



Beginning Zen Practice

A Class with David Guy

March 13–April 17, Monday, 7:30-9:00 P.M.

Zen Meditation, or *zazen*, is the simple practice of being present with our experience. We hear the instructions in a matter of minutes, but spend a lifetime learning the practice. These six classes will introduce participants to meditation and give them support as they develop a daily sitting practice. It will also introduce them to other aspects of practice at the Zen Center.

We will begin on the first night with meditation instructions and a short period of sitting. Each week we will continue to sit for a period at the beginning of class, gradually increasing the time. Participants will have a chance to ask questions and raise concerns about their practice. As the weeks proceed we will study other aspects of Zen practice, including walking meditation, protocol around the zendo, and the service of bowing and chanting. But the focus will be on *zazen*, and participants' actual practice as it unfolds. The content of the class will emerge from participants' questions and concerns.

The cost is \$60, payable the first night, and will be contributed to the Zen Center. Partial scholarships are available. Those who attend must be vaccinated, which includes having a booster, and wear an N95 or KN95 mask while indoors. For more information, or to sign up, please contact David Guy at 919-641-9277 or davidguy@mindspring.com.

David Guy has been practicing meditation since 1991, and regularly gives Zen meditation instruction at the Chapel Hill Zen Center. He has co-authored two books with Larry Rosenberg of the Cambridge Insight Meditation Center, *Breath by Breath: The Liberating Practice of Insight Meditation* and *Living in the Light of Death: On the Art of Being Truly Alive*, and is author of two novels with Buddhist themes. David's Blog is at www.davidguy.org

Zoom Zazen Schedule

The Zen Center continues to offer *zazen* via Zoom on Monday and Friday afternoons from 1:00 to 1:40 P.M., and Monday through Friday mornings at 6:00 and 6:50 A.M., EST. You are welcome to join both periods of *zazen* or either one. The Zoom link can be found on the Event Calendar: <https://chzc.org/events.htm>

All-day Sitting

There will be an in-person All-day sitting on Sunday, March 19, from 6:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M., for people who are fully vaccinated, **including a booster**, and who can wear a mask indoors. Orientation will be on **Saturday night at 7:30**, and includes instruction in the meal form. The day will include *zazen*, a Dharma Talk, practice discussion and a work period, as well as breakfast and lunch. ***It is alright to sit half of the day, but please sign up in advance, and please speak to Zenki if this is your first all-day sitting.*** 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 is appreciated. **Please sign up by Wednesday at info@chzc.org.** For more information on the *oryoki* meal form see: <https://kannondo.org/getting-started/oryoki/>

Outdoor Half-day Sitting

Saturday, April 1, 6:00 A.M.–12:15 P.M.

For the Outdoor Sitting, please bring a bag breakfast. Coffee and tea will be available on the back deck. Masks are required when indoors and when close to others on the back deck. For more information or to sign up, please email Zenki at chzc.zenki@gmail.com or Chris at ccensullo@yahoo.com. If you would like to join us for only a portion of the morning, please let us know when signing up.

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Dharma Talks

Chimyo Atkinson will give a Zoom Dharma Talk on Thursday Evening, March 9, at 7:00 P.M. Chimyo trained at Great Tree Zen Women's Temple with Teijo Munnich Roshi with whom she was ordained in 2007, and received Dharma Transmission in 2015. Chimyo received her monastic training at Great Tree and completed Sotoshu International training periods in Japan in 2010-2011. She also participated in additional training periods at the Aichi Senmon Nisodo in Nagoya in 2012 under Shundo Aoyama Roshi. Please use the Zoom link for the Study Group: Via computer: www.zoom.us/j/821378615

Via phone: (646) 558-8656

Meeting ID: 821 378 615

Zenki Kathleen Batson will give an in-person Dharma Talk on Sunday morning March 19, at the CHZC.

Eco-Dharma Group Zoom Watch Party:

The Rights of Nature—A Global Movement

Saturday, March 11, 10:00 A.M.

