of the Zen Center—including its light and shadows, its vertical and horizontal dimensions, and its feminine and masculine energies—into a resilient fabric with a newly emerging story and patterns. Stitch by stitch, we are sewing the robe of buddhas, which is the robe of liberation and service.

The robe of liberation gives us a new orientation to living, both individually and as a Zen community. It orients us to the whole and to a great vow. What is this whole? When we sew the buddha's robe, we gather fabric from the street, from those we know, and from those we don't know, and stitch the pieces together. So, for example, if you have included a piece of fabric from your mother, the robe includes all mothers throughout space and time. If you included fabric found on the street, it includes all homeless people throughout space and time, and so on. The robe is your robe of liberation. By wearing it, your very body transforms into a buddha body—you, yourself, become a vessel for awakening others. Imagine yourself with your arms spreading outward and sheltering all beings under your robe. Imagine yourself being sheltered by everyone else's robe. Imagine yourself being sheltered by the awakened ones.

The robe of liberation also orients us to a great vow. The decision to take refuge in the Three Treasures is left up to each individual. However, if you ask me about taking refuge these days, I will say, "Yes, take refuge. Make a clear and firm commitment to a life that is far larger than your own self-preoccupations." The buddhas and ancestors raised a great vow. How big is your vow? What is the big picture that you yourself are orienting your life towards? I have noticed that too often, people try to fit a great vow into their small view of their lives. Great vows do not work that way—rather, a great vow expands you, stretches you, calls you forth in ways you cannot think possible. This does not mean that you neglect yourself in unhealthy ways, but rather that you recognize when the vision you have for your life is too constrictive. How do you tell a story of your own life that expands it?

We have also been creating a new story for the Zen Center. The threads of shadows (aspects of our life that are uncomfortable and we instinctively avoid), relationships, and the feminine are becoming part of how we train. When I reflect on these aspects, the limiting way

Buddhism has been filtered through the male monastic lens is what I ponder. What would practice look like if the voices of women had not been written out of the Buddha's life story? How do we integrate the grieving father and stepmother that he left behind, the bereft wife and child that he abandoned in the middle of the night, and the voices of the many women who supported his ministry? How does Zen training change when the feminine is skillfully integrated?

These days, Southern California is being consumed by wildfires. As we grieve for the loss of life, we are bearing witness to the purifying nature of fire. What is being burned away? There is the obvious loss of property, of natural habitats, of wise old trees, and dynamic ecosystems. As you reflect, ask yourself, "What am I burning away?" What about burning away the old debilitating paradigms of patriarchy—of power over, of male entitlement, of white privilege, of domination and control? Can the burning be conscious, with intention, wisdom, and caring for the whole of our lives together? Can self-limiting views burn away?

*"The robe of liberation...orients us
to the whole and to a great vow."*

Your capacity for personal reflection is not unrelated to how we might reflect together on the Zen Center's story for the next fifty years. Just as you are reaching for a story that expands your vision of your own life, can we together tell a story for the Zen Center that expands it beyond what we think is possible?

How do we do this? We will ask questions—good liberating Zen questions. I say, "Follow the questions!" Questions keep the field open—questions do not allow us to fall into what we know, but urge us to not-know. It keeps us from falling into habitual complacency, calling forth curiosity and daring. Recently, someone asked such a question during a discussion. While weaving the Cradle of the Bodhisattva (the wall of reeds behind the garden Kanzeon), this person felt the presence of a powerful feminine energy. This energy was new to him. Not knowing what to do, he asked a simple and honest question, "Who am I in relation to it?"

So, as we turn the calendar page and emerge into the new year with a renewed sense of possibility, let us wear the robe of liberation. Let us fearlessly bear witness to all aspects of life by asking liberating questions. May we live a great vow together in 2018!

Roshi Egyoku is the Abbot of ZCLA.

Grief: Contractions and Expansions

by Joanne Cacciatore



Grief is a process of expansion and contraction that takes place over and over again.

