



General Meeting

The General Meeting, the annual members' business meeting, will be held on Sunday morning, **November 21, at 11:00**, by Zoom, following Zoom zazen. The nominees for the next Board of Directors will be introduced and the budget for 2021 will be presented. Everyone is encouraged to attend, but only Participating Members are eligible to vote. If you have agenda items, please contact the Board President, Ken Wilson at wilso003@duke.edu. For the link to this meeting, please check the Event Calendar section of the CHZC website: <http://chzc.org/events.htm>

Holiday Schedule

There will be no Zoom zazen on Thanksgiving, Thursday, or on Friday, November 25- 26. **The regular Sunday morning Zoom program on November 28, will be held as usual.**

There also will be no Zoom zazen offered from Thursday, December 23, through Friday, January 1, except on **Sunday morning, December 26, zazen will be held at 9:00 am.** The on-going schedule will resume on Sunday, January 2. In person zazen will not be held on Friday, December 24 - Friday, December 31. In person zazen will resume on Monday morning January 3.

In Person Zazen

The Chapel Hill Zen Center invites those who are fully vaccinated and who can wear a mask while indoors to attend zazen in person. Zazen is offered on Thursday nights at 7:00 and 7:40pm; and on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at 6:00 and 6:50 am. In order to socially distance, seating is available in chairs and on every other zabuton. So far, we have been opening all the windows.

Zoom Zazen

The CHZC continues to offer zazen via Zoom on Monday and Friday afternoons from 1:00-1:40; Monday-Friday mornings at 6:00 and 6:50; and Sunday morning at 9:00 and 9:50. You are welcome to join both periods of zazen or either one. The Zoom link can be found on the Event Calendar section of the CHZC website at www.chzc.org/events.htm

Half-day Sitting by Zoom

Sunday morning, November 14

There will be a Zoom Half-day Sitting from 6:00 AM until 12:05 PM. The schedule will be similar to that used for the morning of in-person All-day Sittings and will include a public Dharma Talk at 10:30. For information and to sign up, write info@chzc.org.

All-day Sitting

An in person sitting is planned for Sunday, December 5, from 6:00am-5:00pm, at the Chapel Hill Zen Center. This will be for people who are fully vaccinated and who can wear a mask indoors. Orientation will be at 7:30pm on Saturday night, and we ask that everyone attend Orientation. The day will include zazen, a Dharma Talk, *dokusan* and a work period, as well as breakfast and lunch. The suggested donation is \$15 for members, and \$25 for others; however, if you are inclined to offer more, that would be very helpful in maintaining Zen Center. *Oryoki* sets are available for use by those who do not have their own, and a \$5 donation would be appreciated. **Please sign up by Dec. 3 at:** info@chzc.org, and **if this is your first all-day sitting, please speak with Josho** ahead of time. For more information on the oryoki meal form see: <https://kannondo.org/getting-started/oryoki/>

Dharma Talks

Sunday morning, November 14, a **Zoom** talk by Josho Pat Phelan, using the Zoom zazen link.

New Year's Eve Program

On Friday, December 31, there will be two periods of zazen by Zoom, at 8:00 and 8:50, followed by the Bodhisattva Ceremony at 9:30. Everyone is welcome, and please use the Zoom Zazen link found on the Event Calendar: <https://chzc.org/events.htm>

Sangha News

Mike McKillip and Adrienne Robinson were married on October 15. We send them our congratulations and many warm wishes for a long life together.

Chapel Hill Zen Center Newsletter — Nov & Dec, 2021

<http://www.chzc.org>

PAGE 2

Sangha News (cont.)

This Fall, Zenki Kathleen Batson is attending a 90-day Practice Period at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, south of San Francisco, deep in the mountains of the Ventana Wilderness Area. During the practice period, the traditional monastic schedule and forms will be used. Sam Ridge and Tim Kroll, who began their practice at the Chapel Hill Zen Center, are also attending. Tim was ordained as a priest in September by Ryushin Paul Haller, and Tim will be Head Monk or *Shuso*, for this Practice Period.

