



Water Wheel

Being one with all Buddhas, I turn the water wheel of compassion.
—Gate of Sweet Nectar

Zen Center of Los Angeles
Great Dragon Mountain / Buddha Essence Temple

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The Authentic Tea Bowl Before Birth

By Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao

A monk named Tetsugyu was serving tea to the War Lord of Sendai when Tetsugyu's dharma brother Cho-on appeared. Lord Sendai invited Cho-on to join them for tea. Tetsugyu had chosen a precious antique tea bowl that Lord Sendai himself had given him. In the midst of appreciating the great beauty of the tea bowl, Cho-on suddenly reached out with his ceremonial stick and smashed the tea bowl. "Now," said Cho-on, "look at the authentic tea bowl that exists before birth."

*Tetsugyu turned pale and nearly fainted. But Lord Sendai said to Tetsugyu, "I gave you that tea bowl, but I would like you to give it back to me now. Before you give it back, please piece it together and have a box made for it. On the cover of the box, I ask that you write the name of the tea bowl, which I now give as 'The Authentic Tea Bowl Before Birth.' I will reverently pass the bowl on to my descendants."**

In practicing with this story, just as when we train with a traditional koan, we can embody each of the three individuals as well as the tea bowl. Each has a very powerful, transformative teaching for living the Buddha Way.

Embodying Tetsugyu, I have a tea bowl that is so beautiful and old. In studying the tea ceremony, you learn by observing with your entire body-mind what everyone is doing. In this way, you learn the movements, the way

**Adapted from Reb Anderson, "Being Upright: Zen Meditation and the Bodhisattva Precepts," Rodmell Press (2001).*

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A bowl from our Founders Altar, its cracks covered in gold leaf.

of walking, the way of sitting on the tatami mat, how to appreciate the tea bowl, and how to drink the tea. It is highly ritualized. You wouldn't think it would be enjoyable, but it can be when you disappear into the form.

Tetsugyu owns an exquisite tea bowl. Tea bowls are highly prized as the epitome of Japanese aesthetics. When you see the tea bowls that came out of the depth of a human being, there is no trace of the potter. Such a bowl speaks of that which exists before birth. It is as if an unknown craftsman has created it – the bowl has emerged from the unknown.

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What in your life do you treasure in this way – an object, a person, a position, a circumstance, your life? What do you hold so dear that you share it only with those very special to you?

So here they are at the point in the ceremony where they are all admiring the tea bowl. Cho-on, who wasn't even invited but showed up anyway, seeing Tetsugyu's pride and attachment to the tea bowl, takes his stick and goes WHAM! Tetsugyu is mortified. The thing he loves so dearly has been shattered.

“What is this experience of being in a million little pieces? This is your authentic self before birth.”

Embodying Cho-on is very powerful, isn't it? When you embody Cho-on, what comes up for you? The destroyer? The one who pulls the rug out from under you? You also experience yourself as Cho-on – the times when your actions have torn things asunder. Destroying, upsetting the apple cart, shattering things to bits. But from a Zen perspective, what is it that is shattered? This “I, me” – a solid sense of myself – what happens to it?

Although Tetsugyu was pale and about to faint from shock, Lord Sendai remained calm and present. He said to Tetsugyu, “This is the tea bowl I gave you. I would like you to give it back to me now. But before you give it back to me, please gather up all the pieces and glue it back together.”

It is a Japanese custom that when cracked pottery is glued back together, the cracks are filled with gold leaf. Don't we try to hide our cracks and our scars? And yet these are the very attributes that express our unique beauty and wholeness. When one's self-consciousness is forgotten and grasping is let go of, the Buddha light can shine through. This is poignantly expressed in Leonard Cohen's song “Anthem”:

Ring the bells that still can ring.
Let go of the perfect offering.
There is a crack, a crack in everything.
That's how the light gets in.

Gather up all the pieces, Lord Sendai says, glue them together and make a box for the bowl. Tea bowls come in

boxes of plain, untreated wood – unassuming and ordinary. No nails are used, all the pieces fit together perfectly, and ribbon for securing the lid is threaded through slits in sides. The name of the tea bowl is written on the top of the box. This name, “The Authentic Tea Bowl Before Birth,” is your name, too – your original face before your parents were born.

Now, embodying Lord Sendai: express a time when you manifested the wisdom that transcended grasping and not-grasping. A time when you were open and unknowing in the midst of a challenging life situation. Like Lord Sendai, you said, “Oh, oh, all these pieces” and bore witness to each one. You lived it fully; it lived you.

We all know the story of Avalokiteshvara, or Kanzeon Bodhisattva. Upon hearing all the cries of suffering in the world, Kanzeon imploded – burst into a million little pieces. When the pieces were gathered up, she reappeared with many hands and eyes, all to be used freely, all different skills and means, all different ways of seeing, to be used appropriately for any particular circumstance.

Lord Sendai says gently, “Please gather up all the pieces.” Not: “I gather it up for you,” but you, only you, can gather it up, can live it through. When our life has been shattered, Lord Sendai says: “Gather up all the pieces, then put it back together.” How do we do this gathering up and this putting back together? To see this is to see through the heart of the koan.

Please understand that when this “I, me” implodes, one does not strive to rearrange it to suit oneself. You are never the same, limited person ever again. This “I, me” is no longer in control, no longer dictating reality but rather living in accord with it. Where did the “I, me” go? Has it fallen through the cracks – dissolved into not-knowing? The gathering up and putting back together is all the myriad activities you do with broken heartedness.

What is this experience of being in a million little pieces? This is your authentic self before birth. Formless, before anything takes shape, that from which all life flows. Lord Sendai says, “Make a container.” You know what this container is: it is the Buddha Way. Write the bowl's name on this box. In other words, you now know your nature – the Authentic Tea Bowl Before Birth.

Embody bowlness: roundness, no edges. Whether you are a big bowl or a little bowl, a misshapen bowl or a perfectly round bowl, doesn't matter. Anything and everything can go in. Anything and everything can come out. It has no limits; fundamentally, it is empty of everything,

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Ritual and Form

By John Plum-Hermit Swanger

I want to talk about our forms of practice at ZCLA. Our main form of practice is zazen. Sensei Daishin gave a wonderful talk on that this spring, and I'm not going to talk about that specifically. But we have an incredible wealth of additional forms we practice with here at ZCLA. One of the main things that links all of them is being grounded in the body, in the physical form, what we are doing physically. It is based in our bodies – how we sit, how we walk, how we stand, how we bow. In our formal practice, we have a form for almost everything we do, a way of doing everything we do.