The Eco-Dharma Group invites you to join us on Saturday, March 11 at 10:00am for a Zoom watch party and discussion of the documentary, *The Rights of Nature—A Global Movement*, which explores the legal concept of and growing movement to protect the rights of nature, and the story of reconciling indigenous views of nature with Western ones. After the film, we will discuss the messages of the movie in the context of our understanding of Zen Buddhism. All are welcome. Please contact Chris at ccensullo@yahoo.com or Zenki at chzc.zenki@gmail.com for more information.

To join the watch party:

Via computer: www.zoom.us/j/821378615

Via phone: (646) 558-8656

Meeting ID: 821 378 615

New Virtual Peer Group

Ananda knew that having good and encouraging friends was very important for the path. He even wondered whether having good friends is half the path. "No, Ananda," the Buddha told him, "having good friends isn't half of the Holy Life. Having good friends is the whole of the Holy Life. (Meghiya Sutta)

The Zen Center plans to begin a Virtual Peer Group coordinated by Al-Nisa Berry and Maura High in Spring, 2023. These online meetings will give sangha members an opportunity to share their individual experiences, receive encouragement, and offer compassion in a safe, supportive environment. Our goal is to build a thriving virtual community based on Soto Zen principles and help one another deepen our practice in daily life.

The Peer Group is being created as a spinoff of the Small Groups which follow the Practice Period Tea format. This new group will differ from the Small Groups by allowing all members an equal opportunity to share their experiences while also engaging in respectful, inclusive, and candid conversations. For more information, please contact Al-Nisa Berry at alnisa.berry@gmail.com or Maura High at maurahigh@gmail.com.

Zoom Study Group

6:45 P.M.—8:00 P.M., on Thursday evenings

We are studying the *Heart Sutra*, reading Shohaku Okumura's commentary in the book *Living by Vow*, pages 131-205. **Please note that on March 10, Rev. Chimyo Atkinson will give a Dharma Talk at 7:00pm instead of the Study Group meeting.**

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.*

Looking Ahead

Kessei Ango - I am pleased to announce that the Richmond Zen sangha is planning to have a 90-day Practice Period, with Eden Kevin Heffernan

as *Shuso* or Head Monk. Eden will be leading practice, giving Dharma Talks, and meeting with members individually. Since the CHZC is a registered temple with the Soto Zen Registry, the Opening Ceremony will be held at the CHZC on Saturday, April 15, around 1:00pm. The Evening Tea and Shuso Dharma Inquiry ceremonies will be held on Friday night, and on Saturday around noon, on July 15. Everyone is invited these ceremonies. There will also be a Zoom Study Group reading Uchiyama Roshi's teaching in the book, *How to Cook Your Life*, on Monday evenings at 7:00. For more information, see: <https://www.richmondzen.org/about>

5-day Sesshin – We are planning to have an in-person 5-day Sesshin, or meditation intensive, June 16-21, led by Josho Pat Phelan.

Sangha News

We are happy to announce that Craig Adamski has begun serving as *Ino*, training and scheduling doans, planning services, and much more than we can say here. Many thanks to Zenki Kathleen Batson who has served as *Ino* for so many years.

2023 CROP Hunger Walk

Sunday, June 4 at 2:30 P.M.

Please join fellow sangha members for the Chapel Hill/Carrboro CROP Hunger Walk to help hungry and impoverished people locally and around the world. The 2023 CROP Hunger Walk will begin and end at the Carrboro Town Commons, 301 W. Main Street in Carrboro. You can make a donation, walk with us, or both! Your offering can be made online by going to the Zen Center team's CROP Walk page: www.CHZC.org/cropwalk.htm

Dharma Transmission

A talk Zenki Batson, January 22, 2023

As most of you know Jakuko, Kuden and I received Dharma Transmission from Josho Sensei over the Winter Break. Dharma Transmission has a mysterious quality to it. We don't generally discuss it in detail, so I didn't know exactly what I would be doing from December 26 through Jan 2. I only knew it would involve writing carefully on silk with a paintbrush and a lot of bowing.

