



Instrucción en español

Instrucción y orientación sobre Zazen ahora disponibles en español. Envíenos un correo electrónico a info@chzc.org para programar.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Sunday, January 19 as part of the All-day Sitting, and Monday, January 20

We will have special morning services to commemorate the work of Martin Luther King Jr.

Dharma Talks

Sunday mornings at 10:30 AM

Josho Pat Phelan on January 19 and March 2

Zenki Kathleen Batson on February 16

Jakuko Mo Ferrell on March 16

Outdoor Sitting

Saturday, February 1 from 6 AM to 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.

All-day Sittings

Sundays, January 19, February 16 and March 16 from 6 AM to 5 PM

Each sitting begins with orientation on Saturday night at 7:30 PM which includes instruction in and review of the meal form. Since the form has many steps we encourage people to attend oryoki orientation more than once. The regular Sunday morning schedule, with zazen at 9 and 9:50, and Dharma talk at 10:30, will be open to everyone. All-day Sittings 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 Roshi or Zenki Sensei 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 before each sitting at info@chzc.org.

For more information on the oryoki meal form, see www.kannondo.org/teachings/oryoki-instructions/

Precepts Weekend

Sunday, March 2 1:30 PM

We will have the Lay Precepts Ceremony, *Zaike Tokudo*, on Sunday afternoon, March 2. Elvira Vilches, Chris Censullo, and Jill Kuhlberg are preparing to receive the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts. You are warmly invited to attend to witness and support these ordainees.

A potluck reception will follow.

Baikaryu Eisanka

Saturdays, January 4 & February 22, 10 AM–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 Censullo at ccensullo@yahoo.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/

Library Acquisition

Interdependence: Biology and Beyond, Kriti Sharma

Inter-Faith Council Community

A group of Zen Center volunteers prepare and serve lunch at the Inter-Faith Council (IFC) Community Kitchen on the fourth Saturday of each month from 10 AM to 1 PM. More volunteers are needed, including a core group of committed people, so we can continue our presence. The IFC Community Kitchen is the only soup kitchen in Orange County and is located in Carrboro. If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information, please contact Shawn at (919) 619-2243 or chzencooks@gmail.com.

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Study Groups

Yogacara Study Group

Monday nights, 5:30 to 6:30 PM

This group will resume meeting on January 13, 2025. We will continue studying the Yogacara sutra, the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra*, primarily the translation of John Powers, titled the *Wisdom of Buddha*. A link to download a PDF of this book is available at www.chzc.org/events.htm#study. Hardcover copies are also available from Dharma Publishing.

Reb Anderson's book, *The Third Turning of the Wheel*, discusses this sutra and refers to lines from it by page numbers. Thomas Cleary also has a translation, *Buddhist Yoga: A Comprehensive Course*.

Master Dogen's Zazen Meditation Handbook Study Group

Thursday nights, 7 to 8 PM

This study group will resume meeting Thursday, January 9, and will end January 30.

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

Living with Impermanence

This 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, Kris Garvin at krisgarvin@gmail.com, or Senmyo Sherman at jeffsherman3333@gmail.com, if you would like more information. Everyone is welcome, regardless of age.

Zoom Peer Group

Wednesday nights, January 8 and February 12

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.

For more information, please contact Al-Nisa Berry at alnisa.berry@gmail.com or Maura High at maurahigh@gmail.com. For link to join via Zoom, visit www.chzc.org/events.htm#peer.

In-Person Small Groups

Sunday mornings, January 5 and February 2

The small groups at the Zen Center came out of Zoom discussions that we had at Practice Intensive teas during the pandemic. After the Practice Intensive was over we formed small groups of 6 maximum where people could get together and informally discuss their practice. Since practice includes all of life, we found ourselves discussing everything. These really act as support groups for people who are trying to live their lives according to Buddhist principles. We meet once a month in person at the Zen Center after temple cleaning. All members have an equal opportunity to share. We don't try to fix or correct each other, just to sit and listen. It's a wonderful feeling to be heard, and to talk about practice in an informal setting. If you're interested in joining a small group, or would like more information, contact Michael Hallquist at michael.hallquist@gmail.com or David Guy at davidguy@mindspring.com.