Within this model, contraction is not wrong or bad; contraction need not be halted or controlled. Contraction is necessary for expansion—and thus, contraction is itself part of expansion.

A contraction of grief occurs when our attention and energy are pulled inward, our surroundings made smaller, perhaps because in this particular moment, we feel overwhelmed. Feeling overwhelmed, we contract and tighten emotionally; we conserve our energy and attention, focusing intently on grief—and on self. In a moment of contraction, it feels as if our very survival may be in question. We may feel unsteady, unsafe, unheld; we may feel tenuous, desperate, fearful, and vulnerable. In such moments, we may curl up and hold our breath. In such moments, we feel the call to self-protect. We sense, on some level, that contraction will save us.

Expansion may come with the deep in-and-out breath, in a period of small, even minuscule, growth post-contraction. Allowing contraction to just be, in time we see it naturally ebbs, the tightness loosens, we grow larger, and we become more willing to venture out and explore, to take risks, to open and unfold. And we find ourselves in a moment of trust, safety, curiosity, willingness, connectedness, belonging—and maybe even hope. In previous moments, the contraction saved us; in this moment the expansion will save us.

In this model, expansion, too, is not wrong or bad (or good and right!); expansion, too, need not be halted or controlled. The expansion, too, is necessary for the next contraction—and thus, expansion is itself part of contraction.

Roland's wife Susan and only son, an infant, were killed in an automobile accident only four months before we met. Roland, a shy and understated engineer in his forties who married late in life, was understandably devastated. He rarely made eye contact in our first few meetings. Most often, his head hung down, and as he spoke, his words were mumbled, barely intelligible.

Then, around the six-month mark, Roland came in feeling lighter. A few days earlier, he'd reconnected with some old friends. They'd asked to see pictures of his baby, Jackson. Everyone could see how much he had looked like Roland. He described feeling both heartbroken and heart-warmed as others talked to him about his son. That night, Roland went home and put his wedding pictures

back on the walls of the bedroom he had shared with Susan. He watched Jackson's birth video.

This session was the first time he maintained eye contact with me in the many hours we'd spent together.

"I think I might make it," Roland said, with a tinge of hope.

Six months later, near the one-year anniversary of Susan and Jackson's death, Roland and I met in my office.

Roland's face, drawn

and sullen, expressed what his words could not. "I don't know how to live anymore," he said, speaking the truth of that moment. "My whole life is gone. I've lost it all. Why should I be here?"

I asked Roland what it felt like to not want to be here. "Everything has lost its meaning. Everything in my world lost its color. Nothing tastes good. A few months ago, I thought maybe I was making progress. Now, I'm in a hole, a tiny little hole, a closet. I feel just the way I did in the first few months. I just want to run away."



Photo by Josh Adamski

(Continued on page 4)

WHY GRIEF IS A SERIES OF... *(Continued from page 3)*

We talked for more than an hour about running away and about that tiny, contracted closet of pain. I asked if he could stay with it until it changed.

“What if it doesn’t change?” he said, sounding almost panicked.

“It will,” I said. “Everything does.”

Roland began to make peace with uncertainty in that meeting. Then, after a few weeks, he began to notice that he felt lighter again, and that the door of that tiny, contracted closet of pain was cracking open.

We worked together for almost three years, and Roland started to be able to see his grief as a series of contractions and expansions. One day, late in our relationship, he shared an epiphany: during a contraction (to which he had now learned to surrender) he only felt safe when he knew that he could talk about what he felt with a safe person. If he didn’t feel well-supported through the contraction, if he didn’t know someone was on the other side of that closet door, near even though apart, he felt easily overwhelmed by his grief and couldn’t tolerate being with it.

About a year after our last meeting, Roland emailed me during a contraction. Just knowing he could reach out to me helped him feel safe. This contraction, he said, was prompted by an emerging romantic interest in a coworker. As a result of those feelings, he’d sunk into a place of questioning, feeling like he was betraying Susan and Jackson.