Study Group

The Study Group meets on Tuesday Evenings, from 6:45 PM - 8 PM. We are reading and discussing *The Light that Shines Through Infinity* by Dainin Katagiri.

The Zoom link is on the Event Calendar section of the CHZC website: www.chzc.org/events.htm. **Please log on 5-10 minutes before the study group begins** so we can start on time. *All the Study Groups are open to everyone, and there is no charge.*

Eco-Dharma

The CHZC Eco-Dharma Group is planning to participate in the planting of new trees at the 5206 property early next year. The trees are scheduled to arrive in February. The group will most likely schedule a meeting prior to the planting to tour the property and discuss the project. Please keep this in mind for next year and look out for more announcements as we get closer to the date. Contact Chris at ccensullo@yahoo.com to be added to the CHZC Eco-Dharma e-mailing list.

For an interesting look at the *Miyawaki Forestation* method to create an urban forest, see <https://www.architecturaldigest.in/content/how-to-use-miyawaki-method-grow-mini-forest-minimal-space-home-garden/>.

Bodhisattva Ceremony

The Bodhisattva Ceremony, a renewal of vows and precepts, is a pre-Buddhist ceremony with its roots in ancient India. The Bodhisattva Ceremony will be held by Zoom, on Sunday, **November 28**, at 10:20, following Zoom zazen.

Inter-faith Council for Social Services

Members of the CHZC continue to collect items for the IFC Community Market which provides approximately 1,300 bags of groceries to those in need every month. Both produce and non-perishable food and items such as dish washing soap, shampoo, toilet paper are needed, as well as gently used brown paper bags used to send groceries home. Please leave items on the front deck of the ZC in the large plastic containers. They are picked up about once a week.

Scholarships for Racial Equity Workshops

The Chapel Hill Zen Center has a scholarship fund to help those who would like to take this workshop and other workshops on race who can't afford the full fee. For more information or to request a partial scholarship, please contact Ken Wilson at wilso003@duke.edu. Donations to this fund are also welcome!

Organizing Against Racism

The local organization Organizing Against Racism is holding virtual workshops with REI, Racial Equity Institute, instructors. See: <https://www.oaralliance.org/> For the workshop schedules see: <https://www.racialequityinstitute.com/new-events>

Over several years, some of us have taken this two-day workshop and have found it very informative and beneficial.

Sangha Net

The Sangha Net is a network of volunteers who can offer short-term assistance to those in the sangha in need of help due to transitions in one's life such as illness, disability, or death of a loved one. Examples of tasks can include shopping, arranging for meals, or transportation. During the pandemic, we will assist in ways that can allow for mutual safety.

If you would like to volunteer or if you need assistance, please contact Kris Garvin at krisgarvin@gmail.com, Senmyo Jeff Sherman at jeffsherman3333@gmail.com, or Carol Klein at carollyklein53@gmail.com.

Living with Impermanence

This informal discussion group meets on Zoom about once a month, providing the opportunity to explore conversations on aging, death and dying, as well as impermanence in general. Please contact Carol Klein at carollyklein53@gmail.com, Kris Garvin at krisgarvin@gmail.com, or Senmyo Sherman at jeffsherman3333@gmail.com, if you would like more information. Everyone is welcome.

Recent Acquisitions for the Members Library

When You Greet Me I Bow, Norman Fischer; *Long Quiet Highway*, Natalie Goldberg; *Zen Beyond Mindfulness*, Jules Shuzen Harris; *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki, Vol. III: Comparative Religion*, Richard Jaffe, Ed.; *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki, Vol. IV: Buddhist Studies*, Richard Jaffe, Ed.; *Buddha Nature*, Sallie B. King; *Tao Teh Ching*, Lao Tzu; *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism*, Dale S. Wright.

Giving Thanks, a Dharma Talk

by Zenki Kathleen Batson

Given November, 2019

This coming Thursday many of us will celebrate Thanksgiving. I have always associated this day with the 3 F's: family, food, and football. It is an opportunity to reflect on the bounty of my life, and to give thanks for my incredibly good fortune. However, this doesn't seem like a main theme of this holiday to me any more than other holidays.