Looking Ahead

CROP Walk Fundraiser to End Hunger

Sunday afternoon, March 23

Kuden Paul Boyle

There will be a Formal Tea for Kuden Friday evening, April 18, followed by the Head Monk Dharma Inquiry Ceremony on Saturday morning, April 19.

Buddha's Birthday

Sunday morning, May 4

Cultural Practices of Death and Dying

Wednesday, January 22 from 4 to 6 PM

Zenki Kathleen Batson will represent an American Soto Zen Buddhist perspective in a panel discussion of Cultural Practices of Death and Dying on Wednesday January 22nd at the Passmore Center, 103 Meadowlands Drive in Hillsborough, from 4 to 6 PM. Sponsored by the Orange County Department on Aging.

Habits and Hindrance

by Jakuko Mo Ferrell

Our sangha has four members sewing rakusu preparing for lay ordination next spring. In the ceremony they will vow to uphold the precepts. Starting last February, we and other community members began studying the precepts together by reading and discussing the book, *Waking Up to What You Do* by Diane Eshin Rizzetto. I think we all found her book to be a refreshing examination of all the nuances that practicing the precepts contain. One of the things she emphasizes throughout the book is to meet every situation with intelligence and compassion. To do this by recognizing we usually have automatic reactions to situations. She recommends that we try to notice and explore our underlying feelings in each situation that might cause a reaction out of habit instead of finding a new compassionate way to respond. What helps this process of awareness, I think, is that she presents the precepts not as a list of do not and should not, but as a list of aspirations, so that instead of tending to judge yourself every time you break a precept, you can meet each moment and situation with fresh clarity and compassion for yourself and others.

Looking deeply at the precepts, we discovered that each one is like a multifaceted gem. If you just think of them as a list of “do not’s” it can limit your response. You might not know what to do. You might even do more harm than good. This is why Diane and her teacher Joko Beck began to teach precepts as aspirations to protect life, and be present. Then in the moment act in accord with supporting life. As she says, “this approach more accurately expresses the spirit of the precepts as pointers, directing us

toward our natural propensity to take action out of love and concern for one another. Secondly, when voiced in the prohibitive form, it seems more likely that we will rely on them as an outer authority that judges and keeps score.”

It seemed to those of us in class that the simplest precept has many layers and complexities. You really can’t rely on just “don’t do it.” If you do, the precepts are impossible not to break. When we take up just ‘do not kill or do not speak falsely’, that is not always the best action to take. We must be aware of the situation we are in at this moment, if we truly want to practice ‘do no harm but support life.’ The best thing to do or say is not necessarily simple or the same in one time as another. Getting through an hour or day without breaking one precept is challenging, maybe it’s impossible. It helps if you take a breath and a pause before speaking or acting. Then you have a better chance to respond considering this moment, and refrain from reacting in your habitual way.

In reality you cannot live without breaking the precepts from a prohibitive form. Do not kill. We cannot feed ourselves without taking life. Sometimes you can’t tell the truth to protect life. The precepts are not a dead list of don’ts. Diane says, “They invite us to willingly grapple with the slipperiness of what’s the best action to take given the circumstances of any given situation. They direct and support us toward considering what conditions are present here and now.”

She words the Precepts as aspirations in her book as:

1. I take up the way of supporting life.
2. I take up the way of taking only what is freely given, and giving freely of all that I can.
3. I take up the way of engaging in sexual intimacy respectfully and with an open heart.
4. I take up the way of speaking truthfully.
5. I take up the way of cultivating a clear mind.
6. I take up the way of speaking of others with openness and possibility.
7. I take up the way of meeting others on equal ground.
8. I take up the way of letting go of anger.