Roland came to see me a few times during this period. We would stay with his feelings for a few weeks, watching them intensify and then wane. Eventually, he started to notice a more lasting shift.

Two years later, he married his coworker, a woman named Nancy, in a ceremony that would also venerate Susan and Jackson. Nancy and Roland placed a photo of Susan and Jackson on the altar and held a moment of silence for them at the end of the wedding ceremony.

Roland told me that Nancy’s willingness to honor his deceased wife and son expanded their intimacy and connection.

During contractions, it is essential to have others who can stand by us so that when we arrive at the pinnacle of suffering, we can turn and look into the eyes of another’s compassion and hold through to the other side. During expansion, it is essential to honor contraction, too, to remember contraction and, recall that we have endured many contractions—and will endure yet more.



Joanne reading to the Sangha from her latest book.

We may fear that we will experience contraction only—that a period of contraction will be permanent, leaving us paralyzed with pain for the duration of our lives, fearful of love and life, and terrified of more pain, in a kind of living death. We may long for expansion only—a futile endeavor, a phantom, a ruse. Trying to live in expansion only is a state of self-delusion and inauthenticity that will ultimately leave us dissatisfied with our identity, soulless, worn out from persistent pretense.

The natural course of grief, as in the rest of nature, is contraction-expansion-contraction-expansion-contraction-expansion—perhaps endlessly.

Our emotions move within us, through us, and between us.

Disintegration comes first. Reintegration follows.

A contraction allows an expansion.

This is the wisdom of the universe, the wisdom of your body, the wisdom of your heart.

Excerpted from Bearing the Unbearable: Love, Loss, and the Heartbreaking Path of Grief by Joanne Cacciatores. Reprinted by arrangement with Wisdom Publications, Inc., www.wisdompubs.org.

Joanne Cacciatores is a Zen priest, a professor and researcher at Arizona State University, and founder of the MISS Foundation, an organization that has been helping grieving families since 1996.

2017 Fall Practice Period Commitments

We acknowledge the more than 104 Sangha members who participated from Zen Center of Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo Sangha, Westchester Zen Circle, and California Men's Colony.

Allen Mulch
Barbara Hambly
Bee Colman
Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown
Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran
Bill Ware
Bob Doetsu Ross
Burt Wetanson
Carol Flowing Mountain Schmitt
Charles Duran
Chris Daian Fields
Chris Hackman
Christina Choren Carvalho
Clé Van Buerden
Corey Ryujin McIntyre
Daniel Wilner
Darla Myoho Fjeld
Dave Goodsmith
Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen
DeWayne Gojitsu Snodgrass
Diane True-Joy Fazio
Diane Enju Katz
Dylan Neal
Eberhard Fetz
Eleanor Joen Heaphy
Elizabeth Jiei Cole
Ellen Reigen Ledley
Emilie Rosanvallon
Frank Genku Martinez
Gary Koshin West
Geoff Kanjo O'Quest
George Mukei Horner
Geri Meiho Bryan
Glenn Gikai Davis
Gregory Gonzales
Hannah Seishin Sowd
Harry Hoetsu Heck
Harlan Pace
Heather Faith-Spring Chapman
Hilda Bolden
Jake Busshin Duarte
Jane Radiant-Joy Chen
Jeanne Dokai Dickenson
Jenny Bright
Jessica Oetsu Page