I grew up as many American children did, with a pretty inaccurate understanding of Thanksgiving as also being the celebration of a historical event. As a child I remember wondering how Squanto learned English, and think I was told that English fisherman taught him. It wasn't until I was much older that I learned that Squanto was abducted by an Englishman and sold into slavery in Spain. And, that he made a pretty epic journey to return to his home, what he knew as the village of Patuxet.

As a child I also learned that the Pilgrims found what they believed to be a God-given land. It was beautiful and ready for them to settle and farm, complete with cleared fields. I learned much later that the reason the land was so ready to settle was because only a few years prior to their arrival, it had been the flourishing village of Wampanoag people called Patuxet, Squanto's home. The reason it was available to them was because pretty much every inhabitant of the village had died from a plague brought by foreigners. Plagues were decimating what was originally a large and flourishing population of people on the continent. (*Lies My Teacher Told Me*, J. Loewen)

Over the years I have learned many more details about the complex and often unpleasant history of the events I was originally taught to label the first Thanksgiving. Similarly, as I have matured and studied Buddhism, I have learned more details and some uncomfortable realities about how I have viewed gratitude itself and the act of experiencing thankfulness.

When I think of the prayers I heard my father or grandparents say before meals, I remember al-

Chapel Hill Zen Center Newsletter — Nov & Dec, 2021

<http://www.chzc.org>

PAGE 4

ways hearing a list of things for which they felt gratitude. This gratitude was very real and very heart felt. When I think of Thanksgiving as a bountiful feast, I naturally think of meal time and the meal time prayer and how we approach meal time here at the Zen Center. At the beginning of our meal chant we say, “Now we open Buddha Tathagatha’s eating bowls, May all be free from self clinging.” But in a different version I learned of the meal chant this is worded, “May we, with all beings, Realize the emptiness of the three wheels: Giver, receiver, and gift.”

And a question that arose for me was, “If there really is no giver, no receiver, and no gift, then what *is* gratitude?” The lens through which I asked that question is an understanding of thankfulness or gratitude as an emotion that I feel for something. It requires an object, something for which I can feel the gratitude. When we intellectualize or think about the world symbolically, that is true. Our language is set up so that we need an object for which to feel gratitude, or actions and situations for which to feel thankful. And, we see our world through our thoughts. As the very beginning of the *Dhammapada* says: “We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world.”

In the book *Eco-dharma* David Loy says, “Names are not just labels; they identify things according to their functions, so we usually perceive our surroundings as a collection of utensils to be used to achieve our goals such as satisfying our desires.”

I think this is true of our thinking both at gross obvious levels, and also at very subtle levels. With this question about gratitude, if there’s no giver, no receiver, and no gift, then what is it? I started to look for words like gratitude and thankfulness in the glossaries of the books *Moon in a Dewdrop*, Thich Nhat Hanh’s *Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*, and the *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. These three are standards that I use regularly to help me find my way. But I didn’t see gratitude or thankfulness in the Thich Nhat Hanh book, or the *Princeton Dictionary* at all, and I found only one reference in *Moon in a Dewdrop*. It was in *Regulations for the Auxiliary Cloud Hall*. It said that practitioners would be buddha ancestors

equally throughout time. Therefore, they should not forget the feeling of gratitude.

I was surprised. This seemed odd to me. I saw so many references for words like emptiness, joy, equanimity, giving, etc. So I then looked online to see what gratitude is in Sanskrit, Chinese and Japanese, in case maybe I just didn’t know what I should be looking for, but none of them sounded at all familiar to me the way other important words are from those languages like *shunyata*, *dhyana*, *shin*, or *saen*. This caused me to feel a bit lost. So, I started to think about our chant book, which is often the first contact people have with actual Zen teachings, and I couldn’t think of any place in our chant book that the word “gratitude,” or the encouragement to give thanks, exists. I read through the whole thing carefully trying to keep an eye out for those words and I found the word gratitude once in our whole chant book. We do give homage and venerate, and there are references to bowing and making offerings, which both seem like ways to express gratitude. The definition I found for homage is “a special honor or respect shown publicly.” Venerate is “to regard with great respect; revere,” but these are not quite the same thing as gratitude to me.

