



After the *Zaiki Tokudo* Ceremony (also called *Jukai*) at Richmond Zen, September 29, 2024. Pictured (left to right): Eden Heffernan, Blythe King: *Pōke Keishin*—Phoenix Transforming, Open Heart, Indranil Bagchi: *Kakushin Hokki*—Awakening Heart, Dharma Vessel, Josho Phelan, Zenki Batson.

### Holiday Closures

The Zen Center will be closed and there will be no Zoom Zazen on **Thursday, November 28** and **Friday, November 29**.

The Zen Center and Virtual Zendo will also be closed from **Thursday, December 19 - Wednesday, January 1**, except for the evening New Year's Eve Program and Sundays, December 22 and 29. In-person zazen will resume on Thursday morning, January 2.

### Rohatsu Sesshin

December 6–13

For information and to register, see pages 6 and 7.

### Dharma Talks

Sunday mornings at 10:30 AM

**Jakuko Mo Ferrell** on November 24

**Josho Pat Phelan Roshi** on December 8

*The public is also welcome to all of Josho Roshi's Dharma Talks during sesshin on December 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12 at 10:30 AM.*

**Zenki Kathleen Batson** on December 15 (Children's Talk as part of Buddha's Enlightenment.)

### General Meeting — In Person

Sunday morning, November 3

The General Meeting, our annual members' business meeting, will be held on Sunday morning, November 3, after morning service. The nominees for the next Board of Directors will be introduced and the budget for 2025 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, John Paredes at [john@jollyoso.com](mailto:john@jollyoso.com)

### Baika

Saturday, November 16, 10 AM to noon

You are invited to join us in singing *Baikaryu Eisanka*, Japanese Soto Zen Buddhist hymns with bell accompaniment. No experience necessary! Please contact Chris at [ccensullo@yahoo.com](mailto:ccensullo@yahoo.com) if you are interested in attending.

For more information about *Baikaryu Eisanka*, see: [www.sotozen.com/eng/practice/baikaryu/](http://www.sotozen.com/eng/practice/baikaryu/)

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## Bodhisattva Ceremony

Sunday, November 17 at 10:30 AM

We will have the Bodhisattva Ceremony instead of our regular service. This traditional monthly ceremony is a formal way of renewing our vows and precepts. Everyone is welcome.

## Buddha's Enlightenment

Sunday, December 15 at 10:30 AM

We will commemorate Buddha's Enlightenment with a short talk directed to the children followed by a candle lighting and special service in the zen-do. At the end of service, the children will be given a gift of incense and a candle. **The morning will end with pot-luck refreshments, with beverages provided.** Two periods of zazen, beginning at 9 AM will be held as usual. Everyone is welcome.

## New Year's Eve

Tuesday night, December 31

We will welcome the New Year with two periods of zazen at 8 and 8:50 PM followed by the Bodhisattva Ceremony at 9:20, and a Fire Ceremony at 9:50 followed by refreshments. For the Fire Ceremony, we write down the habits and tendencies, difficult states of mind, tangled aspects of relationships, and so on, that we would like to release. We will have an outdoor fire to burn our papers along with the name cards from Memorial Services held during the past year and incense stubs that have accumulated throughout year. Everyone is welcome for the whole program or to any part of it. **The program will end with pot-luck refreshments.**

## Sangha Net

The Sangha Net is a network of volunteers who offer short-term assistance to those in the sangha in need of help due to transitions in life such as illness, disability, or death of a loved one. Examples of tasks include shopping, arranging for meals, or transportation. 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.

## Study Groups via Zoom

### Yogacara Study Group

Monday evening, 5:30–6:30 PM

The Monday evening Study Group will continue studying the Yogacara text, the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra*, translated by John Powers, titled *The Wisdom of Buddha*, and Reb Anderson's book, *The Third Turning of the Wheel*. Please see the Event Calendar listing if you need a link to the PDF of the sutra. **There will be no meetings in December.** The group will resume meeting **on January 13.**

### Master Dogen's Zazen Meditation Handbook

Thursday night, 7–8 PM

The Thursday night Study group is reading *Master Dogen's Zazen Meditation Handbook, A Translation of Eihei Dogen's Bendowa: a Discourse on the Practice of Zazen*, written by Eihei Dogen, with Koshō Uchiyama's commentary. This group will take a **break beginning November 28 -through December.** It will resume meeting **Thursday, January 9,** and will end January 31.