J. Gary Davidson
Jim Dōjun Hanson
Jim Quam
Joe Johnston
Joel Mitsujo Latimer
John Heart-Mirror Trotter
John Kyogen Rosania
Jonathan Kaigen Levy
Julie Getsuan Suhr
Kane Buzen Phelps
Karen Radiant-Joy Brodie
Katherine Senshin Griffith
Kathy Myoan Solomon
Kipp Ryodo Hawley
Kriss Light
Laos Joko Chuman
Lee Kuzan Nedler
Lorraine Gessho Kumpf
Marc Dogen Fontaine
Mark Shogen Bloodgood
Mak Muan King
Marley Klaus-Dowling
Martin Nakell
Mary Rios
Michael Jinsen Davis
Michael Jishin Fritzen
Michael Tevlin
Nan Reishin Merritt
Nem Etsugen Bajra
Nick Larson
Patricia Keian Pfof
Patricia Suigen Way
Patti Muso Giggans
Peggy Faith-Moon Gallaher
Penelope Luminous-Heart Thompson
Peter Ryugen Sample
Reeb Kaizen Venners
Reverend Fa-Yin
Richard Taishin Schulhof
Roland Palmer
Roger Haferkamp
Rosa Ando Martinez
Russ Rinkai Rayburn
Sandy Seiju Goodenough
Sarah McCarron

Seishin
Steve Sumii
Steven Totland
Susan Yushin Tipton
Tim Ryokan Vreeland
Tim Taikan Zamora
Tina Jitsujo Gauthier
Tom Yudo Burger
Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert
Ty Jotai Webb
Wendy Egyoku Nakao
Yuesen Yuen
Z Zeller



Buddha's Birthday altar.



The Day of Dead at ZCLA

by Rosa Ando Martinez



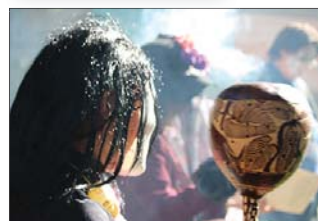
In pre-Columbian times, the Mayans and other indigenous cultures honored the cycle of life and death with great public festivities and parades. It was believed that the dead would be insulted by mourning and sadness. On chosen days of these celebrations, Día de Los Muertos, it was believed that the spirits of the beloved deceased, both adults and children, would visit the family home to bless the living and bring the community good fortune for the coming year.

Communal and family festivities included stories that commemorated the lives of the deceased. This was an occasion to teach young children reverence for their ancestors and their family roots and to understand death as the natural course of life.

Elaborate home altars were constructed and decorated with flowers. Copal incense was burned to honor the ancestors. Food and drink were offered on the altar to nourish the spirits after their long journey to earth and to lighten their return to the spirit world.

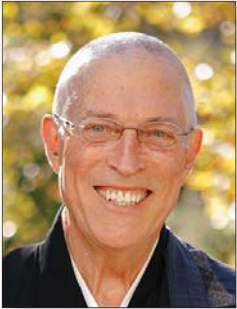
In Mexico and Latin America, the Day of the Dead customs have been passed down from generation to generation as a mixture of indigenous belief and Spanish religious influence. Celebrated annually on the first and second days of November, Day of the Dead remembrances have become part of modern day popular culture. During this time, ceremonial altars pop up throughout the city in parks, public buildings, schools, museums, and, of course, cemeteries. Skeletons and skulls can be found in major department stores and community markets alongside other traditional decorations.

Much like the indigenous altars, modern day altars feature favorite foods and beverages of the deceased as well as personal possessions such as toys, musical instruments, and clothing items. In the center of the altars are placed photographs of the beloved. Incense and candles are burned to communicate with the spirits. Traditional marigold flowers are placed on and around the altar to guide the spirits to the spot. Paper skeletons, tissue paper cutouts, toys, and pan de muertos (sweet rolls) are favorite decorations. Sugar Skulls are among the most popular offerings. A typical Day of the Dead custom is for Mexican families to gather at gravesites for picnics and festivities as the living celebrate life and welcome back to this world the souls of the ancestors.



From a Sitting Group to a Sangha

by Mark Shogen Bloodgood



Sitting in the Sangha house at ZCLA after the morning program, over 16 years ago, Dokai planted the seed: "Have you thought about eventually starting a sitting group in San Luis Obispo?" "What?" I said. "I'm too new in the practice to think about that!"