In our school of Soto Zen Buddhism, you can only receive transmission once and only from one person. You are connected to this person for life. When we receive dharma transmission we are being entrusted by our teacher to teach, to stand upright, and share the Dharma on our own. Although we will, in reality, always be guided by our elders and teachers.

The dharma that is transmitted is our understanding, and it is our teacher's understanding. It is also Shakyamuni Buddha's all at the same time. Because all things co-arise and each individual is different and behaves differently in different relationships, we each received different dharma from Sensei. The dharma each individual carries is their own. It is a co-arising of the way their own understanding and life force meets their teacher's understanding and life force. Each person expresses the Dharma in a unique way as a unique being, but it is also all the same Dharma, an expression of the Buddha's teachings. Each transmission of the Dharma is simultaneously unique and universal. It is also constantly evolving and changing, while also being continuous and consistent. What is transmitted, the Buddha's teaching, is to be conveyed in the receiver's body, speech, and mind. It is to be embodied in how we live our lives. It is not an actual thing. It is nowhere and it is everywhere. This is my sense of it.

During our time together we were engaging in activities as our ancestors have for many generations, and we engaged in activities that had meaning at various levels. Activities were practical and mundane like eating together, cooking, bowing, painting, and chanting, and these activities were also at the very same time, touching into something vast and inexpressible with words and discursive thinking.

I think life is always this way if we are truly present for what we are doing. When we engage in life fully in each moment, in those moments there is a mundane practical aspect, and there is a vast boundless aspect because in reality we are always completely connected to the entire fabric of co-dependent origination – the fabric of existence. For me, this process of Dharma Transmission,

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living together for those many days, had us engaged in a daily rhythm of activities very conducive to experiencing this multidimensional quality of life in space and time.

For those eight days, I felt like I was participating in a very private and intimate sesshin. Those are the five and seven-day meditation intensives we do together. It was private daily monastic life with my close dharma relatives. Certain activities were done every day in a certain order, but we were not watching the clock the way we do in sesshin and we didn't actually sit much zazen. We were engaged in physical activities – bowing, chanting, services and ceremonies, and many hours of very carefully writing the names of the ancestors of our lineage using a brush with ink on special silk. To be engaged in such physically demanding activities, both gross and fine motor – we bowed more than 100 times every day! – seared the practice and experience of what we were doing into our physical being mentally, and emotionally. As we know heart and mind are not separate, and body and mind are not separate. As I carefully wrote the ancestors' names they became imprinted in my heart/mind. It reminded me of how I carefully wrote each student's name on their school bag and cubby name card by hand when I taught toddlers. Doing that carefully by hand was how I welcomed the children to school and into my heart and life.

Each morning began with Jakuko, Kuden and me visiting altars throughout the temple grounds to offer incense, bow, and chant. We took turns holding the incense for one another, offering the incense, and maintaining the chanting. In the beginning, we fumbled. The papers we carried that guided us and told us what to do when, rustled noisily and sometimes fell. We whispered questions and responses to each other about details that we couldn't remember. We were like a bunch of foolish children trying to get an assignment right. Slowly we became more confident and graceful. By the end, it began to feel like a smooth and beautiful offering that we were making individually and also in harmony with one another. I wasn't quite ready for it to end. We were just getting the hang of it!

At two points in this daily morning *jundo*, we would walk outside in the very cold predawn morning. The temperatures were really cold those days! In this cold darkness, one of the lines we chanted included the words, "Joining palms together with this mountain for the benefit of all beings." At these particular times, we would make a large open-armed circular gesture before bowing. While doing this I would look up at the predawn sky and feel like I was gathering the entire universe into my heart. Each time I felt amazed at how spacious I felt, as if everything could fit.