None of this was familiar to me before I came to Zen Center. It's not as if I grew up with any of these forms. It's something we learn and begin to practice with, to explore and to embody. In a way, from one perspective, they are all the same thing, but from another perspective, there are all these differences – how we walk in certain situations, how we hold our hands, what the sequences are, on and on. Bowing, standing bows, gassho, shashu, how we offer incense, how we offer someone else a stick of incense so they can offer it, how we begin to practice with hitting a bell, clappers, on and on. Isn't it amazing?

In a way, you can say it is pretty simple – you stand, you walk, you sit. But there is all this subtlety, all this nuance to it – all this *form*. When I came to practice, I was drawn to the form; I find it mysterious, but I'm drawn to it, and I still am. Certainly, with zazen and learning the posture of zazen and finding a form for sitting, a way to be in seated meditation, it really changed my orientation to my life. I think it's safe to say that is true for all of us. In some basic way, it has changed all our lives. So the power of these physical practices is really significant. They have a lot of power, a lot of resonance and energy.

Recently, I've been reading sections of *On Zen Practice*. The entire first section is titled "On Form." Early in the Introduction, Maezumi Roshi writes, "So Zen practice must be done physically. Not just through belief. Our whole practice rests upon a physical base. Just as our lives begin physically." He goes on to describe, from that base,

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John Plum-Hermit Swanger

the process of harmonizing the body, breath and mind in zazen. Maybe this seems like an obvious point, but I think it is always helpful to be reminded of and brought back to the body, to what we are doing physically, because so much of my conditioning and habits of mind are to be in my mind.

This calls me to pay close attention to how I am sitting, what is my posture, where are my ears in relation to my shoulders, where are my feet, how does my breath feel – to have an awareness, in zazen and also in all these other forms of practice, of these physical forms. When I'm bowing, can I not rush, can I take a moment and connect to my breath rather than think about bowing and how that might look – whatever my self-involved tendencies are. That's a really big shift, isn't it? To get out of all of that and into, "Oh wait, here's my breath, here's what I'm doing, this is how my hands are in gassho," really grounding the experience in the physical practice.

So we have all these forms of practice. And maybe some of them I like better than others, some I think I don't like, some I don't want to do at all – I have the whole range of thoughts and evaluations and judgments, just as I do with everything else. It sounds ridiculous when you say it out loud, though, doesn't it? "I prefer gassho to shashu." It really is how my mind works, though.

What is the purpose of all this? Why do we have all these forms? Is it simply a cultural thing, that our practice

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and lineage has come to us through Japan – which is true, in its way – so we’ve just inherited these forms that are really not connected to our culture? What’s it all for? Does it serve something? What does it serve?

My experience is that there is a purpose to these forms. Part of it is about being brought back to the present moment. Being continuously brought back. You have to pay attention, over and over and over. To the body, to the breath, and to the mind.

“You have to pay attention, over and over and over. To the body, to the breath, and to the mind.”

We get trained by these forms, don’t we? They put us into a different shape, stretch us and focus us. There is the awareness of the moment, of what I’m doing, and there’s the awareness of all of us together. A lot of the forms promote a kind of harmony of functioning, of orderliness. So there is also that aspect – my awareness of what I’m doing in my body and what my mind is doing, and to some extent to be able to drop that, to be able to just throw myself into the form, to lose myself in it. But then, also, there is this awareness of: How am I in relation to you? How is that working with everyone else? Where are you? And really feeling the connection of that, the atmosphere, the space.

Certainly, in service and in ceremonies and ritual, we experience that a lot; together we enter into a different space, a different kind of space. It’s the same space, but our shared awareness changes the space. And so we are called to be aware of that quality of the space, what the ceremony might be, how is this serving, how we’re activating a vow.

That collective awareness is important and comes into play through these forms and through our interaction, through us all acting together in harmony. Individually, we manifest our own minds, and then there is this collective mind that is also being manifested. I experience this in the zendo a lot, and in service and other places. I’ve drifted off at some points and come back into some level of clarity, and it’s like it has called me back – that clarity is the samadhi of the person sitting next to me.

We know we’re connected, so it just makes sense that we would have this experience. This is another, strong aspect of these forms: it clarifies the fundamental reality of our connectedness. It gives us an opportunity to experience it, to express it, and to begin to explore it.

These forms also can be very powerful mirrors for our own minds, in the sense of just seeing the things we don’t want to do. “I don’t want to do that,” or “I haven’t done that before,” or “I’m nervous about that,” all of that stuff that we experience. Seeing that reflected – where am I stuck, what is it I am not even willing to do? I see all my preferences: I’m willing to do this, but I’m not as good at that. And while that might be true, it misses the point in terms of practice and training.

Let’s also not forget the other side: “Well, I’m kind of good at that one.” Again, it might be true and there’s nothing wrong with it, but that way of thinking, from the perspective of practice, there’s a problem there. When I’m able to drop that, or to have that subside because I’m paying attention to something else because I’m developing a different awareness so there’s no room for that, that’s the unity, the freedom, the losing oneself. That’s the no-self: just hitting the bell. And returning to that. I have to pay attention to what’s going on around me, how the bell sounds. It’s incredible, really. There’s a whole world in each moment, in all these things we do.

Here is one additional excerpt from *On Zen Practice*: “There are two ways of looking at rituals. On the one hand, rituals are an external expression of our inner state. And on the other hand, we strengthen and reinforce our inner state by these external actions. Of course, in reality there are not two things but rather a unified whole. As we practice together sincerely, we become increasingly aware that such notions and internal and external cannot be separated. This awareness is actually the growing realization of the real harmony that underlies everything. And because we are doing these things in a harmonious environment and concentrating on what we are doing, this itself is our harmonious consciousness.”

