



Holiday Closures

The Zen Center will be closed on **Labor Day, Monday, September 2.**

December Sesshin

We are planning to have a 7-day sesshin December 6–13. For more information and the registration form, please see the Event Calendar section of the ZC website www.chzc.org/events.htm#sesshin.

Outdoor Half-day Sitting

Saturday, September 7, 6 AM–12:15 PM

Please bring a bag breakfast which you can either keep at your place or store in the Annex fridge. Coffee and tea will be available on the back deck. For more information or to sign up, please email: info@chzc.org. If you would like to join us for only a portion of the morning, please let us know when signing up.

Dharma Talks

Dharma Talks will be given at 10:30 AM, on Sunday mornings, September 22, by Josho Pat Phelan, and October 20, by Zenki Kathleen Batson.

All-Day Sittings

All-day sittings are planned for Sundays, September 22, and October 20, 6 AM until 5 PM. We encourage you to wear a mask indoors. **Orientation will be on Saturday night at 7:30 PM**, and includes instruction in the meal form. The day will include zazen, a Dharma Talk, Dokusan 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 Josho or 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 the 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 the Wednesday prior** at info@chzc.org. For more information on the oryoki meal form see: <https://kannondo.org/getting-started/oryoki/>

Baikaryu Eisanka

Saturday, October 5, 10 AM to noon

You are invited to join us for *Baikaryu Eisanka*, the practice of singing Japanese Soto Zen Buddhist hymns with bell accompaniment. No experience necessary! Please contact Chris at ccensullo@yahoo.com or Zenki at chzc.zenki@gmail.com, or sign up at the bulletin board if you are interested in attending. For more information about *Baikaryu Eisanka*, see www.sotozen.com/eng/practice/baikaryu/

Beginning Zen Practice

A Class with David Guy

Six Monday nights, 7:30–9 PM

October 14–November 18

Stop searching for phrases and chasing after words. Take the backward step and turn the light inward. Your body-mind of itself will drop off and your original face will appear.

— Master Dogen

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. This class 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 Chapel Hill Zen Center.

The class will meet at the Chapel Hill Zen Center on Monday nights. The cost is \$60, payable the first night, and will be contributed to the Zen Center. Partial scholarships are available. 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

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Study Groups via Zoom

Yogacara Study Group

Monday nights, 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.

Precepts Study Group

Wednesday nights, 7–8 PM

This group is led by Jakuko Mo Ferrell and will meet on Wednesday evenings, **except for the second Wednesday of each month: September 11, and October 9**. We are reading *Waking Up to What You Do: A Zen Practice for Meeting Every Situation with Intelligence and Compassion* by Diane Eshin Rizzetto along with supplemental materials. Contact Jakuko Mo Ferrell at Mowitwear@gmail.com for questions and updates.

Master Dogen's

Zazen Meditation Handbook

Thursday nights, 7–8 PM

We are reading and discussing *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 Kosho Uchiyama's commentary.

Everyone is welcome and there is no charge.

All Study Groups use the same Zoom link, see: chzc.org/events.htm#study

Sejiki Ceremony

Saturday evening October 26 at 7 PM

This year the *Sejiki* Ceremony will be held on October 26, at 7 PM. Children are welcome, and welcome to wear costumes. And we invite you to help decorate the entry garden and deck with your Jack-o-Lanterns!

Sejiki is a Japanese word meaning “feeding the hungry ghosts.” Hungry ghosts are depicted as beings with very large stomachs swollen from malnutrition, who have the tiniest of throats, and who are always hungry. They are symbolic of the state of mind which is never satisfied with who we are or what we have. In the ceremony we call forth hungry ghosts and beings who are stuck in intermediary states, as well the dark, unknown regions of our own psyches, bringing them into the light. We offer them the nourishment of Dharma with the hope of satisfying and releasing them.

The *Sejiki* Ceremony also has the feeling of a universal memorial service. In addition to releasing the spirits of the departed, the ceremony is intended to resolve our karmic relationships with the deceased. During the ceremony, the names of those for whom we have performed memorial services during the past year will be read.