### Seeing One Thing Through

Thursday night, 7–8 PM

On February 6, the Thursday night study group will resume studying Sojun Mel Weitsman's book, *Seeing One Thing Through* beginning with "Aspects of Practice," on page 127.

**All Study Groups use the same Zoom link, see: [www.chzc.org/events.htm#study](http://www.chzc.org/events.htm#study)**

Please log on 5-10 minutes before the study group begins so we can start on time. Everyone is welcome and there is no charge.

### Living with Impermanence

by Zoom About Once a Month

Living with Impermanence is an informal discussion group that shares 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

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that silence. On occasion we've set an agenda in advance to study a topic of interest. Please contact Carol Klein at [carollyklein53@gmail.com](mailto:carollyklein53@gmail.com) or Kris Garvin at [krisgarvin@gmail.com](mailto:krisgarvin@gmail.com), if you would like more information. Everyone is welcome.

## Peer Group by Zoom

Wednesdays, November 13 & December 11 at 7 PM  
These online meetings 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 meets monthly on the

Second Wednesday of the month. For more information, contact Al-Nisa at [alnisa.berry@gmail.com](mailto:alnisa.berry@gmail.com) or Maura at [maurahigh@gmail.com](mailto:maurahigh@gmail.com).

## Library Acquisitions

*Entangling Vines: Zen Koans of the Shumon Kattoshu*, translated by Thomas Yuho Kirchner; *Wait: A Love Letter to Those in Despair* by Cuong Lu; *Gardens of Awakening: A Guide to the Aesthetics, History, and Spirituality of Kyoto's Zen Landscapes* by Kazuaki Tanahashi and Mitsuo Nagase; *The Tale of Zen Master Bho Li* by Barbara Verkuilen and Aaron Gilmore; *The Book of Equanimity: Illuminating Classic Zen Koans*, by Hongzhi Zhengjue and translated by Gerry Shishin Wick.

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## Dharma Talk

by Josho Pat Phelan

Today Blythe King and Indranil Bagchi will receive the Precepts as Lay people at the Zen group, Richmond Zen. The ceremony begins with honoring the historical transmitters of this way of practice, Shakyamuni Buddha, Eihei Dogen who brought Soto Zen from China to Japan, Shogaku Shunryu who brought Soto Zen from Japan to the United States, and to other countless, nameless Ancestors who have kept this tradition alive during the past 2,500 years so that we, today, can meet practice. Now, it's our turn to accept the responsibility to maintain this practice so that countless others in generations to come may find it alive.

The honoring or homages begin with the statement, "Invoking the presence and compassion of our ancestors, in faith that we are Buddha, we enter Buddha's Way." One way to characterize "Entering Buddha's Way" is by choosing, moment by moment, to live based on vow, on our deep intention to wake up, rather than living by default based on our karmically conditioned, habitual reactions. This is almost a 24-hour a day intention that is engaged and re-engaged moment-by-moment. At first this takes conscious effort, but the more we turn toward this wholesome direction, the more it sinks in and begins to "saturate" our mind and consciousness.

Once I read that the Dalai Lama, who has been a celibate monk his whole life, said that he had a dream of an attractive woman. And in the dream, he reminded himself, "I am a monk." To me this indicates that his vow is so deeply integrated, that even when dreaming, he is aligned with his vow. I think this is how we transform our consciousness in *zazen* and in our daily lives—wake up to this present moment, to our vow, wake up and return, over and over. This is a transformation—you know, it takes time, and there are ups and downs. It's not a straight transition.

When I read Katagiri Roshi's teaching on the precepts in his book *Returning to Silence*, I was really struck by how much Katagiri Roshi used the term "faith." The word that is translated as "faith" from Sanskrit is *shraddha*. The meaning of faith in Buddhism is different from the way that faith is commonly used in the West or practiced in Christianity.

In Buddhism *shraddha* is the conviction that grows through our own direct experience with the teaching. This doesn't mean just hearing the teaching and liking it or even understanding it—it means knowing how the meaning of the teaching applies and works in our own personal lives. In Zen we tend to use the word "faith" to mean trust, or the confidence, that practice works—that we have everything we need to practice and awaken. Because

of this, we can throw ourselves fully into practice without needing to try to measure our progress. In this way, practice becomes an endeavor that isn't dependent on what it can do for us. We, ourselves, have the ability to practice and to awaken, so our trust or faith isn't in something outside ourselves; or, maybe it means trusting everything, including ourselves and our practice.