All these forms we are practicing with can’t help but express our own internal state. And we put ourselves into them – we throw ourselves into them – as a way to strengthen this awareness and this internal state. We keep returning and keep returning. We have all these ways of doing it – we bow together, we chant together, we put our hands together in gassho, on and on and on. There is this constant cycling, or spiraling. That practice, and the awareness and realization of complete unity, and the collective harmony, the realization of oneness, of unity – that’s what that practice of form is. ■

From The Archive: “Every Day Is A Good Day”

By Koryu Osaka Roshi, translated by Maezumi Roshi

Supported by generous donations from the White Plum Asanga, ZCLA has been engaged in locating, digitizing, and cataloging the talks given by Maezumi Roshi and others in the early days of ZCLA. In May 1970, one of Maezumi Roshi's teachers, Koryu Osaka Roshi, traveled from Japan to the United States for the first time. While here, he led a week-long sesshin at ZCLA, and offered teisho each day during the sesshin. Forty-two years later, we offer an edited version of the teisho from Koryu Roshi that concluded the sesshin. This edited transcript is based on Maezumi Roshi's oral translation at the time.

Blue Cliff Record Case 6, “Unmon’s Every Day Is A Good Day”

Attention! Unmon introduced the subject by saying, “I do not ask you about fifteen days ago, fifteen days hence. Come! Say a word about this.” He himself replied, “Every day is a good day.”

This teisho concludes this sesshin. I would like to express my feelings of appreciation. Fifteen years ago, when Maezumi Sensei wanted to come to this country, he made up his mind to bury himself here. I appreciated his intention very much and, from time to time since then, I have been asked to come and propagate Zen in this country.

This year, I finally made up my mind to come. I was very sick until the end of March, and I have been weak, but even though my doctors said I shouldn’t come, I came to fulfill my promise. I had reservations about whether I could do a good job, due to my weak physical condition, the unfamiliar customs, and the language barrier. But two days after I arrived, Zen Center had a Thursday evening meeting and I was deeply moved by the fact that so many people came and were so eagerly searching for the truth of life.

In spite of the fact that you have very busy work schedules and many duties in your lives, all of you have come to participate in this sesshin together for a week, getting up early in the morning and going until 9 or 9:30 in the evening. Day after day, you try to accomplish your practice with your very best effort and with all your



Koryu Osaka Roshi (ZCLA Archive photo)

might. This has impressed me very deeply. In the first couple of days, I told you to build up the strength and the vitality in yourself, and in fact that’s what you have done. And since the fourth day, a good, vital atmosphere has prevailed. I believe this sesshin has been very successful. I am very much impressed and grateful and happy about this. With my language barrier and my physically weak condition, I couldn’t quite do sesshin the way it should be, but I tried my best with my very sincere effort. And due to the interpreter and also due to your sincere, devoted cooperation and effort, even though we had difficulties communicating, we accomplished much more than I had expected.

I hope you practice your zazen. As the pioneers of Zen Buddhism in this country, I want you to accomplish your practice as much as possible. As long as my health allows me to come, I would like to come and practice Zen together with you.

This teisho concludes this sesshin; however, the end of sesshin doesn’t mean the end of our life. After this sesshin, I want you to sit, even a half hour, in the morning, and in the evening. If it is impossible due to your busy daily schedule, when you walk or when you work, or when you sit on a chair, I want you to reflect upon whether your master is really in your lower abdomen. Most of the time it is absent. But try to keep and maintain your master in your lower abdomen. And try to hold the samadhi power in your lower abdomen until we meet together again.

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Today's major character, Unmon, is the dharma successor of Seppo. This koan doesn't have introductory words. There is a reason for that. The reason is this: after this koan was initially published, it became so popular, and so many people read it, that the tendency to understand Zen intellectually became widespread. The compiler of this koan collection thought that was not good. So he collected all the documents and burned them. That's why some chapters are missing. And it is not only this chapter but also others where introductory words are missing.

Unmon first practiced zazen under Master Bokushu. This priest was a great man, and in fact he was the head monk in Obaku's monastery. As you know, Obaku was the teacher of Rinzai. At one time, Bokushu was nursing his own mother, and they lived in a very small hut. Un-

"It is easy to offer a common greeting, but when you are suddenly asked to present your best realization in a word, that's hard to do."

mon visited Bokushu at this hut. At the doorway, Unmon called out and said, "Anybody in?" Bokushu opened the door and, right away grabbing Unmon's neck, cried: "Say a word!"

It is easy to offer a common greeting, but when you are suddenly asked to present your best realization in a word, that's hard to do. Unmon paused, and Bokushu pushed him away and slammed the door. This happened twice. Finally, Unmon decided, "Next time, regardless of what happens, even if I have to wrestle with him, I will get inside the door and ask him the most essential and important question of life." The third time, he was treated the same way. But somehow, he got his leg inside the door. Bokushu just slammed the door anyway, and Unmon's leg was broken. At that moment, Unmon attained enlightenment.

The point is this: when you really come to a dead end, this kind of thing can happen. For the common person, when they have this kind of experience, what would happen mostly is that they would complain about the pain. But owing to his previous study and practice of

zazen, within that very moment, within that pain itself, Unmon found absolute, total being.

You have to notice that Unmon's teacher was very strict and severe. Under him, Unmon attained his first enlightenment. Afterwards, Unmon went to practice under Seppo, where he accomplished his practice. Seppo trained himself very hard, working in the kitchen all the time wherever he went. The way he worked was in a very careful, meticulous, sincere way. That was Seppo's character. In this way, Unmon learned a vital and strong way to train his students, but at the same time, he learned a meticulous, careful, well-considered way to practice.

Unmon is sometimes referred to as "King Unmon," which simply means that his character was so noble and well-defined. His words are often described as the "three phrases of Unmon." This means that one phrase has three different meanings or functions. The first is that when he says a word, it is like a lion's roar, or the cry of a crane – very loud. It echoes to the far distance. In other words, many people hear and realize it. At the same time, it has the power by which it cuts off one's misunderstanding and delusion. Third, the phrase has such power and yet is so fitting to the circumstance. It is as if one wave comes, and right after that the next wave forms. In one word, one phrase, there were always these three implications. He was that skillful and expressive.