If you would like the name of a friend or relative, or other being read during the service, please leave the name in the envelope on the zendo bulletin board, or send it to info@chzc.org no later than the day before the ceremony.

In the spirit of *Sejiki*, we invite you to bring a food offering for the Interfaith Council pantry of non-perishable goods, which will be collected in the entryway.



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General Meeting

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

Eco-Dharma Update

The CHZC Eco-Dharma group began meeting in 2017 as a way for sangha members to express their concern for the more-than-human world. We now plan to fold all future activities into the main programming of CHZC. The greatest interest and momentum in the group revolves around tending to and ensuring the well-being of our shared Chapel Hill Zen Center environment, including care of the land at 5206 Hwy 86. These are some of our ongoing projects: Kris Garvin, as head of the flower-arranging team, continues to plant more native species at 5206, and garden volunteers are working to remove invasive species at the Zen Center. We have had work days focused on the trees we planted at 5206, and now regularly hold Half-day Outdoor Sittings as part of our general programming. Thanks to the efforts of Steve Magers and several volunteers, we have an outdoor pavilion to sit in if it rains. The efforts of the Eco-Dharma group have also influenced the CHZC Board which approved the purchase and installation of a new energy-efficient water heater, and continues to make a strong effort to consider environmental factors when making purchase decisions. As John Daido Looi said, "When you realize the whole universe as nothing but yourself, you have to take care of it." Caring for the more-than-human world is a natural and logical extension of our practice of Zen Buddhism, so it will continue to manifest within our regular programming. Stay tuned for upcoming opportunities to participate.

Outdoor Workday at 5206

Sunday, October 6 at 11:20 AM

Following the Sunday morning program, we will have a work period at the 5206 property up the highway. Please bring a bag lunch and work gloves. Drinks will be provided.

Peer Group by Zoom

The Peer Group meets monthly on the Second Wednesday at 7 PM. Upcoming Meetings will be on September 11, and October 9. Please join us in sharing your thoughts, challenges, and successes with other sangha members. For more information, please contact Al-Nisa Berry at alnisa.berry@gmail.com or Maura High at maurahigh@gmail.com. The Zoom link can be found on the Event Calendar at www.chzc.org/events.htm#peer

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.

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 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 or Kris Garvin at krisgarvin@gmail.com, if you would like more information. Everyone is welcome.

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Looking Ahead

Lama Rod Owens

November 1, Hayti Heritage Center

November 2, Eno River Unitarian Church

Lama Rod will speak at the Hayti Heritage Center on Friday, November 1 at 7 PM, and lead a one-day retreat, open to all, on Saturday, November 2 from 9 AM to 4 PM, at Eno River Unitarian Church in Durham. For more information, contact Karen Ziegler at: ziegl001@gmail.com.

Finding the Compassion in Zen

Zenki Kathleen Batson

Today I want to explore a line of questioning that keeps coming up. The questions revolve around what people perceive as coldness and lack of compassion in Zen. People ask, where is the kindness, the tenderness, and warmth? I am always slightly surprised that people see these elements as missing. At the same time, I know that sometimes our practice can seem odd and cold to a newcomer. I think it is helpful to remember that Zen operates in a completely different paradigm from the one most of us grew up within. Zen is not focused on dividing our activity into right and wrong, then working to fight for what we have labeled right, and against what we have labeled wrong. Zen is focused on seeing the true nature of our lives beyond this simplistic view of right and wrong. It asks us to de-center our personal judgments about the world; physically settle into the rootedness of this experience that works to see all perspectives, then respond appropriately and without harm to benefit the most beings. In our practice, we work to stay present for what is arising without turning away.

In our environment here, we create order and subtle beauty that quietly calls us to look more carefully and in fuller detail. It beckons us to stay present with what is. Sometimes people can misinterpret this idea of staying present to what is as not doing anything, or not caring for the big picture. In practice, Zen teaches us that we are in, as well as affecting, the big picture in every moment. Every choice we make matters.