The word "mountain" in this line refers to our temple. Mountain is a traditional way to refer to Zen temples. We evolved from being a Zen Center to being both a Zen Center and a temple when Sensei became Abbess. She was installed as abbess in a Mountain Seat Ceremony in 2000 and our temple became known as a mountain at that time. The ceremony is known as *Shinsan Shiki* in Japanese. Literally, the "ceremony" (*shiki*) of "ascending" (*shin*) the "mountain" (*san*). I don't know the origin of this use of the word mountain. I do know that many monasteries were established on mountains far from the business of the world. I also have a sense that the purpose of the commitment of an abbot to oversee and maintain a temple and guide a sangha, is to create stability and a strong foundation for the community like a mountain. This isn't always how things pan out for communities. It *is* how it has worked for our very fortunate community. Our teacher has led by example with a calm, even steadiness for decades. As her assistant, I know in detail how much she does on a daily basis to do her job as abbess and I am deeply humbled and frankly sometimes completely overwhelmed by it. I have always believed that a good leader does things quietly and without much fanfare so that people don't realize how much they are actually doing. Our teacher exemplifies this.

We are known here as Red Cedar Mountain Temple or *Sekisanji*. This is what our temple seal says. We also have the name *Jogoji* as an official Soto Shu temple. *Jogo-ji* means Quietly Abiding Temple. Some people receive Dharma Transmission at a temple where they do not

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practice regularly or that is not their home temple. To be walking around the grounds of this beautiful place offering incense and bows of respect and gratitude where I practice daily was incredibly moving and meaningful. I felt great fortune to be doing it here at *this* beautiful Red Cedar Mountain. *This* sweet place of quietly abiding together in practice.

As we did these incense offerings at various altars around the temple grounds, we were honoring and offering gratitude to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and ancestors. I felt we were also honoring and expressing gratitude for this mountain itself – this ground, this building, these boards and roof, these zafus and zabutons, the trees, and squirrels, and deer, the sinks and toilets and tables, the heating system, (that will be looked at by repair men again next week) the stoves and refrigerators, and this sangha – everyone who practices here at this mountain. Our entire community of sentient and insentient beings.

To do this with Kuden and Jakuko contributed to its power and meaning for me. It reinforced that I am not alone but held within a sangha, and the activity of students receiving transmission from their teacher is about the whole sangha evolving. I also felt other dharma siblings with us.

As a sangha, we are incredibly fortunate to have this mountain. Many sanghas lost their temple homes in the pandemic. Sangha members, donors, and patrons support us and make it possible for us to have this temple building of our own and everything we need to practice the Dharma easily together. Sangha members volunteer time and energy to keep everything running smoothly along. There really is no excuse to not practice. It is all made so easy for us!

The responsibility to keep this practice alive is what has been passed on to me and my dharma siblings. I feel a great responsibility and deep honor. I look out at everyone here and feel completely supported and inspired by this practice. I feel confident that this is the way. There is a deep well of support and dharma water to drink from that springs from the Buddha and travels without pausing through time and space to us here and now.

During the days of Dharma Transmission, there was a lot of silence and focused awareness in our activities. We also had friendly conversations. During some meals, Sensei would reminisce and share stories with us about her practice and her experiences. We could feel that we were hearing important words about our lineage and our family. I only recently lost all my parents which imparted a sacredness to these moments for me because of a raw awareness that I will not always have access to them. These special moments with my teacher will one day end as everything does. There is a celebratory aspect to Dharma Transmission, of course, but there is also a very solemn aspect because such an event signals the passing of time and indicates that our existence is impermanent. In order for the Dharma to remain in the world of humans we pass it from one human to another. This implies that we are born, we age, and we die. As the verse on the han reminds us, *time passes swiftly*. Sensei was basically my age when I arrived here and I was still in my 20s. We are all aging. Dharma Transmission is a huge right of passage for the teacher and students. Rights of passage often inspire us to look back at our life, where we have been, and how we got to where we are.

One afternoon when Sensei went home to work on something I shared with Jakuko and Kuden how odd and unnatural it felt to me to not have her present. I felt a bit like a child who was not quite ready to be left home alone for the first time. We also all noted how warm and good it felt to be living together in this simple and focused way. Living together with Sensei, Jakuko, and Kuden over those days there was a sensation, maybe better to say, a recognition, that society can be peaceful, humans can get along, humanity can find a way.