Diane says, “The precepts in an aspirational form can help prevent us from using them as a yardstick to measure our worth. Because we may never measure up.” In addition, if you can pause before reacting in your habitual way, it can reveal all your underlying assumptions, opinions, and preferences that initiate or trigger your habitual response. Diane suggests working with one precept at a time to develop your awareness, and help you notice your habitual tendencies. Focus on one for a week or more. There are 3 precepts involving speech. They are a good starting place. To take up the way of speaking truthfully, if we pay close attention, we can see all the little ways we adjust the full truth. The truth can hurt. We might be uncomfortable that a truth will unnecessarily hurt someone’s feelings. Sometimes we omit the whole truth. Often, we shade the truth. There is a gray area of falsehoods where we speak partial truths. We also might by keeping silent when we witness harm, or be deceptive by omission. There are a lot of subtle ways not to speak truthfully. It’s so important to remember to be present enough to pause before speaking, before you gossip, say something unkind, or let your anger form your response. Sometimes the truth is admitting, “I don’t know what to say.” Diane says, “Begin practicing this precept by observing the ways in which you do not speak truthfully...finding yourself distorting the truth. You might be protecting yourself from an awkward or uncomfortable situation, but in some situations, you might be saving a life, as if you are hiding a person, to protect them from persecution. Every situation calls for awareness and clarity so you can offer the best response.”

Another example is the precept, do not kill. The aspirational wording is, ‘I take up the way of supporting life.’ It took our class a long time to process all the aspects in this chapter. Diane says, “This precept takes us into the heart of working to meet the difficult questions and decisions of supporting and taking life that face us daily.” We noticed various examples of this such as, should I be a vegetarian or a vegan? How long do we prolong life with ventilators and life support? When is it time to continue to watch your pet suffer in old age, or offer your beloved pet the end of life? How does someone decide to end life in utero or keep an unborn child

they fear they can’t support? There is no one right answer, it’s necessary to sit with and look deeply for the answer in the present. Someday it’s yes, someday it’s no, or not now. We also looked at war, it’s based on killing the other. Maybe war should never be an option. Diane heard it said, “Don’t be against war, be for peace.” But does that mean “that we just stand by when an aggressor threatens to annihilate a people and take their land?” How many little ways do we harm our family and friends by lashing out in anger? We have to wake up over and over. How do we support and embrace all life? We have to pay attention to our habitual responses and be present before acting and speaking. Diane says, “We do the best we can to be open to and to preserve life whenever possible, and to be clear and present in those times we cannot. If we engage in trying to understand our actions, then something begins to change....There is no rule or formula that can tell you what to do...But one thing we can rely on is learning/remembering to be present in each situation, without getting caught in self-centered thinking, then our chances of taking action that best serves the situation will be far greater.” She continues, “This is where working with the precepts as an awareness practice can be of help. Sometimes the way will be clear and sometimes not. If it’s not, you just make the best choice you can and practice with the results.”

What drives most of our responses is our habitual reactions. We respond without thinking. How good are you at being a habit catcher? Do you catch yourself at the beginning, middle of it, or in reflecting at the end of the day? A few months ago, I had covid for the second time. I was tired and not feeling great and took a rest in my room. After a while, one of my grandsons came into our house. He stomped about making an enormous amount of noise that was hard to identify, but his clatter went on for 30 minutes. As I lay there wanting to rest, I became very aware that my annoyance was increasing at this disruption, feeling and watching my irritation rise. Had I not already lost my temper just an hour earlier, over the important matter of when my husband should add the noodles to the soup, my irritation likely would have boiled over. But this time I was able to stay present, feel it, and breathe

without acting. I remembered that soon it would be time for him to go to bed. This noise wasn't permanent. So I lay still and let my breath comfort me. It didn't help me enjoy the disturbance, but losing my temper again would have felt worse. I wasn't feeding my anger with thoughts and so it didn't grow. I think anger's favorite food is our thoughts, our self-centered thinking about how we are suffering. On being present, Okumura Roshi said, "We don't usually see reality itself, but only our preconceptions: things we like or dislike, something desirable or undesirable. Running after things we desire, trying to avoid those we detest. Our life becomes a matter of escaping from or chasing after something. There's no time to rest, to just calm down and be right here. Letting go of thought in zazen is very precious."