One thing led to another. Roshi suggested I meet with

Sensei Shingetsu to discuss how the Valley Sangha, which she founded, had grown itself. An unforgettable meeting. Sensei, encouraging and informative, suggested that I consider this a gift of the Dharma extended to others. Later, a fellow yoga student Lon Schwartz and I were talking about the possibilities for a local Zen meditation group. He offered the use of his optometry office.

This precious seed was germinating. Dokai donated zafus that arrived in a large black duffle bag still used to this day, referred to as "the body bag." Borrowing zabutons along the way and a few of my own, we opened our doors: the San Luis Obispo Zazen Group. Folks started to come, a few yoga students and friends from the White Heron Sangha (WHS), a local Buddhist group. Dokai joined us for our first meeting and offered a short talk. In those early days, we sat in the reception area of Lon's optometry office. The kinhin path led down the hallway, past the exam rooms, and back through his eyeglass display area. Two periods of zazen with kinhin in-between followed by discussion or a book study for an hour or so.

Lon eventually closed his business and joined a group of Thai monks near San Diego. Our next venue was in the studio of my yoga teacher Peter Sterios. Time passed and we found ourselves in the yoga dome of the Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort in Avila Beach where we became an "offering" of the resort: Learn to Meditate. It was humorous at times. Resort guests would come in for half

an hour of instruction in zazen and the protocol for our zendo. They sat with us for an hour. Many left after the first sitting period.

The resort program director managed to have our schedule "adjusted." Instruction was reduced to 15 minutes, more time for her own programs. How unfair, I thought at the time, to unsuspecting guests. Again, we set out searching for a space. One of our sitters, Sylvia Alcor, also a member of the local WHS, mentioned that a fellow WHS sangha member, Mary Renard, had a private retreat center with a meditation room, Crow's End. With

Mary's acceptance, we had found our current location. It is a secluded six-acre property under an oak canopy in the hills in San Luis Obispo County. Now we listen to crickets on warm summer evenings; croaking frogs after a rain. Once, Russ Rinkai Rayburn found a baby rattlesnake in the bathroom. And Geoff Kanjō O'Quest found a much larger rattlesnake coiled by his car. The wild surprises of country sitting.



Photos by Joe Johnston

For years we continued our original format. Later, we added a short service, chanting either the Heart Sutra or Maka Hannya, followed by a dedication. Our program has grown to include evenings of reflection, practice talks, sutra copying, Zazenkais, as well as: Buddha's Birthday, the Parinirvana, Bodhi Day, and Year End ceremonies. Recently we offered our first atonement ceremony.

This past year, some of the students began to take an interest in studying and receiving the Precepts. We now offer Precept and Jukai. My wife, Karla, volunteered to guide the rakusu sewing. In November, our first Jukai ceremony took place. Six members received the Precepts.

That seed, planted so many years ago, is opening its petals. A sangha has been birthed!

Shogen is the leader of the San Luis Obispo Sangha.

Giver, Receiver, and Gift

by Darla Myoho Fjeld, Development Steward

This has been a fascinating and tumultuous year in our country and our world. At this time last year, many of you came to the End-of-Year retreat and New Year services feeling uncertainty about what the future would hold and vowing to do what you could to ensure a world free of suffering – one where the balance tips toward compassion rather than the poisons of greed, hatred, lust, envy, and delusion. In practicing together this year, we have been learning how to live and act in a world of uncertainty, injustice, and loss. At times like these, it is more important than ever to maintain a peaceful dwelling within ourselves and in the world.

To this end, each year at this time, the Zen Center calls upon our members and friends to give generously to the Annual Fund – our largest fundraiser of the year. Successfully reaching our goal of \$70,000 allows us to pay for the expenses associated with the many offerings of the Zen Center with the goal of creating a more compassionate world. The support that we receive from the Annual Fund

helps to maintain our buildings and grounds, pay for the food we eat, and pay for our hardworking staff and Abbot.