No, we don't need to *find* a way there *is* a way, and this is it. The teachings of Buddha manifested *are* this way. To believe this, or move forward with this conviction, feels like the essence of taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. In monastic living, if we are sincerely making every effort to live according to the teachings, we function like an ideal family – buddha's family. I

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have had this sensation during sesshins too. Ultimately, Buddha's family includes the entire world. How do we live every aspect of our life in this harmonious way? It is an ongoing question for me.

Our time together was intense and beautiful and at times immensely overwhelming! It was exhausting some days. We were steadily engaged from before dawn until after dark. Each day another one of our activities was to chant the names of the Buddhas and Ancestors of our lineage, offering incense, ringing a bell, and bowing with each name. It was a powerful experience. The reality of our interconnection with others through space and time became visceral. I would envision each ancestor walking into the room to be with us. Somehow their students, their families, the people who supported them, the birds singing in their ears as they sat zazen, and eventually the plants and animals that sustained them were all present in the room too. In this way, the ancestors evolved into the entire world for me each time. The notion of making decisions with seven future generations in mind became more real to me.

As we chanted the names of the ancestors I was also reminded of the power and importance of saying a name, of remembering others, and was struck with a deeply somatic new reverence for the refrain to "Say their names" in the Black Lives Matter Movement. I wondered if bowing could play a role in contributing to healing somehow.

At some point over the days and our activities within them, it became viscerally clear at a deep gut level that Suzuki Roshi is an ancestor, Hakuryu Sojun Mel Weitsman is an ancestor, Taitaku Josho Pat Phelan our teacher is an ancestor, and we were in the process of becoming ancestors. To even consider myself an ancestor means to consistently look very closely at how to make the most wholehearted effort possible in each moment so that my deepest intention to live to benefit all being manifests in my actual behavior and actions. It means considering how I can serve better, how to fully align intention and awareness in each activity, and how to see the Buddha nature of each person I encounter. It also makes me more acutely aware of the human-

ness of all the ancestors that came before me. To acknowledge this humanness does not lessen the respect or immensely deep gratitude I have for their practice, their stories and teachings, their struggles, and their commitment to keeping this practice alive so that I am able to experience it in my life here today.

Sensei is considered to be in the 92nd generation since Shakyamuni Buddha. My dharma siblings and I are now considered part of the 93rd generation. To consider this theoretically unbroken blood vein through time is immensely powerful. These are the human generations. We also remember the Seven Buddhas before Buddha that remind us that truth is truth whether there are humans to experience it or not. The commitment made in Dharma Transmission is to not let this blood vein dry out or end, to continue this flow of the Dharma, passing it on to future generations into an unending future. Engaging as we did in activities done the same way over many generations we were and are directly connected to our ancestors and history. Our job is to keep this beautiful practice and way of life alive now and for future generations.

At one point, while writing with the paintbrush I noticed my pinky supporting my hand that held the brush so that I could make straight lines on the silk. This is something my mother, who was an artist taught me to do. She was very skilled at hand lettering. As I sat there working with black and red on white, her favorite colors, my mother was quietly present with me. My parents are now ancestors that I carry within me. Sometimes I say something or move a certain way and I hear my mother or father's voice or feel their life force continuing to be expressed through me. It is as if I carry them within me. Their genetics are my genetics.

This Family Business of Buddhism is the same. I feel I carry many aspects of Sensei within me in a similar way. Sometimes I have a thought and I can't tell or remember if it is an original thought from this brain, or if it is something Sensei taught me or showed me, or that I learned from observing her. I hear myself explain things the way she explained them to me. And, sometimes

I move or gesture in a certain way and it feels as if Sensei is directing it within me, since I have watched her so closely for so long. The way she sidesteps away from the altar before turning, for example, when I sidestep from the altar I experience it both in my own body and also somehow as an extension of her and I can't find myself in particular, or her, and it just becomes service and side stepping. It is sometimes a little disconcerting. "Who am I?" comes up. Then I remember that a separate independent self is an illusion, that what we call self co-arises with causes and conditions and our engagement with others. I recognize the influences of my teacher and the ancestors within me, guiding me, continuing to teach me, and then small self becomes large self and it is no longer disconcerting but inspiring.