The one place where I found the word gratitude is in the *Lovingkindness Metta Sutta*, “During all of one’s waking hours, let one practice the way with gratitude.”

Is this saying we should always be grateful for the way of practice, or is it telling us to always have an attitude of gratitude in practice? It sounds like the first, we should be grateful for this way of practice. I am grateful for practice, and I think that is a positive way to feel about practice, but the more I thought about it and the idea of no giver, no receiver and no gift, the more it seemed likely that the meaning is the second – that we should have an attitude of gratitude in our practice. If we come to a place where we begin to view everything we do as our practice, then all activity should be engaged in with gratitude. Hence, “during all our waking hours.”

The *Metta Sutta* goes on to say, “not holding to fixed views, endowed with insight, freed from

sense appetite, one who achieves the way will be freed from the duality of birth and death.” I started questioning if this freedom from sense appetites refer to freedom from greed, hate and delusion. I think back to our meal chant which says, “Desiring the natural order of mind, let us be free from greed, hate and delusion.” When I analyze this, it leaves me thinking that perhaps the natural order of mind is a state of gratitude, a state in which one does not have the three poisonous minds. The three poisonous minds are of course greed, hate, and delusion and we can pair them with things we are taught to instead focus on. Non-greed would be generosity, giving, or *dana*. Not hating would include love, compassion, and seeing the equal value of all beings. Not engaging in delusion would mean experiencing the co-dependent arising of all phenomenon, and the ultimate inability to break down self and other into a dichotomy, the *prajna paramita*.

In our chant book one of the places where the suggestion to venerate and make prostrations exists is in the *Maka Hannya Haramitsu* by Dogen Zenji. A monk determines that he should venerate and make prostrations to this most profound *prajna paramita*, the wisdom that experiences the interconnected, impermanent, emptiness or boundlessness of reality. The Buddha was in agreement with the monk and the text goes on to say that “The monk realizes now that by venerating and making prostrations to all things, he is venerating and making prostrations to *prajna* (wisdom).” I have always found the *Makka Hannya Haramitsu*, Dogen’s commentary on the *Heart Sutra*, confusing. But I think perhaps this section might be pointing to this idea of feeling gratitude towards everything.

If we look for writings in which Dogen gives us more specific guiding principles of how to act, or what attitude to have in action as opposed to on the cushion, we can turn to writings like *Bodaisatta Shishobo* – the *Bodhisattva’s Four Methods of Guidance*, or *Hachi Dainin Gaku* – *The Eight Realizations of Great Beings*.

In *Hachi Dainin Gaku*, Dogen states that The Eight Virtues of a Truly Great Person are:

having few desires, knowing one has enough, appreciating serenity/quietude, making diligent effort, not forgetting the teaching, the practice of settling in *samadhi-zazen*, the practice of wisdom or *prajna paramita*, not engaging in useless arguments or idle talk.

It seems to me that if one is to have few desires and know when one has enough, gratitude is implied because if we have few desires and know we have enough, chances are good that we feel gratitude for what we have. The practice of quietude or *zazen*, leads us to see in a non-discursive way how everything in our life is given to us. We are also asked to practice wisdom, that thing Dogen also talks about bowing to in *Makka Hannya Haramitsu*, which in effect means bowing to everything.

In *Bodhaisatta Shishobo*, *The Four Methods of Guidance*, the four elements of a Bodhisattva’s social relations, are giving, kind speech, beneficial action, and identity-action. Of these, giving feels most closely related to gratitude. I have heard from various teachers that what we are asked to give are material goods, the teaching, and fearlessness. In the section on giving, Dogen states that giving means non-greed. He suggests that we “Should offer flowers blooming on a distant mountain to the Tathagata, or offer treasures you had in a former life to sentient beings.” He also said, “To leave flowers to the wind, to leave birds to the seasons, are also acts of giving.” I find these statements strikingly beautiful, and also reassuring that giving is something much greater than I had originally believed because it seems that he is suggesting that giving is an attitude, a way of being in relationship in the world that isn’t directly tied to a specific giver, receiver, and gift. Similarly, I believe that Zen teaches us that gratitude is an attitude, a way of being, that is not necessarily directly tied to the act of receiving anything specific, or looking for something specific to be grateful for. It is in this way that there can be gratitude even if there is no giver, no receiver and no gift.