We began our 90-day Practice Period on October 1st with 100 participants. Our theme is forgiveness. This is our pathway toward ending suffering for others and ourselves. During our Practice Period, we committed to increase our zazen, go to face-to-face meetings with our teachers, and participate in a zazenkai and/or sesshin. We committed to practice with the Three Tenets. Many of us also committed to give to the Annual Fund. We ground ourselves in these practices of peaceful dwelling and offer peace to the world.

In her Annual Fund Appeal Letter, Roshi Egyoku wrote: “The Zen Center continues to be a place of refuge for everyone to return to silence – that boundless place from which we may bring wisdom and love into the world.” If you have already sent in a gift, it is most appreciated. If you haven’t already done so, please send in your generous gift today -- last year, gifts ranged from \$5 to \$22,000.

A Message from the Board

by Patti Muso Giggans, Board President

“In the resource of All-Enriching Wisdom, the board of directors oversees all legal and fiduciary matters. We actively support the Mandala, Mission and Vision, Core Values and Practices of the Zen Center of Los Angeles/ Great Dragon Mountain Buddha Essence Temple. We maintain a place for practice rooted in our Bodhisattva Lineage, and nurture the widest possible view.” This is the purpose of the ZCLA board of directors.

It’s a big task approached by a membership of nine members who take their responsibilities seriously and bring much wisdom to our deliberations. We approach our efforts as a practice. I am sure sometimes our sangha wonders what actually does the ZCLA Board do. Let me give you some insight into our process and how we practice together.

We meet on a bi-monthly basis as a full body but also meet in circles and committees. The Board is made up of the Abbot, Vice Abbot, Temple Director, residents, and other Ad Hoc sangha members. Everyone shows up as Zen practitioners and with their other life experiences and professions. We always start our meetings by sitting in silence for five minutes, begin with a reflective teaching brought by one of us, and end with the Four Vows. We practice council together and are part of ZCLA’s shared

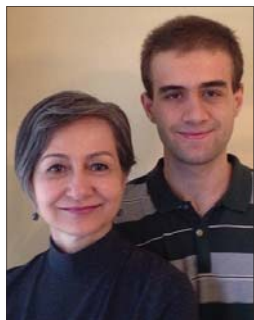
stewardship model. We meet annually at an all-day with the Collective Awakening and Wisdom group to vision together and work on strategic planning.

One of the main functions of the Board is to make sure that we have the resources which translate into the annual budget and sustainability of Zen Center. We appreciate the financial support that our members and supporters continually and faithfully provide. Zen Center would not flourish without the generous support of all that comes to us in many forms, not only financially. The board is extremely grateful for the varied and many forms of generosity and contributions that are offered by our sangha.

This year a main focus has been on the safety of our buildings of which several are over 100 years old. The City of Los Angeles is requiring an upgrade in earthquake safety which pushed and inspired us to look at the safety of all the buildings. The buildings and grounds protect the Dharma so our mission is very clear and we are taking steps to not only comply with all regulatory safety requirements but also because it is not only our duty but our vow to protect the dharma and the sangha. You will be hearing more about these projects in the coming new year. If any sangha member is interested in visiting a board meeting, please know that you have an open invitation to come and witness our proceedings.

Road to ZCLA

by Christina Chören Carvalho



Chören with her son Lukas

“Did we forget the toddler at home?” my mother would say during our family outings. Although I had no problem being social and as cheerfully noisy as any child, I also loved my silence and often wondered why I had a comfortable life while other children were beggars on the streets.

Come adolescence and its array of betrayals followed by self-destructive impulses, Sartre and Nietzsche became constant companions, but with Hesse’s Siddhartha, I realized there was a name for my calling and a possible, if forbiddingly remote, path to follow.