Katagiri Roshi said that our effort to practice is supported by the whole universe, and that if our effort were not supported by the universe as a whole, we couldn't make real effort. I feel encouraged and moved by these words. But even though I am used to this idea, when I read Katagiri Roshi's teaching on the precepts, I was still surprised to find how much he referred to the nature of the universe in benevolent terms. He didn't use the word "benevolence" or "the nature of the universe,"—that's how I characterize it. I've always thought that in Zen, the universe was treated in a neutral way, not as bad or good, but simply being, just as it is. So I was surprised to find such a strong attitude of benevolence.

A good example of Katagiri Roshi's attitude of benevolence is in his discussion of repentance. Before receiving the precepts formally, first, there is repentance in which we acknowledge our endless actions arising from ignorance. In *You Have to Say Something*, Katagiri Roshi wrote, "Repentance is to realize exactly the oneness of ... all sentient beings and buddha, delusion and enlightenment." He said, "All sentient beings are allowed to live and are, from the beginning, forgiven for living their lives in this world." "...the self must readily accept the compassion of Buddha's world." He said, "Buddha's world" means the "Truth, or the same and one ground, or that which is beyond good and bad." So another way we could word this is "the self must readily accept the compassion of that which is beyond good and bad."

Katagiri Roshi continued, to readily accept Buddha's compassion "means we must actualize Buddha's compassion in our everyday lives. We have to live our lives in the complete realization that we are already forgiven, that we are already allowed to live..." He said, "We are already embraced....our

bodies and minds are embraced by the universe" Again, "We have to live our lives in the ... realization that we are already forgiven, that we are already allowed to live..." "...our bodies and minds are embraced by the universe," which seems like such a warm, caring, inclusive attitude for being in the world. And I believe that this view is dependent, completely dependent, on self acceptance which includes self forgiveness and deep trust.

Perhaps in Zen practice one of the greatest leaps of faith is the willingness to let go of thought, especially in this day and age. And to me this means to let go of our story, a little or a lot; and letting go of our story is a fundamental form of renunciation. Once someone described this as the story of me, written by me, starring me, directed by me, told by me... and heard by me. Repeating our stories strengthens our point of view, it justifies our actions, and perpetuates our pain. I think to let go of our story is, to a large extent, to let go of supporting and defending the self. One way I think of the self is, our personal, organizing principle that structures how we do what we do; and I think the self also projects something like an organizing structure onto the world, including that which gives meaning to our lives and which could be interpreted as God. When we practice *zazen*, the more we are able to settle into this body and mind, the more we are able to trust; and the stronger our trust becomes, the more we can feel where we hold back, how we try to protect and defend our self. The 9th precept concerns vengeful anger and it is characterized by contriving reality for the self. And the problem of the self and what happened to it, what it likes and doesn't like and why, normally is a big part of our mental world.

One of the tangible forms our faith takes is sitting *zazen*. What allows us to settle into this experience, into this moment fully, is to let go of our future, just sitting here with the unknown. To do this, we need to let go of any expectations and hopes of what our *zazen* will do for us. This is a radical letting go of any ideas we may have about the result of our efforts. Faith or trust is what allows us to let go, to drop anything that is not right now. Mentally, this means letting go of our strategies, our plans, and even our orientation in time and space in *zazen*. Physically,

it means letting go of holding or tension. We sit facing the wall which, I think, gives us freedom to unfold, deeply unfold, and meet the unknown within ourselves. One way to begin is to relax physically, letting go of any kind of facial expression or holding of the muscles in the face; during *zazen*, let it all drop away. Let the gaze of your eyes soften, without trying to focus on anything. We are sitting here with the fundamental ground of our being—actually, sitting *zazen* is the most fundamental element of being, which is much more essential than the story of our “self.”

During *zazen* when any kind of tension or holding comes up in your body, try to let it go. If that doesn't work, instead try to relax or settle into the holding as a way to learn more about it. A helpful attitude might be, “How do ‘I’ do ‘me’...How do ‘I’ do ‘me’ in such a way that needs this holding or contraction?” Or “What would happen if I didn't hold right here”—wherever that is in my body or mind?

I'm reminded of the koan, Case 46 in the Mumonkan, “Stepping from the Top of the Hundred-Foot Pole” which is very simple, “One day Master Sekiso said, ‘How do you step forward from the top of a hundred-foot pole?’ Another master commented, “Even though one who is sitting on top of a hundred-foot pole has entered the Way, or has entered realization, it is not yet genuine. Take a step from the top of the pole and the world of the Ten Directions is your total body.”