Chapel Hill Zen Center Newsletter — Nov & Dec, 2021

<http://www.chzc.org>

PAGE 6

The truth of the matter is that I think for a long time I engaged in gratitude only as a form of very polite and socially acceptable grasping and rejecting. And I still do it. I feel real gratitude for what I have, what my situation is, and what others have given me, but this is also a subtle type of grasping, at holding onto these certain things and situations. I also feel gratitude that I am not in various situations, that I do not have various illnesses, and that I do not have various objects to contend with, and this is actually a subtle form of rejecting. I tend to be introverted and have never felt like a very giving person in general. When I read Dogen's words, "To leave flowers to the wind, to leave birds to the seasons, are also acts of giving," and that giving is "to offer flowers blooming on a distant mountain to the *Tathagata*." I felt better, that maybe there is hope for me to be a generous person somehow after all.

Until recently, my experience of gratitude has also often had a feeling similar to a period in a sentence. I receive something. I feel gratitude as a response. I say thank you in some way. And that's the end of story. The gratitude is real appreciation, but that appreciation is the culmination of the receiving. In Zen however, I think we don't see gratitude written about so much because it is only an aspect of a flowing process.

In our meal chant we say, "Innumerable labors brought us this food, May we know how it comes to us. Receiving this offering, let us consider whether our practice and virtue deserve it." We don't say thank you we say, "Hmm, do I deserve this?" We then go on to say: "This food is for the three treasures (Buddha Dharma and Sangha), For our teachers, family and all people, And for all beings in the six worlds."

As we get ready to eat some food, we say it is basically for everyone in the world not just ourselves. We are eating for the whole world, to support a life that contributes to the well-being of the whole world. After all, our practice is to vow to live to benefit all beings. Then our Meal Chant tells us how we go about doing the above, how we can receive this food in a way that isn't just for the

satisfaction of our hunger, how it can be for all those beings: "The first portion is for the precepts. The second for the practice of *Samadhi*. The third is to save all beings"

So, we practice the precepts and we do zazen. We eat our food and use the energy from it to give to the world that supports our life. Looking at the meal chant, it discusses what we receive then what our response should be. Instead of saying our gratitude, it compels us to express our gratitude by practicing, continuing the giving, and allowing the movement of giving to keep flowing. If we look at life, we can see that giving and receiving go back and forth, and flow in all directions. If I look closely, it gets hard to tell what or who is giving, and who is receiving. Natural systems flow to the point that we can't tell what is giving and what is receiving when we are really in touch with how it is all interconnected. In a Dharma talk Hozan Alan Senauke said, "Giving is the natural energy of the Universe, it is like breathing." He then describe how trees create oxygen, we breath that in, process it, and give it back for the trees to receive. In the section, "God Giving" in *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*, Suzuki Roshi said,

"Every existence in nature, every existence in the human world, every cultural work that we create, is something which was given, or is being given to us, relatively speaking. But as everything is originally one, we are in actuality giving out everything. Moment after moment we are creating something, and this is the joy of our life. But this 'I' which is creating and always giving out something is not the 'small I'; it is the 'big I.'"

Sometimes we don't recognize that the "big I" or the Universe or whatever you want to call the unified whole, as the giver of all things. And we forget, and move away from the flow of energy with giving thanks. If I think about our culture here in general, we tend to take, accumulate, and throw away the world as utensils as David Loy described it. We consume energy, material goods, and items from nature as if they exist only for our use of them. If you are like I noticed I have been, you are often truly very thankful for what you

have, but my gratitude and my saying, thank you, has been the end of the flowing. Culturally we sometimes tend to not think about what happens after we receive what we have, or how it came to us. We say innumerable labors brought us this food, but really innumerable labors bring us everything in our life, bring us our life itself.