This carrying of my teacher's teaching happened slowly over time, like the story of a person walking in a misty field and becoming drenched without noticing it happening. With my own parents gone and my teacher, my Dharma parent, entrusting me with the responsibility of being an ancestor, I feel like I have officially passed into a new realm of adulthood. I am fully grown. It is time to stand upright and carry forward every beneficial thing that all these various ancestors have shown me so I may be of benefit in the world. It reminds me of hearing somewhere that Uchiyama Roshi said the definition of a bodhisattva is a true adult. The adult that I have become completely co-arises with what I experienced being here on this Mountain. There would be no Zenki without Taitaku Josho. And there would be no Zenki without all of you. I would be here on the planet somewhere doing something, hopefully not causing big problems for others but there would be no *Myokyo Zenki*, Bright Mirror, Total Function. There would be no Bright Mirror if there were nothing to reflect, and no Total Function without learning from my teacher how to align intention into activity through awareness. No Zenki without this practice and the ancestors, without Gyugaku Hoitsu, Hakuryu Sojun, and Taitaku Josho.

Also, I would literally be up here in my skivvies if it weren't for others. My jubon belonged to Dai-En Bennage Roshi, my kimono to Nyugen Liz Moore, my koromo belonged to Choro. My *kotsu* to Zenkei Blanche Hartman. And some of these robes were made by Jakuko. Anywhere I go to practice people know Jakuko and at least one other person if not several will be wearing a garment made by her. We have our own sewing treasure here. She is part of the ancestor lineage as a teacher and also part of another lineage within that as a sewing teacher. I share all this because Jakuko ... has so many robes to sew! But I feel you should know she is a founder of the Chapel Hill Zen Center from the days before Sensei came to be the teacher here, and she is a treasure to the Soto Zen Buddhist community of the U.S.

Even this okesa, since I am not finished sewing mine yet is not mine. This okesa belongs to Sensei. She is letting me borrow it. I believe I owe it to everyone that I wear these items in a way that honors these people, their generosity, and their practice. Even when I finish the okesa I am sewing it will not be mine. It will always belong to Buddha. It is Buddha's robe and I feel the responsibility and honor of that deeply.

In Soto Zen, we take refuge in Buddha as ultimately being this entire universe, this entire reality. In Dharma, as the truth of how all beings are within this universe, and in Sangha, which is ultimately all beings. This is the truth of co-dependent origination. Within this vast network, we are each situated in a particulate place and time and we manifest our vows in that immediate reality. I am deeply grateful to be *here* on Red Cedar Mountain, in Quietly Abiding Temple. What a beautiful gift. I vow to honor this gift and my teacher's trust in me by living and sharing the Dharma to the best of my ability.

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Chapel Hill Zen Center



P.O. Box 16302
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In-Person Schedule

Mon, Wed & Fri

Tues Evening

6:00 A.M. zazen

7:00 P.M. zazen

6:50 A.M. zazen

7:50 P.M. zazen

Sunday Morning

9:00 zazen

9:40 kinhin

9:50 zazen

10:20 service

Meetings at 5322 NC Highway 86
2.5 miles North of I-40 exit 266

Joshō Pat Phelan, Abbess

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Living with Impermanence

This is an informal discussion group sharing how we experience impermanence in our lives including life changes, illness, aging and death. We usually begin with participants sharing what they are currently thinking of or dealing with. Discussions then usually emerge spontaneously to raised concerns. Silence is frequently a response after someone shares and we trust in that silence. On occasion we've set an agenda in advance to study a topic of interest. For more information, contact Carol at carollyklein53@gmail.com, Kris at krisgarvin@gmail.com, or Senmyo at jeffsherman3333@gmail.com.

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.

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.