Sitting on top of a hundred-foot pole” refers to realization, or enlightenment, or emptiness. The point of this story is not to get stuck in emptiness—not to be attached to enlightenment. Realization is a direct experience, a living reality... a kind of gift; but if we hold on to it, it stops being alive and instead becomes a theory. Stepping forward from the pole refers to letting go and staying in the present with whatever this moment brings. In the book, not always so, Suzuki Roshi commented on this case saying, “If [one] stays at the top, he is not the enlightened one. When he jumps off the top of the pole, he may be the enlightened one...” Then he said, “Actually there is no top of the pole. The pole continues forever, so you cannot stop there.” “And even though you try to stop at the top of the pole,

you cannot stay there because it is growing continuously.” “To forget about the top of the pole is to be where you are right now....not to be in the past or the future, but to be right here.” He said, “This is *shikantaza*.” *Shikantaza* is sometimes translated as whole-hearted sitting or nothing but just sitting, with no expectations, and it is another word for *zazen*.

*Shikantaza*, or just sitting, is the complete, unambivalent willingness to just sit, letting go of layer upon layer of holding, both physically and mentally. This tension or holding can take the form of maintaining our personality, as well as anything that goes into putting together what we think is expected of us. When you sit, try to relax that expectation “muscle.” The more we let go, the more we can settle; and the more we settle, the more we trust; the more we trust, the more we can entrust our life to life itself. In this endeavor of just sitting, in the midst of uprightness, we don't do anything, we don't even breathe. So, we don't interfere or try to make anything happen—we allow breathing to happen the way it wants to happen. We just sit, laying down anything that interferes with this. This can be a profound allowing of the self to rest, just rest. I think, especially when we begin practicing *zazen*, we need to trust that everything we let go of will be there at the end of *zazen*, when we need it. Our memory will return, we will know how to start our car and find our way home. It may sound silly, but in the beginning I think there can be a fear that if we let go too much, “we” or “I” may not return. Maybe we will forget how to be who we are, or who people remember us being. When we sit, we give thinking back to thought, we give memories back to memory, trusting and entrusting our being to the unknown, to the universe which is always supporting and embracing us.

Katagiri Roshi said that “Right faith is not waiting until we understand something and then doing it; faith is to do something even though our consciousness tells us we don't have faith, even though we don't know what right faith is. He said, Right faith is to do something because it is exactly the total manifestation of the ultimate nature of existence.”

In our everyday activity, letting go of thinking, or

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our storyline, is very close to letting go of self-consciousness, which isn't so easy since most of us are strongly conditioned to be aware of how we are being seen by others. We may feel judged for our size, our clothes, our athletic ability, attractiveness, grooming, intelligence, competence, personality, humor and so on. Sometimes we carry around the painful attitude, "How am I doing?" "Am I worthy, do I fit in, am I really acceptable?" In practice, we try to let go of self-consciousness by inhabiting our bodies. Strangely enough, connecting with our physical presence unifies our body and mind, it closes the mental gap that creates our sense of separation from others.

Master Dogen used the phrase, "our whole faith-like body," which is also translated as "our whole vow-like body." Katagiri Roshi said this "means

your whole body and mind are exactly faith." Or we could say exactly vow. He continued, "You cannot discriminate between you and faith, you and zazen." "Faith means tranquility, and complete tranquility is the source of ... our existence." "Faith in Buddhism is to trust perfect tranquility, which is to trust something greater than just our conceptualization." "...this tranquility comes up just like spring water from the earth because we already have it underground, regardless of whether we are conscious of it or not."

Again, the precepts ceremony begins, "In faith that we are Buddha, we enter Buddha's Way," we enter life based on vow, reconnecting with this deep spring; without seeing it or hearing it, still we can connect with it.

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## Rohatsu Sesshin

Friday, December 6 – Friday, December 13

Josho Roshi will lead the Rohatsu Sesshin from Friday night, December 6, through Friday afternoon, December 13. Sesshin is an intimate way to practice with ourselves and others. We begin sesshin together, we sit together, walk together, eat together, and work together. Our practice is supported by the entire universe and each of us is supporting everyone else.

Sesshin will begin **at 7 PM on Friday evening** with orientation and job assignments. In order to help all of us settle into the schedule and our zazen practice, please arrive on time for orientation on Friday night. The zendo will be open by 5 PM on Friday. Following orientation, silence will be observed.