The first Dogen writings I read were the “Genjokoan” and the “San Sui Kyo.” I cried because I found them so beautiful and moving. They expressed a truth I had up to that point not seen expressed in words anywhere else. Words like kindness and compassion are not in either of those fascicles, but they aroused in me a deep feeling for all beings. Zen is like artwork. Its teachings meet us directly. They strike us at our core and open our hearts and minds to take in more of the endless universe. When we first begin studying or practicing Zen we may not know that Zen is a Mahayana tradition. Mahayana is the name for all the Buddhist schools that have the Bodhisattva Vow at their foundation. A bodhisattva is motivated by *bodhicitta*, the inspiration and aspiration to awaken to the truth to help all beings realize their true nature and end suffering. Bodhisattvas vow to remain in the world of suffering to respond to the suffering of all beings. Specifically, the suffering brought about by not understanding the truth of impermanence, interconnectedness, and the signless nature of all phenomena. By signless, I am referring to the ultimate inability to name the phenomenon of the world truthfully. Any definition we create does not properly label the subtle profound reality that is happening. And yet we must use words. We must communicate and live our lives in the world together. *Prajna* is the wisdom of these truths. Awakening to these truths relieves suffering. Sometimes it can seem that the focus in Zen is only on this wisdom element of Buddhist teachings. If we explore the teachings of Buddha’s wisdom without the lens of compassion however, they become useless and potentially harmful. Nagarjuna warns that a misunderstanding of emptiness is a dangerous thing. Compassion is wisdom’s partner in all sects of Buddhism.

Although there is much Zen literature to read and help guide us, Zen practice is about experiential learning. Zen practice tosses us into the experiences. It takes time to discern what the experiences mean. Zen is pushing us to truly be awake and alive in our actual life, not just moving through it as we live in our thought constructions. Okumura Roshi

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says, “When we see the flower without thinking, we find that our life, this body and mind, and the life of the flower are the same life. There’s no separation. We can say, ‘I am blooming there as a flower.’ To extinguish our views, to let go of thought, or to negate our own way of thinking is not negative. It makes our life very vivid and dynamic.” The wondrous beauty of recognizing and living within this vivid and dynamic reality is peaceful and healing. It is the essence of Zen practice.

In the same way as Okumura Roshi describes seeing a flower, when we see another being suffering, if there is no separation we can say, “I am suffering over there as that person.” Compassion arises in non-duality. As deluded beings we need encouragement, guidance, and help to realize this. So I’d like to talk specifically about where we can look to be reminded of the importance of compassion in our practice here at the CHZC.

When we become committed to practicing Zen we receive the 16 Bodhisattva Precepts. These precepts guide our activity. According to Tenshin Reb Anderson they “are the gate to authentic Zen practice. They offer a way to bring the stillness and silence of sitting into active expression in everyday affairs, a way for compassion to enter all aspects of our lives. They are the life vein of upright sitting...The Ten Grave precepts of the 16 Bodhisattva vows encourage us to protect and nurture life, to be generous and respectful of others’ property, to use sexual energy in an appropriate way, to tell the truth, to maintain a clear mind and body, to speak of the virtues of others and our interdependence with them, to be generous in all material and spiritual matters, to practice loving kindness and nonviolence, and to respect and protect the Triple treasure – Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.” These Precepts are so important we take them when we receive the precepts as a Lay person, *Jukai*, and sew a rakusu. We receive them when we ordain as a priest. We receive them when we get married, and also when we die. We also try to have the Bodhisattva Ceremony regularly here to renew our vows and keep them fresh and alive in our lives. I find the Bodhisattva ceremony beautiful and very moving. The

sounds and the bowing open my heart and mind. Zazen also opens our heart/mind in this non-discursive way. It is beneficial to also read through the ceremony on our own to learn the words and think about what we are saying. Compassion and warm concern for others is right there in our vows to live a life that does not harm. These vows are not rules or admonitions. They are a roadmap of Buddha’s beautiful sublime world. Since we are humans we get confused and have trouble navigating Buddha’s world. We tend to want to cling to parts of it and reject other parts of it. We need this roadmap to keep us from getting lost. As Dogen says in “Gakudo Yojin-shu,” “All buddhas’ compassion for sentient beings are neither for their own sake nor for others. It is just the nature of buddha-dharma. Isn’t it apparent that insects and animals nurture their offspring, exhausting themselves with painful labors yet in the end have no reward when their offspring are grown? In this way, the compassion of small creatures for their offspring naturally resembles the thought of all buddhas for sentient beings. The inconceivable dharma of all buddhas is not compassion alone, but compassion is the basis of the various teachings that appear universally. Already we are children of the buddhas. Why not follow their lead?”