Unmon told the assembly, "I don't ask you about fifteen days ago. Fifteen days, come say a word about this." In the lunar calendar, the fifteenth day of the month is the full moon. Here, Unmon is not asking you about the full moon up in the sky, but rather about the moon within yourself. That full moon that is the instance of enlightenment. That is to say, "I don't ask you before you have enlightenment, but after having enlightenment, what do you say?" All the monks in the assembly kept silent. So Unmon answered, "Every day is a good day."

Generally speaking, if you have a life such as: today, we go to a movie; tomorrow, we go up to the mountains, this sort of life is considered to be a nice, pleasant life. But here, Master Unmon says, it is not as simple as that. Regardless of what kind of difficulties you have in your life – poor health, sickness, losing your job, or having other troubles – despite all these undesirable conditions, your Mind is always calm and undisturbed. Indeed, not only is it undisturbed, but you truly maintain a clear eye of realization and see the truth clearly, day after day. That is what is meant by "every day is a good day."

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EVERY DAY IS A GOOD DAY (Continued from page 6)

We have a saying: “It’s raining, the fields are wet, the sun goes down, the baby is crying, and my back hurts.” Regardless of what kind of miserable conditions you encounter, still you enjoy your life. It is not easy to do, but if you can do it, you’d really be a great person. In

Buddhism, especially in Zen, we have an expression: “the lotus in the flame.” The regular lotus flower, even though it is pretty, when you put it in a fire, it will be burned up. But this “lotus in the flame” becomes more bright and more fragrant when the flame gets hotter. Regardless of what kind of difficult and undesirable conditions you live in, take advantage of them and train yourself in the midst of such difficulties. Don’t simply attempt to overcome hardship, make it into joy to overcome it. Indeed, if you are strong enough, you can do it. All of you know Mount Fuji in Japan. Another saying: “Whether it’s a clear or cloudy day, Mt. Fuji’s original figure is unchanged.”

Like in baseball or any type of game, there is a winner and loser. But the true winner isn’t necessarily determined by simply winning or losing a game. In the same manner, in our life, regardless of whether the circumstances are desirable or undesirable, if you are able to maintain a calm, cheerful, joyous, sincere, truthful state, every day could be really a good day.

Mrs. Ruth Sasaki once said, “Zen is the way by which we thoroughly enjoy each moment of life.” I agree with her. I sincerely hope that all of you, after this sesshin, like this koan, like what Unmon says, spend every day as a good day. I very deeply appreciate and am grateful for your attentive listening. Thank you. ■

AUTHENTIC TEA BOWL BEFORE BIRTH (Continued from page 2)

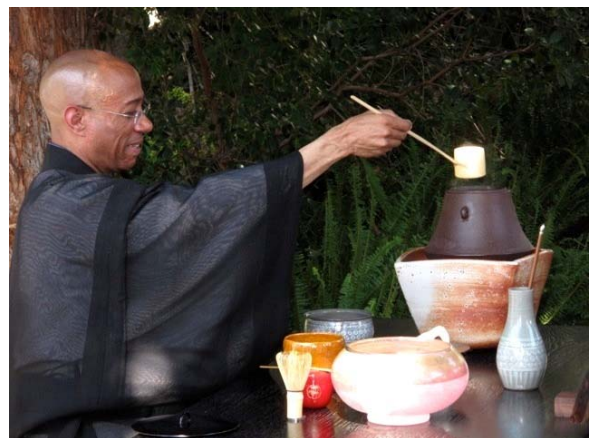
isn’t it? It is empty of a self – of all fixations, finalities, self-created standards; it is an intimate dissolution into life itself. The gold-leafed cracks are nothing but the myriad hands and eyes of Kanzeon, the Bodhisattva of Love.

Lord Sendai says, “When you return to me this Authentic Tea Bowl Before Birth, I will reverently pass it on to my descendants.” It has become even more priceless – the broken-hearted one is gentle, wiser, receptive. The broken-hearted one has shifted away from self-centeredness and surrendered to the immediacy and intimacy of our interconnecting.

What is it that is reverently passed on but each of us living this life to our fullest capacity – alive! – transcending any self-imposed limitations. Whether you realize it or not, you are an empty bowl – not attaching and yet receiving everything. What is the great gift you have already received? Your life! It is to be treasured, to be offered, to be shared, under any and all circumstances. You already have everything you need, including the capacity to live through the shattering, and a bowl overflowing with life’s inherent abundance.

Each of us is continually gathering up the pieces and reuniting with the wholeness of life. Each of us is growing hands and eyes, growing in wisdom, growing in love. Each of us is growing in our relationship with ourself, with the earth, humanity, and all of its creatures. Share the gold that arises out of your cracks and scars and reverently offer it for the benefit of all.

I truly encourage you: know this Original and Authentic Tea Bowl Before Birth and use it fully. ■



Arthur Wayu Kennedy performing a Tea Ceremony in ZCLA’s garden, September 30, 2012.

Interview: Shared Stewardship And Collective Awakening

The Water Wheel will be giving additional attention to our ongoing core training practices here at ZCLA, in particular in the areas of Shared Stewardship and Collective Awakening and Wisdom.

To begin, Water Wheel Assistant Editor Burt Wetanson interviewed Shared Stewardship Co-Stewards John Plum-Hermit Swanger and Katherine Senshin Griffith to get their perspective.

Water Wheel: To begin with, what is Shared Stewardship?

Plum-Hermit: Shared Stewardship is the collective practice of organizing the Zen Center and of practicing together and bringing Dharma principles into all the aspects it takes to run and function as the Zen Center. It began in around 2001, as an experiment and as a practice. One of the initial impulses for it was: if we did everything and organized the Zen Center and ran the organization from an enlightened perspective, what would that look like?

So the shift into Shared Stewardship was one of moving away from the traditional hierarchical model of organizing to one that emphasizes the Sangha and the collective, and what we thought of as the horizontal. Asking people to become involved and take ownership and stewardship of all aspects of Zen Center was the starting point.

Water Wheel: Couldn't that almost be said of any time in the history of the Zen Center? How does collective awakening enter into that?

Plum-Hermit: I'm not sure about the first part of your question. To move away from the model where the Abbot and Head Teacher is directing everything, and everything is flowing vertically – which is the traditional model and is the way the Zen Center of Los Angeles had been operating for many years – is a really big shift.