It is possible to sit part of the sesshin, but please come to orientation on Friday night, and commit to sitting for at least two days. When registering, clearly explain what part of sesshin you would like to attend. The sesshin day will include zazen, beginning at 6 AM, kinhin, a Dharma talk, work period, formal *oryoki* meals in the zendo, and dokusan, an individual meeting with Josho Roshi, will be available. The day will end around 9:30 PM.

Fees are \$50 per day for Participating Members, and \$60 per day for others. However, if you are able to offer more, it would be very helpful; the additional funds can be considered a tax-exempt donation. There will also be an opportunity to offer a donation to the teacher. **It is our intention that no one be turned away for financial reasons, and scholarships are available.** If you would like to request a scholarship, please contact John Paredes at [john@jollyoso.com](mailto:john@jollyoso.com) and let him know how much you are able to contribute. In the past, contributions received for scholarships were very helpful in allowing people to attend sesshin here and at the San Francisco Zen Center.

Please return your registration form by Wednesday, November 27, with a \$50 deposit. The registration form is also online at: [www.chzc.org/december-sesshin.pdf](http://www.chzc.org/december-sesshin.pdf).

You are welcome to sleep at the ZC, and there may be some space available in members' homes nearby. Please bring a portable bed or pad for the floor, a sleeping bag, pillow, a towel and wash cloth, slip-on shoes, work clothes, and layered clothing. Opportunities for bathing are limited. For more information, please contact Zenki at [info@chzc.org](mailto:info@chzc.org).

The Zen Center emergency phone is  
**(919) 933-0776**

# Chapel Hill Zen Center

## December Sesshin Registration Form

December 6 – 13, 2024 | Registration Due Wednesday, November 27

Chapel Hill Zen Center PO Box 16302, Chapel Hill, NC 27516

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Liability waiver:** *Prior to sesshin, you will be required to sign a waiver whereby you release the Zen Center from any liability for accident or injury, and agree not to sue. You may request a copy of the form in advance.*

I have a medical condition:  Yes  No

*For example, diabetes, heart condition, pregnancy. Please attach a short statement of explanation if yes.*

I have an allergy or food restriction:  Yes  No List allergy and severity: \_\_\_\_\_

I have an oryoki I can bring:  Yes  No

I need a chair for zazen:  Part time  Full time

I plan to arrive at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. I plan to leave at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

I am sitting only part of sesshin/I have a modified schedule:  Yes  
*If sitting a modified schedule, please write out the details.* Modified schedule (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

I can help set up (Friday, 5 - 6pm):  Yes

I can help clean up on last day:  Yes

I have enclosed my deposit/sitting fees: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to donate toward the scholarship fund: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I paid my deposit/sitting fees online (chzc.org/donate.htm):  Yes Amount paid: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

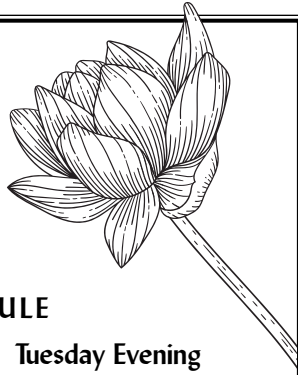
If this is your first sesshin with the Chapel Hill Zen Center, please attach a short statement about your zazen practice and history: How long have you been sitting zazen? How often are you currently sitting? Have you sat a one-day sitting or longer sesshin before? If so, when and with whom?

I have room in my home for someone from out of town to stay?  Yes

Where do you plan to sleep?

# Chapel Hill Zen Center

P.O. Box 16302  
Chapel Hill, NC 27516



## SCHEDULE

### Sunday Morning

9:00 AM zazen  
9:40 AM kinhin  
9:50 AM zazen  
10:30 AM service

### Tuesday Evening

7:00 PM zazen  
7:40 PM kinhin  
7:50 PM zazen

### Monday through Friday Morning

6:00 AM and 6:50 AM zazen, 7:30 AM service

Meetings at 5322 NC Hwy 86, Chapel Hill, NC  
2.5 miles North of I-40 exit 266

**Josho Pat Phelan, Abbess**

**Zenki Kathleen Batson, Vice Abbess**

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*Without thinking that he protects rice  
the scarecrow  
in the mountain's small paddy  
doesn't exist in vain*

— Master Dogen



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.