We probably recognize that our habitual responses are well ingrained, and learned early in life. Our mind automatically reacts. Every day, especially at my age, most situations that arise are and feel familiar. The unpleasant ones especially can still trigger my emotions. Working with the precepts involving speech, in the morning, I can tell myself not to get mad today at what anyone says or does, and then be shocked a minute or an hour when something said or happens does trigger my anger. This is where the important value of the 'pause' comes in. Pausing before you respond isn't to disguise or hide your feelings, but to feel what is coming up. Is your heart rate increasing, your palms getting sweaty, or your stomach tightening? Learning to notice your feelings, so you can respond takes the moment to pause, then recognize the emotion coming up, and then take another moment to consider your response. Diane says, "At that time or later it helps to try to trace those feelings back to their origin. Name them and importantly see what assumptions you were making. Are they true? Did you feel a need to defend your 'self'?" Adding to the challenge, is that our opinions and assumptions will cloud our view. And on the other hand, we have our truth to speak. Diane says, "On reflection, some of us may find we meet whatever life brings our way with the same old reactions. Much of our life is spent in habitual swings...No matter how unhappy it makes us, no matter how much we know it affects

others, it may seem to us the only way to go...Yet if we really want to experience the happiness and well-being that comes when we break loose of our habitual reactions of self-defense, then we need to take a much clearer look at our reactive thinking."

When practicing with the precepts as a guide, it helps to breathe before we react or respond. Diane says, "We may have no idea where our reaction stems from, but we continually react in the same way whenever our buttons get pushed. It is the 're' part of our reaction into which we need to inquire. By observing ourselves through any of the precepts, we are quickly confronted with our reactionary patterns, and how they occur again and again." To respond to each situation, takes practicing taking a breath, noticing any emotion bubbling forth right now. Diane says, "Being open is often very difficult unless we cultivate the ability to rest in what is." (Or as Suzuki Roshi used to say, "Things as it is.") Try not to push the situation away as you feel your aversion to the moment. There is a lot to be learned from your reaction, "even in just 2 or 3 seconds if we are willing."

Taking a deep breath before speaking can almost always help you keep the precepts around speech, speaking truthfully, not speaking about the faults of others, and not putting others down. We can develop new habits, like not taking everything personally, or letting things define who we are. Take up a new habit, take up responding not reacting. Habituation means whatever you do, you strengthen the habit, and you will get really good at it. It's an important point because our habits become who we think we are. Diane says, "For quite some time, you may find that you become aware of your reactions only after they've arisen and fallen away. This is quite normal, since our reactions are deeply ingrained patterns by which the brain and body process data. But there is a great deal of power in awareness. Trust it. The point is that at any moment you can note that you are about to engage or have engaged a precept. That is your point of entry into the practice. Over time, as awareness grows sharper, it will pick up on what's going on deep inside, long before harsh words hit the tongue... this is a journey of heart and mind."

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I found an interesting perspective in the book *Taming Your Gremlins*, by author Richard Carson. He says, “Habits are cemented in place by fear. Fear is your gremlin’s primary tool. At the time, he talked you into forming a particular behavior into a habit, that behavior may have made very good sense. If, as a child, when you expressed anger, and your parents punished you, it would have made sense for you to develop a “happy face façade.” People who truly enjoy themselves don’t feel the need to smile all the time. Behavior that you incorporated as a child may still be appropriate in certain situations ... But to the extent that that behavior is a habit, it will interfere with your excitement, your spontaneity, and your potential for creative living. As you directly experience how you are now and who you are now, the habits your gremlin has talked you into accepting fade, then there will occur an automatic adjustment upward in your enjoyment level. Simply stated it reads: I change not by trying to be something other than I am. I change by being fully aware of how I am. When you initiate the business of actualizing yourself instead of your act, you begin to feel better automatically.”