Senshin: The other model was one of worker bees. This was said, and the formula was followed, and there were worker bees. It's not like the Sangha didn't do things in traditional monasteries, but here the Sangha is taking



Shared Stewardship Co-Stewards Katherine Senshin Griffith and John Plum-Hermit Swanger

responsibility even in leading, in guiding, stewarding, not just in carrying out tasks.

Plum-Hermit: When we talk about a model or a paradigm of organization, whether it's in the business world or a spiritual community or here at Zen Center, the traditional model is this top-down model. So the shift to Shared Stewardship is a really big shift to make, and to very intentionally and very consciously make that shift.

Yes, there have always been people doing things and in different areas of responsibility, but what we want is to create a new model that's based on really specific foundational Dharma principles like, in the case of Shared Stewardship, the Five Buddha Family Mandala, for instance, and Council Practice, as well as Zazen and all the traditional practices. But to make that intention, and to say, "what would it look like, let's explore creating this new model" – that's what the experiment of Shared Stewardship has been and continues to be.

I think maybe a good example is the way Shared Stewardship began to form and the vision that Roshi had. She emphasized that the vision had the quality of an impulse to experiment and be willing to explore, not knowing if any of this would work at all.

One specific example involves the position of Head Administrator. There was somebody in the office who was functioning in an Executive Director-type role. Then there was a time when no one was available to do that, and so one of the first groups that was formed was called

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the Executive Council, and the specific experiment there was: Can a group of four people, working collectively, fulfill the function of this Director position, which traditionally was held by a single person. So that's a very specific impetus behind the formation of an early Circle based on the principles of the Mandala and of Council and horizontal empowerment. Let's call it Stewardship.

Senshin: I was outside Shared Stewardship for a while because I first came to Zen Center in 2001, and I saw it from the outside. One of my first experiences involved the Tenzo sphere and cooking. I remember when I got the first calls – “Hi, could you cook on Sunday?” Early in Shared Stewardship, the Co-Tenzo Coordinator positions developed to coordinate cooking at the Center. The early Co-Tenzo Coordinators started from scratch and figured out how to do it, and then they passed the ball to the next Coordinators.

One of the things about Shared Stewardship is that, instead of, “Here's the rules for being Tenzo Coordinator,” it's more like, “Here's what I found that works.” You hand it off to a different personality and they do it their way. Some people make announcements, some people tap people personally. I remember Luminous Heart used to call people up to ask them to cook. Then there were the sign-ups. So I think it's a function of example and experimentation.

Water Wheel: Over this period of time, have you seen changes, successes, or difficulties that were not predicted? How is Shared Stewardship working? It can't be working today as it was on Day One. Give me a sense of the evolution of Shared Stewardship.

Plum-Hermit: My sense and experience of it is, the evolution has been mainly one of deepening as a practice and really becoming the culture of Zen Center. There's been a real development over time in the numbers of Circles. If you look at our Resource Directory and all the things that are addressed, and the numbers of Circles, and the ways in which they interconnect and interrelate and communicate and link – there's a lot of complexity. That complexity is what I see as development.

Water Wheel: Has there been an evolution in the degree to which the Sangha understands Shared Stewardship or buys into it or appreciates it or wants to be involved in it?

Plum-Hermit: When it was really just starting out, there was an unknown quality about it. There was a lot of

unknown and some resistance: “How will this ever work? It's so inefficient. This can't work. We don't want to do Council.” All kinds of things came up for different people and collectively. So one of the big shifts, as these practices have been used over ten years, is that they just seeped into the roots and the ground of Zen Center. It has become the culture. I don't even know if people who come here now perceive it. When we get feedback, I think a lot of people sense something about the atmosphere here, but they don't necessarily connect this to Shared Stewardship. I think it's become pervasive in that way.

“When people come in, they want to solve their own problems, but after a while they shift to ‘I want to give, I want to serve, how can I help?’”

–Senshin

Water Wheel: Could we turn to the idea of Collective Awakening and how it relates to Shared Stewardship.

Senshin: When you sit on the cushion, you're aware of your thoughts. And you're aware of your body. That's what we do on the cushion, whether your practice is counting your breath or shikantaza or koan practice. Well, if you think, “Everyone is sitting on the cushion, and I'm aware of them, and I'm not just aware of how I'm still, but I'm aware of how I fit in with everyone else.” You're aware you're doing it *as* everyone.

As Program Steward, what I find is that when people come in, they want to solve their own problems, but after a while they shift to “I want to give, I want to serve, how can I help?” When you see the newcomers shift to that place, that in itself is awakening.

Water Wheel: Is it like the Mustard Seed Parable in which Kisagotami awakens to collective suffering, and that transforms her? Is that a kind of collective awakening?

Plum-Hermit: I think so. I think one of the big aspects of Shared Stewardship is that it's also a personal practice. It involves me beginning to do personal, what we call “internal,” work in order for it to work. Just to

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function with other people, and all of the things that arise, and all of the opportunity for letting go of the self and the opportunities to serve, and so on.

And then it also involves maintaining the relationship to the vertical. The vertical, the authority, doesn't just disappear, so how to have that in balance in a way that's in a healthier balance.

It requires an internal shifting too, and I believe that in the process, collective wisdom has become more recently our collective koan. It really has. And what is collective wisdom? Nobody knows. We don't know. So really, it has a koan quality to me. And as we work and make internal shifts, we see how that relates to working with other people and stewarding and the collective, which in a way is all there is. "I only have individual wisdom" to me doesn't make much sense. So collective wisdom is maybe a better description of reality.

Senshin: The Buddha said, "I and all beings simultaneously awaken."

"I think collective wisdom has become our collective koan. It really has. And what is collective wisdom? Nobody knows."

–Plum-Hermit

Plum-Hermit: And the Bodhisattva Vows. The so called "personal liberation" – the only path for that is the vow to liberate, to serve everyone. So in the Bodhisattva Vow, there is no individual enlightenment. It's *only* the collective.

Water Wheel: "Collective" seems to be an odd word to use about the phenomenon we're talking about.

Plum-Hermit: There's also the aspect of it of the collective mind. In the Jungian sense, the collective unconscious. That place where we're all the same ocean of consciousness.