As human beings who follow the Bodhisattva Precepts as a roadmap of Buddha’s world, we are one type of bodhisattva. Another type of bodhisattva is the various powerful archetypal manifestations of Buddha’s qualities. Specific bodhisattvas represent various attributes of Buddha.

An important visual reminder that we have here is this statue of the Bodhisattva of Compassion. This Bodhisattva is sometimes portrayed as being male and sometimes as female, and is known by many names. In our practice here you hear him/her referred to as Avalokiteshvara, Kanzeon, or Kannon. This bodhisattva is here in the zendo and also in the entryway. Sometimes people call her Kwan Yin. This bodhisattva’s presence in our zendo is not a decoration. She looks down from a height with a wide-angle perspective to see and hear all the cries of the world – to see the big picture. She is the em-

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bodiment of compassion. These statues remind us that we are being called to manifest Kanzeon for ourselves and for others. Kanzeon exists in the world because we bring her qualities into being in our own lives. In the *gaitan*, the room next to the meditation hall, the large calligraphy with powerful strokes is a mantra in Korean script often associated with the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Sometimes for service we chant the “Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo.” When we chant this we are invoking Kanzeon and paying homage to the manifestation of compassion. We are calling forth the spirit of compassion within ourselves and within the world. We chant that all day and all night our thoughts will be Kanzeon, and we are saying our small mind is not separate from Big Mind or Buddha. According to Sojun Mel Weitsman, “Kanzeon is not separate from you or I or Big Mind – the mind of the universe.”

We also chant the Heart Sutra almost every time we get together. In the Heart Sutra the very first word is Avalokiteshvara which is another name for Kanzeon. In longer versions of the Heart Sutra we can see that the Heart Sutra is Avalokiteshvara’s answer to Shariputra’s question about how we should practice. We also learn that the whole exchange occurs in Shakyamuni Buddha’s *zazen*. What does this mean? I would say that it means that the teachings of Buddha’s wisdom, *Prajna*, the understanding of emptiness and the non-self nature of all being, are being expressed through the lens of compassion. If we don’t pay attention, it can be easy to forget who is speaking in the Heart Sutra once we start chanting. We can remember that it is the Bodhisattva of compassion who is delivering this teaching in the Heart Sutra. For me this sutra exemplifies the union of compassion and wisdom in Zen even though it is not explicitly said. That it occurs in Shakyamuni Buddha’s *zazen* lets us know that *zazen* is the practice in which these two elements arise. It is subtle so it can be easy to miss this important point. Abbot Obora in his commentary on the Heart Sutra states that Avalokiteshvara’s heart is an empty heart. In our dedications, we ask to awaken Buddha’s compassion and luminous mirror wisdom and we dedicate any merit attained

from our chanting to the benefit of all beings.

Often we hear words in Zen that we can interpret in a negative way such as dispassion, equanimity, and stillness. They can feel like an admonition to not engage and to not care. Or, we can have the idea that it means we should care for everything equally. Dogen teaches that high things belong in high places and low things belong in low. We don’t care for things equally, but we can care for each thing we are engaging with fully in the moment we are engaging with it. And, if we are not able to do that, we can work to have compassion for our mind’s desire to reach towards some other moment. Through our practice of *zazen*, we learn somatically that what letting go leads us to is a vastly wide open heart/mind that cares deeply. A heart/mind that is responsive instead of reactive and driven by ego. For me, equanimity means a willingness to continuously let go of my tight grasp so that I can meet life with an open heart/mind over and over – even when I fail dramatically. Okumura Roshi says, “The Buddha’s peaceful dharma is reality itself free of all dichotomies. This reality is blissful and precious. We don’t usually see reality itself but only our preconceptions.” “When we refrain from viewing and judging things in dualistic ways, our attitudes towards external things are transformed.” I believe the transformation leads to a kind, compassionate open-hearted perspective. According to Katagiri Roshi, “The moment when we touch the truth, there is no way to explain the self as a subject who touches the truth. So, very naturally, the subjective self who touches the truth becomes silent. But it is a deep silence; the truth is really something alive in you.” Much of our activity here is to bring us into direct contact with truth through beauty and grace instead of analysis. (Even though right now I am here analyzing and talking about it.) The idea is to just come and experience. To allow the process to work on us in *zazen* and in quiet awareness in our activity within our environment and with others, softening us to our own suffering and the suffering all around us, giving us the stability to stay present and offer an appropriate response. And, what is right in front of us here moment to moment is of-