I don’t remember a time when great silence and big questions weren’t my most intimate friends. And after I realized there were people who devoted their lives to awakening for the benefit of others, there was never a time when I didn’t think I would be ordained. I just postponed it. Friends would invariably interject, “But isn’t it a kind of escape (from so-called real life)?” No matter what I answered, it was clear to me that NOT ordaining was an escape.

I allowed myself quite a long leash, getting overly involved with career and relationships. But even at times when the sense of “I have arrived” was vivid enough, a deeper voice would stir and question my true north. One of these plateaus happened when I was working as a graphic artist at Apple, having a grand time in the heart of Silicon Valley. Still I had to follow my calling and go to Dharamsala, India, where I spent four years studying Buddhist philosophy and thangka painting.

For a number of years, my spiritual path had a pendular movement between Tibetan Buddhism and Zen, informed by feminist writers like Adrienne Rich and Mary Daly. My ordination in one tradition or another was always in the back of my mind.

But the great gift of motherhood was still in store for me, and I embraced it with gratitude. When the Metta Sutta says: “Even as a mother at the risk of her life watches

over and protects her only child, so with a boundless mind should one cherish all living things...” I know this is an impossible aspiration to which I need to aspire anyway, trusting that the very Path will take me along.

When I finally came to ZCLA in 2013, it had become clear that Zen was the truer path for me. I had already received Jukai and the name “Eirin” (Wisdom Forest) from Coen Roshi. Here I got a taste for the work with koans and it was like a whole new universe had been unveiled before me. I felt, and feel, extremely fortunate to have been accepted as Roshi Egyoku’s student. Now that my wonderful son, Lukas “Tenzin” (meaning Dharma Holder – homage to H.H. the Dalai Lama) is off to college, I have more time and can move to wherever I may be most useful.

For over a year now, I have held a Zen study group that is starting to sit zazen together. It is a small and joyous group of people who were very supportive of my spending time here and being ordained. Now in my Tokudo, I received the name Chören which means “clear or limpid lotus.”

Meanwhile, I am also working as a sort of liaison in finding possible projects in Brazil for a partnership with the Buddhist Global Relief organization. To me, it is paramount that formal practice be complemented by

concrete bodhisattva activity. Besides my supporting the connection between BGR and Brazilian projects, I intend to get personally involved with one of the latter as soon as I get back home.

Now I have been privileged enough to be one of the recipients of the Kobori Roshi Transportation Fund. That will allow me to fulfill Roshi Egyoku’s plan for me – that I come to ZCLA once a year for the next five years for proper priest training.

May her concerted efforts and the generous support I am receiving from the whole sangha bear abundant fruit for the benefit of many.



Chören with her Zen study group in Brazil.

Chören is a student of Roshi Egyoku. She lives in Brazil.

2017: At-a-Glance



Bernie Roshi shares ZCLA photos with his wife Eve Marko.



A head shaving ceremony prepared Choren for her Tokudo.



Shogen gave Jukai to six of his Baby Buddhas. His wife Karla (on Shogen's left) taught them how to sew their rakus.



LA's City Hall looms over the Women's March.



At the fabulous finale of the 50th Celebration, Roshi enjoyed a treat from the neighborhood ice cream truck catered for the event.

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

The Zen Center is maintained by the hands and eyes of each one of you.

To the **Fushinzamu Bodhisattvas** who helped clean the kitchen;

To **Roshi Egyoku** for leading the Forgiveness classes;

To **Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen** for leading the Precepts Class Series;

To **Darla Myoho Fjeld** for leading the CAAW 2 meeting;

To the **Brown Green Circle** for showing us the movie “Years of Living Dangerously”;

To **Geri Meiho Bryan** for leading October’s Day of Reflection and Precept Council;

To **Roshi Egyoku** for leading the Autumn Wind Sesshin and Rohatsu Sesshin;

To our guest speakers: **Shozan Jack Haubner** and **Joanne Cacciatore**;

To **Myoho** for leading the Development Circle meetings;