Senshin: I like what Plum-Hermit said the other day – part of the practice of Stewardship, rather than just

the efficiency, is becoming aware of just how many things are affected. "Okay, I'm getting the sound system ready for the jukai. I have to let the Ceremonial Steward know that that's going to happen. I have to find out when the ZP-2 class will be done. I'm thinking of the neighbors. I'm thinking of the newcomers who come in." That increased awareness in the practical sense is also awareness in the practice sense of caring for all those aspects. All that is the manifestation of Collective Awakening.

Plum-Hermit: I like the term "collective awareness." That sense that a big part of the practice of Shared Stewardship, and practice in general, is trying to expand and widen our view and broaden our capacity and take in more, and be aware of more. My experience has been – as Senshin said really nicely – that it's impossible to work in Circles and in Shared Stewardship without developing some of that. Otherwise, it simply doesn't work. It causes too many problems. As for the part that involves "getting it done" – yes, we function, yet, in the context of Shared Stewardship, that is not the real point. The whole point is the practice, the potential for awakening. It's an upaya, it's an expedient means, a teaching method. That's very important because we can get very caught up in the content, so to speak, of what we're doing.

So another side is to learn discernment. We are using guiding questions as part of our Shared Stewardship practice, so when we are working through some issue, we ask questions such as: who needs to know, who needs to be included, who isn't being included, what are we not seeing in this picture? From one standpoint, these are training methods. From another perspective, these are an expression of how things really are, and we're aligning ourselves more accurately with that.

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I think this is a really important point about Shared Stewardship, about practice. There's all of our normal conditioned ways of thinking about things and doing things: "Let me just go ahead and take care of it. It's much more efficient. I'm good at this." There's something very contrary to all of that training when you say: "Let's do this collectively, let's bring other things in, let me step back from this, set myself aside." And that's the training part.

And then there's this aspect beyond the training part which is really acknowledging a much deeper truth about how life is, which is: We're not alone and separate to begin with. So why do we continue to act like we are?

Senshin: One of the old meal gathas used to be: "Seventy-two labors brought us this food." Well, in some ways, as Program Steward, I feel great appreciation for all the Circles. Zen Center really couldn't run unless everyone was doing their thing. And in some ways, it is so seamless. The altars are clean, the flowers are there. Everything gets pulled off. It comes from the heart and it cares. Oh, it's one body! My left hand's in a cast and my right hand will take care of it. It is the one body doing it.

Water Wheel: What is the feedback that you've gotten, maybe over years, from the membership that's not directly here. The larger Sangha.

Senshin: I can speak from the outside, because I came for many years on Thursdays and Sundays, and I was very busy. I chose not to be in the Shared Stewardship, and it didn't bother me that I didn't know. I felt I could enter any time I wanted. You can just come as a consumer to sit and practice and leave.

It's okay to just come to sesshins. It's okay just to come and sit. We're offering that to the world. That's what our purpose is. But if you come regularly and want to deepen your practice, this is the model we are embodying.

Plum-Hermit: I think it's much more pervasive than that. I think it's imbued in the teachings here, imbued in the atmosphere here. When people come to just visit casually, they feel a sense of something about this, whether they know what it is or not. One of the things I've been seeing over time – my Zen practice and my practice in Shared Stewardship are almost one and the same. So it's hard for me to know what people who are "outside" think or see or feel. I don't really know.

There's a quality that's just in the culture here. Another koan question for a number of years has been: How do you introduce the practice and have people enter into and begin to really learn about Shared Stewardship? You have people here at all different points of experience and all different points of experience in Zen practice and all different points of experience at Zen Center of Los Angeles and Shared Stewardship. So how do you incorporate this practice and allow people to enter in and train?

It's really great Senshin mentioned this consumer model approach, because at the beginning of Shared Stewardship we made a conscious approach to introduce a practice that was different than that. We could have a Zen Center where we just run things and offer things to

***"My Zen practice and my practice in
Shared Stewardship are almost one
and the same."***

–Plum-Hermit

people, and it's another consumer model. But part of the impulse behind Shared Stewardship was that's not the model we want. That's the model of our contemporary, ordinary society, let's say. We want to develop something that has a different quality.

Senshin: And the model itself makes your mind shift. That's why it's not separate from the practice. "Oh, I'm not just thinking of myself. By coming here, I can't help but think of other people, the other elements."

Water Wheel: There's a quote I'd like to read, and give me your reaction to it. **"Shared Stewardship is an integral vision for practice, not just volunteerism. There's a commitment and a vow. It's for the sake of personal and group awakening together."**

Plum-Hermit: That's very nice. It's an important part of it – what is the simple content of the Circle, what's the area we're overseeing? All of that's important, but the practice, this element you just described, is the moving force of the vow of personal and collective awakening. That upaya, that's the fundamental point about Shared Stewardship. And in a way, that can be very hard to get and to connect to. It just has to be emphasized.

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SHARED STEWARDSHIP (Continued from page 11)

sized over and over and over, because it's so easy to get caught up in – just as it is in our own thoughts – it's easy to get caught up in the content, the tasks, the details, so to speak.

“It’s okay just to come and sit. We’re offering that to the world. That’s what our purpose is. But if you come regularly and want to deepen your practice, this is the model we are embodying.”

–Senshin

Senshin: In the old Chinese and Japanese stories, you go to the traditional Zen monasteries and you had to work, there was that samu element. You really did need rice, but the practice of work, the way you did the work, was very important of itself.

So we kept that, but Shared Stewardship is another thing like that, where when you come here, you do that. It's expected and it's not even explained. You're just in it.

Plum-Hermit: Your comment really brings up another point for me. There is the part of talking about and trying to describe and explain Shared Stewardship, which is important. And then there's the part, which is much more to the point, of direct experience, the throwing yourself in. Once you begin practicing on a particular Circle, or in a particular way or role within Shared Stewardship, that's the learning and the training. That's the point where the personal growth and shifts happen. That's the only way it can happen. Just like in other aspects of our practice, to talk and write and think about it can be helpful, but you have to really *do* it.

Water Wheel: Is there anything in the air that something might be evolving? Any new directions? Is there some future vision for Shared Stewardship?

Senshin: A Tenzo Circle has been formed. Things are always shifting, and I think one of Roshi's visions is just: Go with the shifts. Some things may be dropped, some things may grow. It's all about practicing with Not Knowing.