Pema Chodron talks about learning to stay present so we can get unstuck from our habits. She says, “It is the simplest and most difficult thing to do. The urge to react, or to get away, or to reach for comfort. The ‘urge’ is the problem because it propels us to repeat our habits. Our body tightens with the urge.” She says that “the difficulty of staying present is the feeling of impermanence. It feels like uncertainty and groundlessness.”

“Being human we like certainty, and we like being right. It can be hard to relax into ‘nothing to hold onto.’ We human beings scramble for something to hold onto. But the nature of existence is in flux. Can we learn to relax in the flow? Pema recommends ‘learning to stay.’ She says, “our habit of moving away from the present moment might be in our DNA, but whatever arises, try to meet it with an open mind, see it clearly, and allow the freshness of the present to respond.” Pema Chodron says, “Transforming your life is a long, slow journey. Learning to stay present in each situation is an essential ingredient. When something triggers you,

and you feel annoyed or upset, try to create a little space for a new response. You have to catch the ‘urge’ to react and tell it, ‘to wait a minute.’” Pema strongly encourages us to bring warmth and kindness to this process of examining habits. She says, “Don’t use seeing your habits as another way to criticize yourself. When you notice a habit, you are present. When you are present, you are connected with your basic wisdom. We all have this wisdom and awareness. To resist our strong urges to react, please equate the process with helping yourself and those around you. Be kind to the whole situation. Take delight, you are waking up.”

We all know, and have experienced, how hard it is to stay conscious. Pema offers a process for working with our habits called the 4 ‘R’s, Recognize, Refrain, Relax and Resolve. She says, “Recognize, this is always the first step. It is hard to interrupt the momentum of the urge to react. But if you are not present, you will be caught and triggered.” Too often, I recognize I’m triggered after I’ve reacted in a habitual way. When this happens to you, Pema says, “to take notice, review, make it conscious so the next time you can recognize it sooner.” I’ve come to realize that most of the times when I’m hurried, feel pressured, or distracted, my speech more often comes out angry or defensive. When I’m focused and present, and can pause, I can offer either an appropriate response or no response at all, then the whole situation diffuses. Pema says, “Your body usually signals you when you get triggered, it tightens. Feel it and use it like a red light. Then try to open and let go of that tightness.”

Refrain: Pema says, “To refrain, try to interrupt the momentum of your thoughts arising. Sometimes they flood in with feelings, opinions and assumptions. Notice the urge to react habitually.” I find that I have to try to bring as much patience and presence as I can muster to some situations. When I’m aware, I can feel the feeling of a reaction come up. That’s the place or the moment when you have a choice to respond in accord with the precepts. Blanche Hartman once said, “When I began to recognize I was getting on the same train, going to the same station and I didn’t want to be there, I found the space to decide not to get on the train.”

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Relax; Pema says, “Try to relax, be present and open. Feel the underlying feelings coming up. Offer yourself loving kindness and warmth. Appreciate this moment of waking up. As this becomes your new habit, you will more often rely on your wisdom and basic goodness.” Having just been on a vacation I can attest to this truth. Recently I went to Ocracoke Island with my family. All my kids and grandkids, my brother, his wife, about 16 of us all in one house, one kitchen. Every day we were trying to figure things out as a group, like where to go, what to eat, what to do and watching conflicts with the kids come and go. It’s family living. But the whole weekend I felt calm and felt a little space watching our drama. I was relaxed and felt really happy to be there with everyone, and that may have contributed to a settled mind that could watch and not feel the need to react. But I was aware of how different I felt being there, present, calm and watching the various storms blow through. Often at home I’m in the thick of the storm, of the daily pressures I feel when I’m working/running my sewing business, practice, coordinating caring for the grandkids, trying to find time for it all. The difference at Ocracoke was I was relaxed.