To **Rosa Ando Martinez**, **Diane Enju Katz**, and **George Mukei Horner** for leading the Altars & Flowers Workshop;

To all those who helped with the set up the Day of Dead/Obon celebration;

To **Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert** for leading the November Zazenkai;

To **Christine Choren Carvalho** for leading the November Day of Reflection and Precept Council;

To **Conrad Butsugen Romo** for leading December’s Day of Reflection and Precept Council;

To **Roshi Egyoku** for being the Tokudo Preceptor for Christina Choren Carvalho;

To **Faith-Mind** for leading the Year-End Seeshin;

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Thank you Faith-Mind for the fabric dyeing class.



Taking care of the Buildings and Grounds.



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To our Day of Reflection Tea-Snack Tenzos: **Doetsu**, **Meiho**, **Katherine Senshin Griffith**, and **Jiei**;

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To our Fall Practice Day and Core Practices instructors: **Dharma-Joy**, **Mukei**, **Shogen**, **Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown**, **Gessho**, and **Tina Jitsujo Gauthier**;

To our Fall Day Managers: **Ando**, **Kaizen**, **Myoho**, **Shogen**, **Jitsujo**, **Kaigen**, and **Dharma-Joy**;

To our Fall Introduction to Zen Meditation instructors: **Oetsu**, **Enju**, **Ando**, **Genku**, **Heart-Mirror**, **Kyogen**, and **Kaizen**;

To our Fall Dharma Chat leaders: **Ando**, **Enju**, **Joko**, and **Senshin**;

To our Buddha Hand Circle members for overseeing the Resident Program and for all the delicious breakfasts they prepared during the Ango period;

To the Bearing Witness Council leaders: **Jeanne Dokai Dickenson**, **Kenku**, and **Jitsujo**;

To **Roshi Egyoku**, **Sensei Ryodo**, **Faith-Mind**, **Dokai**, and **Senshin** for their offering of Face-to-Face interviews.■

ZCLA Affiliated Groups

The Lincroft Zen Sangha (New Jersey)

led by Roshi Merle Kodo Boyd

The Monday Night Meditation Group (Pasadena, CA)

coordinated by Betty Jiei Cole

The Ocean Moon Sangha (Santa Monica, CA)

The San Luis Obispo Sangha (CA)

coordinated by Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Santa Barbara Zen Center (CA)

led by Sensei Gary Koan Janka

The Valley Sangha (Woodland Hills, CA)

led by Sensei Patricia Shingetsu Guzy

The Westchester Zen Circle (CA)

led by Sensei Kipp Ryodo Hawley

Outreach Groups

CMC Buddhist Fellowship Group

California Men's Colony (CMC)

San Luis Obispo, CA

led by Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Contact info@zcla.org for information.

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Our mission is to provide the training and resources for realizing the interconnection of all life, to maintain the precepts and to embody the Three Tenets of Not-knowing, Bearing Witness and taking action that serves these goals. We provide the teaching, training and transmission of Zen Buddhism.

Our vision is an enlightened world free of suffering, in which the earth and all beings live in harmony, everyone has enough, deep wisdom is realized and compassion flows unhindered.

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Sangha Rites of Passage

Welcome New Members

David Goodsmith

Terry Robinson

Ben Seiko Allanoff

Andrew Frangos

Resident Leave-Taking

Allen Mulch

Laos Joko Chuman

Patricia Keian Pfost

Yuesen Yuen

Shared Stewardship Entering

Geri Meiho Bryan

CAAW2 Circle and Development Circle Member

Frank Genku Martinez

John Kyogen Rosania

CAAW2 Circle

George Mukei Horner

Day Manager Steward

Shared Stewardship Leave-Taking

Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen

Day Manager Steward

Jonathan Kaigen Levy

Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert

Tenzō Circle Members

Wedding

December 16, 2017

Bob Swan

Patty Watson

Tokudo

December 17, 2017

Christina Choren Corvalho

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