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ten really quite lovely. How fortunate we are! Here we make effort to have the environment reflect our deep care for the world. What is presented could be called beauty but it is really beyond categories like beautiful. It is sublime. In our practice we are enveloped in a well-tended environment full of simple beauty to stir our heart and quiet our mind. Actually in Japanese heart and mind are the same character, we are stirring what cares and tends, and quieting what analyzes and separates. So Welcome! Come in and slow down. There is nothing more important for us to do than be fully here when we arrive. A friend and longtime practitioner here once said, "People think of Zen as being sparse and minimalist, but what I have experienced practicing it is that everything around me comes to luxuriant life." Allow your presence to greet the flowers and fish in the garden and for the fish and garden to meet you. Watch the bug on the railing washing her face just like you do. Come in quietly and close the door tightly so as not to cause the air system to turn on. Our unnecessary energy use affects the entire planet. Watch people place their shoes gently in the cubbies so as not to disturb the people already sitting zazen. When you take off your shoes, really look at them. Where are they from, who made them, what are they made of? An entire world is there in each shoe. Notice Kanzeon in the entryway. Notice the bold calligraphy of Kanzeon's mantra in the *gaitan*. See our ancestors smiling in the photos on the wall. Consider the beautiful flower arrangements carefully offered by the flower arrangers. The flowers teach us Buddha's teachings. In considering the beauty of a cherry blossom Paula Arai states, "It is the courage to be so exquisitely beautiful in the face of impermanence that fills the heart with sublime appreciation of the nature of reality." Allowing it all in we can allow it to ground us and support us to see and be with all that is hard to see and be with. As the Dalai Lama stated, "Often it is through the expression and appreciation of beauty that we unlock the compassion potential in the human heart." Practicing with others is a lovely way to find the compassion, warmth, and gentleness of Zen. It is in the way a person sitting zazen

bows in harmony with the person doing a standing bow to their cushions when they first arrive. It is in the care with which those cleaning the incensor place it on the altar so it aligns with Buddha's nose. It is in the way grown people with achy knees and hips, crawl along the floor straightening the zabutons and zafus. Or the way newer practitioners bow slowly with concentration and deep sincerity when entering the zendo. And it's the spiders that live in the Annex bathroom because everyone who uses that bathroom understands that it is the spiders' home. When we engage with our entire body and full life force there is no room for our small ego to get in the way to worry, "Am I doing it right?" Or to celebrate what a great job we are doing. It feels different and it adds a different energy to the room than the desire to do things right. So come in, sit down, bring your full aliveness into your entire body. Be fully upright and present. Fall open like a flower. Where you experience differentiation and separation see co-dependent arising. Where grasping, anger and anxiety arise – yours or others – see the suffering beneath. Stay present. Right here is where compassion arises.

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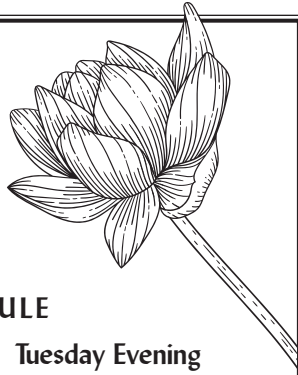
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Chapel Hill Zen Center

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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*Buddhist practice is not to criticize or analyze
what you are doing. Buddha practice is to realize how valuable
your own presence is, right now, right here. How valuable you are.
That is Buddhist practice. At that time, the zazen you are
doing right now, right here, is very valuable.*

— Katagiri Roshi

from *Buddhist Lay Ordination Lectures*, 1982



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.