Plum-Hermit: For some time, we have felt, and Roshi has felt, that to begin to articulate these very questions that you're asking us – what is Shared Stewardship? How does it work? How is it an upaya? What is the form of it? To begin to articulate this in a way that can be shared with other people – that feels like a phase we are definitely moving into.

There's a lot of interest, and it's a powerful paradigm and model, so to find a way to share that, I think, will become increasingly a focus. Figuring out how to share Shared Stewardship with people who are new to the Center, people who want to get involved. I feel it's so pervasive in the culture here. There are many of us who have been doing this for quite some time. Whether you've been involved for three years or five years or twelve years, we have a lot of experience with this – and yet, it's hard to see what that experience is. It's hard to articulate it. And there are a lot of people who are very deeply involved who maybe don't necessarily see what the contours of this form are that we're in. ■



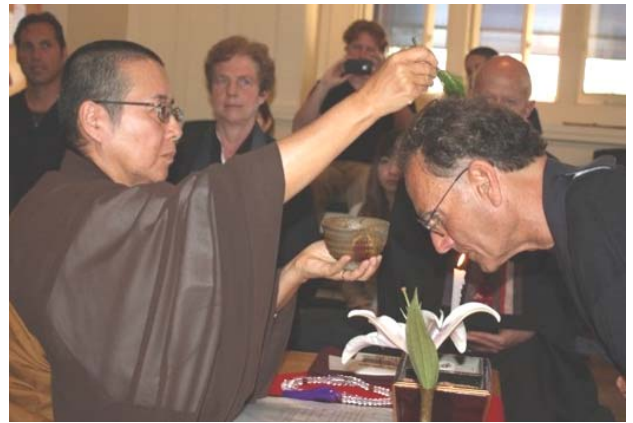
ZCLA now maintains a page on Facebook! Go to facebook.com/zencentrala to see what is going on! And if you are on Facebook, you can “like” it and receive regular updates in your news feed.

Summer 2012 – An Event-Full Time On Great Dragon Mountain!

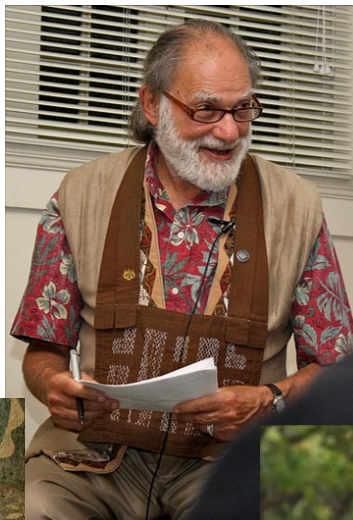
Here are a few photos reflecting some of the many events at Zen Center over the past few months.



*Tokudo Ceremony for Mark Shogen
Bloodgood*



Jukai Ceremony for Jonathan Kaigen Levy



Jukai Ceremony for Roberta Myodo Brehm



Visit and talk by Red Pine



Visit, talk, and workshop by our Abbot Emeritus, Roshi Bernie



Sangha Rites of Passage

CEREMONY FOR RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS

From Roshi Egyoku Nakao

July 8, 2012

Jonathan Kaigen Levy

From Sensei Daishin Buksbazen

August 19, 2012

Roberta Myodo Brehm

ZEN BODHISATTVA PRIEST ORDINATION

From Roshi Egyoku Nakao

August 12, 2012

Mark Shogen Bloodgood

NEW MEMBERS ENTERING CEREMONY

September 22, 2012

Andrew Bassuk

Dylan Neal

Jessica Oetsu Page

David Randall

Bradford Schultze

Alexandra Wintersteller

NEW RESIDENT MEMBER ENTERING CEREMONY

September 22, 2012

Patricia Pfost

SHARED STEWARDSHIP INSTALLATION

Brown-Green Group

Diane True-Joy Fazio (Steward)

John Heart-Mirror Trotter

Board of Directors Secretary

Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown

Buddha Hand Circle Steward

Rosa Ando Martinez

Health Circle

Myokai Snodgrass

Tenzo Circle Co-Stewards

Jonathan Kaigen Levy

Reeb Kaizen Venners

Co-Tenzo Coordinator

Tim Zamora

Day Manager Circle

Darla Myoho Fjeld

George Mukei Horner

Tina Jitsujo Gauthier

Disaster Preparedness Circle

Patricia Pfost

Priest Circle

Darla Myoho Fjeld

Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown

SHARED STEWARDSHIP LEAVE-TAKING

Altar Group

Bob Gido Fisher

Board of Directors Secretary

Sensei John Daishin Buksbazen

Brown-Green Group Steward

George Mukei Horner

Co-Tenzo Coordinator

Miguel Rojas

27th Annual Day of Dana

Friday, November 16

7:00 p.m. Sangha Supper

7:30 to 9:00 p.m. Assembly of Food Bags

Saturday, November 17

11:15 a.m. Delivery of Food Bags

It's the time to give thanks by giving to our neighbors in need. For the 27th year, ZCLA repeats its tradition of offering bags of food and supplies for neighborhood families.

These food bags are made possible through your dana. To provide these bags of food and supplies to 25 or more families, we need to receive contributions of \$1,500 to

\$2,000 for food purchases. **Please give generously!** We all know that every little bit counts in these tough economic times. Make your check payable to ZCLA, marked "Dana Baskets." **Every dollar donated to the Day of Dana is used to purchase food and supplies that we give away to neighbors in need.**

The drive will culminate on Friday, November 16, with a special dinner, after which we will package items and assemble the bags, which we deliver the following morning. Please join in this celebration and service to others.

If you would like to help in one of the myriad ways we need assistance before November 16, please contact Gary Belton, Steward of the Day of Dana, or Senshin at program-steward@zcla.org. ■

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

Please contact Dharma-Joy (dharma-joy@zcla.org) if you know of bodhisattvas to appreciate. Have we missed anyone?