The last is Resolve: Pema says, “Repeat endlessly!” We have already spent a lifetime acting out of habit. It takes a lot of willingness to stay present. Just like in *zazen*, you never finish. It is transformational work, and it is gradual. “If you like, try these exercises and see if they help. Our habits strengthen by repetition, so try these new habits.” This may be where the wisdom of sitting *zazen* first thing in the morning originated. It’s a very good time to, “Wake up to what you do” then take a long pause and let go. We just have to remember to bring it along with us during the rest of the day. Okumura Roshi says, “No matter what mistakes we make, we can start over because of impermanence. We can change the direction of our life. We transform our life, our thinking and our views. Sitting in *zazen* and letting go of everything is the key to shifting the basis of our life.”

You might like to try to use Diane Rizzetto’s aspirational approach, practicing with the precepts, to develop your awareness. She says, “Used skillfully

as a tool they wake us up from the self-centered dream. Don’t expect miracles. For quite some time, you may find that you become aware of your reactions only after they’ve arisen and fallen away. But there is a great power in awareness. Trust it.”

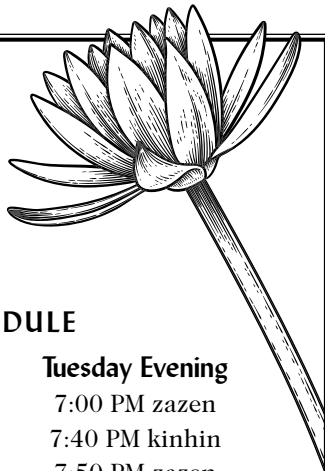
She continues, “The point is that at any moment you can note that you are about to engage or have engaged a precept. That is your point of entry into the practice. This is a journey of the heart and mind.....After some practice, you’ll begin to notice moments when you’re already observing your experience before you take action....This first step is important because the very act of stepping aside, even if it is only slightly, to observe our actions is a giant step toward putting those reactions into perspective.....finding a response instead of a reaction. A response that really engages a precept is the one that best meets the situation at that time. This is meeting life as it is.” She goes on, “Engaging in the precepts in our lives in the most ordinary way, can call us out of our hiding, but in truth, there is no hiding place. We cannot escape what we are..... The precepts can be the voice that jolts us awake.... The precepts can accompany us to places where we don’t want to go, but indeed are going. They bring us into the heart of wisdom and compassion; taking action out of this understanding is as simple and natural as drinking a glass of water.”

Suzuki Roshi said, “All the teachings come from practicing *zazen*, where Buddha’s mind is transmitted to us. To sit, is to open up our transmitted mind. All the treasures we experience come from this mind.... We practice like a cow rather than a horse. Instead of galloping about, we walk slowly like a cow or an elephant. You cannot waste your time, even though your *zazen* is not so good. Good or bad does not matter. If you sit with this understanding, having conviction in your Buddha nature, then sooner or later, you will find yourself in the midst of the great Zen Masters.”

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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

Joshō Pat Phelan, Abbess

Zenki Kathleen Batson, Vice Abbess

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I told you what the Triple Treasure is... “I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Sangha.” “Take refuge” in English is represented as “kie” in Japanese....” “Kie” means return, to offer to throw away or to return. It means coming to a place where you must be and which you must be in. ‘Kie’ means returning to a place in which you must be present. The place is not centered in individual feeling, individual karmic life, not the general karmic

life that human beings possess. It means something more than that. It is the universal aspect of human life, the buddha world, buddha nature. That is the place where you must return to. That is the place you have to depend on. That is where you must stand up constantly, day by day, or otherwise you cannot feel stable and secure in your life.

— Dainin Katagiri Roshi



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.