I think back to the historical Thanksgiving story and wonder, what does it really mean to be thankful for a beautiful place to live when the reason that place is available to us is that all the previous inhabitants died of illness brought by others like me? Or what is the value of gratitude for my way of life now if my way of life contributes to a future world that leaves so much less beauty and diversity of living beings for my son? A world that may be too hot for him to grow old in before he dies? Since I have vowed to live to benefit all being, then this is something I have to look at, and it can be very painful. According to David Loy, “Buddhism is not about avoiding suffering but being transformed by it.”

The fearlessness we are asked to give may sometimes mean being willing to honestly look at how complicated truth is, and how what we have is often necessarily related to the suffering of others. I think giving fearlessness also means a willingness to open to the vast expansive nature of true reality in which giving and receiving flow, in which our whole existence is recognized as a gift, and in which events and situations and things that we both want to grasp, and want to reject, can all be met with gratitude.

One example of this ability to meet difficulty with gratitude that really moved me was when Abbot Myogen Steve Stücky formally stepped down from his position as Central Abbot of San Francisco Zen Center because he was very ill. In his Stepping Down Ceremony he said, “My death asks so much of you. Please accept this as a teaching for yourself and for our Sangha. Accept this with gratitude.”

The fact that our chant book only has the word “gratitude” one time, and it is only in the glossaries of my favorite Zen reference books one time, does not mean that gratitude is not part of

our practice. It is the opposite. Gratitude is so much a foundational aspect of our practice it is a given. We are being taught that our whole practice is one of gratitude for the whole of our existence. We are being asked to meet everything that comes our way with gratitude. No grasping or rejecting is what we practice in our zazen, and that is what we are asked to bring forward into our daily lives. Zazen itself often leaves us in a non-discursive state of gratitude which leads to giving.

Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk who practiced with Suzuki Roshi and other Zen teachers, calls gratitude the Great Full-ness. It occurred to me that this can be the experience of zazen. When we open up completely and let go of everything, falling open to the big picture, everything is left and the delineation of where our life ends and everything around us begins is completely blurred. We recognize how our life is only possible because of everything we see as “outside” ourselves. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. This emptiness of a separate individual self is also known as boundlessness, perhaps this is the Great Full-ness. It is recognition of the “Unity” discussed in the *Merging of Difference and Unity*. Right now I am thinking that this is what true gratitude is – how gratitude exists as an important element of our practice even though we don’t see the word mentioned a lot in our teachings, and how it can exist even though we are taught in reality that there is no giver, no receiver, and no gift. When we practice, we are full of gratitude because like a fish completely surrounded by the ocean to the point that he cannot see where it starts or ends, if we are not grasping or rejecting, we see we are being given our entire life, and everything in it as a gift.

@Copyright 2021, Zenki Kathleen Batson

Chapel Hill Zen Center



P.O. Box 16302
Chapel Hill, NC 27516
(919) 967-0861

Zoom Schedule

Sunday Morning *Monday to Friday*

9:00 zazen	6:00 A.M. zazen
9:40 kinhin	6:50 A.M. zazen
9:50 zazen	
10:20 service	

Meetings at 5322 NC Highway 86
2.5 miles North of I-40 exit 266
Josho Pat Phelan, Abbess

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 166
Chapel Hill, NC

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Adverse Weather Policy

The general rule about coming to the Zen Center is, if driving may be risky, don't do it. For example, when it is snowing or sleeting, or if snow or sleet are predicted to occur before or during zazen, you can assume that the zendo will be closed. This is particularly true for 6 A.M. zazen. The highway where the zendo is located is often not as well traveled or as well treated for snow as other highways in the area, and the temperature in the county is often a couple of degrees colder than in more populated areas.

Embracing diversity, the Chapel Hill Zen Center expresses the fundamental connection of all beings by welcoming everyone to the practice of zazen.
May all beings realize their true nature.