To our cooks and snack coordinators: **Jonathan Kaigen Levy, Rosa Ando Martinez, Gemma Cubero, Patti Muso Giggans, Ellen Reigen Ledley, Gary Belton, Mike Solitary-Pine Ford, Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen, Carla Flowing-Mountain Schmitt, Diane True Joy Fazio, Jessica Oetsu Page, Darla Myoho Fjeld, Charles Duran, Tina Jitsujo Gauthier, Jolene Beiser, Matt Goodman, Nem Etsugen Bajra, Yoko Bajra, Cassie Riger, Monica Kyodo Campins, Jim Hanson, Dan Hegarty, Jane Chen, Susanna Knittel, Gary Belton, Tim Zamora, Lynda Jikai Golan, Katherine Senshin Griffith, Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown, Nina Reiju Wasserman, and Reeb Kaizen Venners;**

Outgoing Co-Tenzo Coordinator **Miguel Rojas** for his long service and constant cheer;

Enduring-Vow and **Kaigen** for their tenzo efforts during the Summer Sesshin;

Bob Gido Fisher for wonderful cookies and treats, often at the last minute;

Allen Moses for the many donations of fresh citrus fruit;
Danny Duran from Dura-Clean for fixing the ZCLA dishwasher for free;

Denise Acosta for making the Father's Day Cake and jukai cake;

Ty Jotai Webb, Tom Yudo Burger and **Reiju** for set-up support for the Ox-Herding Classes;

Parking Co-Stewards **Nina Harake** and **David Hilton** and the many people who help with parking;

Kaizen and **Kaigen** for stepping into the position of Co-Stewards of the newly forming Tenzo Circle;

Hannah Seishin Sowd for creating a Tenzo recipe blog;

Mark Shogen Bloodgood and **Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran** for leading the Father's Day Circle;

Yudo for finding the perfect white bowls for the Growing A Plum Blossom Sesshin;

Pat Way for dedicated and indefatigable gardening help;

Flowing-Mountain for catching all the odds and ends that really need attention around the Zen Center;

Roshi, Jikai, George Mukei Horner, Kaizen and **Kaigen** for photographing various Zen Center events and ceremonies;

Jikai and the **Brown-Green Group** for creating a delightful butterfly garden in front of the Zendo.

Yudo for extra office support, signage and long hours spent updating the Zendo seating chart

Nilotpala residents for sponsoring film showings and social gatherings;

Zendo jikidos: **Mukei, Z Zeller, Kaizen, Heart-Mirror, Ando, Tim Zamora, David Hilton, Penelope Luminous-Heart Thompson, Susanna Knittel, Nina Harake, Kaigen, Gary Belton, Kristi Twilley, Fisher, and Peggy Faith-Moon Gallaher;**

Kristi Twilley for helping to deliver the Gate of Sweet Nectar food to the food bank;

DeWayne Gojitsu Snodgrass, Jitsujo, and Yvonne Myosei Beatty, for leading recent Dharma Chats;

Heart-Mirror for his generous donation of new microphones for our recording system;

Mukei and **Heart-Mirror** for fixing our non-working microphone;

Faith-Mind, Enduring-Vow and **Yudo** for help with the Tea Ceremony preparations;

Senshin, Mary Rios, Shogen, Jotai, Yudo, Faith-Mind, Mukei, Dharma-Joy and **Carmen Chisho Izzo** for helping prepare the Sangha House and Zendo for electrical rewiring; and to

Conrad Butsugen Romo for his tireless efforts cleaning in the kitchen.

Thank you!!!

WELCOME to new resident members **Patricia Pfost** and **Matthew Goodman**, and to new members **Jessica Oetsu Page, Bradford Schultze, Andrew Bassuk, Dylan Neal, Robert-Lone-Pine Smith, David Randall, Sandeep Lehil, and Alexandra Wintersteller!**■

ZCLA Affiliated Sanghas & Sitting Groups*

The Laguna Hills Sangha (CA)
coordinated by Helen Daiji Powell

The Lincroft Zen Sangha (NJ)
led by Sensei Merle Kodo Boyd

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

The Ocean Moon Sangha (Santa Monica, CA)
led by Sensei John Daishin Buksbazen

The San Luis Obispo Sitting Group (CA)
coordinated by Mark Shogen Bloodgood

The Valley Sangha (Woodland Hills, CA)
led by Sensei Patricia Shingetsu Guzy

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

Contact us at info@zcla.org for information.

* Affiliated groups are led by Dharma Successors of Roshi Egyoku or coordinated by practitioners actively practicing at ZCLA with a teacher. Those interested in leading a ZCLA-affiliated sitting group may apply to the Teachers Circle.

The *Water Wheel* is published by the Zen Center of Los Angeles, Great Dragon Mountain / Buddha Essence Temple, which was founded in 1967 by Taizan Maezumi Roshi.

Our mission is to know the Self, maintain the precepts, and serve others. We provide the teaching, training, and transmission of Zen Buddhism. **Our vision** is an enlightened world free of suffering, in which all beings live in harmony, everyone has enough, deep wisdom is realized, and compassion flows unhindered. **Our core values** are available upon request or on our Web site, www.zcla.org.

Founding Abbot: Taizan Maezumi Roshi
Abbot 1995-1999: Roshi Bernard Glassman
Abbot: Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao
Staff: Mary Rios, Business Manager; Katherine Senshin Griffith, Program Steward; Tom Yudo Burger, Guest Steward; Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen, Grounds & Membership Steward; John Plum-Hermit Swanger, Development Steward.
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Address Correction Requested

The Legacy Circle: Providing the Buddhadharma for Future Generations

The Legacy Circle is dedicated to ensuring the future financial sustainability of ZCLA and to providing the teaching, training and transmission of Zen Buddhism for future generations here at Great Dragon Mountain.

The Legacy Circle was launched in 2006 and currently has over 30 members. Members of the Legacy Circle are those friends and donors who have already included a gift or bequest to Great Dragon Mountain in their wills or estate planning. Great appreciation to all of our current Legacy Circle members!

Please consider joining the Legacy Circle by arranging for such a future gift to ensure the vitality of the Zen Center as a precious place of practice and transformation.

In early October, we sent more detailed information about this Circle and the opportunity for this form of

Dana paramita. There will also be a gathering and appreciation event for Legacy Circle members in February, 2013.

If you would like to discuss the Legacy Circle in more depth, please contact Patti Muso Giggans or John Plum-Hermit Swanger through the Zen Center Office. ■



Legacy Circle members with Sensei Kodo in February 2011.