



After the Zaike Tokudo Ceremony, also called *Jukai*, on March 2, 2025. Pictured, left to right:

Jill Kuhlberg, *Myoren Kogan* — Radiant Lotus, Ancient Vow  
 Chris Censullo, *Daiki Hōetsu* — Great Capacity or Instrument, Dharma Joy  
 Elvira Vilches, *Shinshi Shuhō* — Deep Intention, Protector of Dharma  
 Josho Pat Phelan Roshi

### 30th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, October 11

On October 1, 1995, the Chapel Hill Zen Group moved into its current location, occupying the gaitan and current zendo areas. This was and is our first dedicated space. Since then, the Zen Center's activities have spread into the Community Room and Annex. We then created two additions—the current Entry Room, and then an extension and renovation of the Community Room and Annex to include ten additional feet toward the parking lot. The Sangha has grown and matured, slowly adding more programs and ceremonies to become what the Zen Center is today.

We hope you will help us celebrate this happy event, which will include a Taiko Drum Performance!

### Spring Sesshin

A five-day *sesshin*, or meditation intensive, will be held May 30–June 4. For more information, please see page 7.

### Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Sunday, May 4

We will celebrate Buddha's Birthday following regular zazen, at 9 AM. A Children's Program will be held during zazen to decorate the Flower House. At 10:30 there will be a short talk in the zendo directed to the children.

The children will then have a procession to an outdoor altar where they will offer incense and bathe the Baby Buddha, which will be followed by a **vegetarian potluck lunch**. Everyone is welcome!

### Children's Program

If you are interested in a Children's Program at Zen Center on Sunday mornings, please contact Zenki at [info@chzc.org](mailto:info@chzc.org).

### Holiday Closures

The Zen Center will be closed on Memorial Day, **Monday, May 26**, and on Independence Day, **Friday, July 4**.

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## Dharma Talks

During sesshin, the Dharma Talks by Josho Pat Phelan Roshi will be open to the public, Saturday through Tuesday mornings, May 31–June 3 at 10:30 AM.

There will also be public Dharma Talks at 10:30 AM on the Sunday mornings of June 29, July 20, and August 24.

## Study Groups

### Yogacara Sutra Study Group

Monday Evenings from 5:30 to 6:30 PM

We will continue studying the Yogacara sutra, the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra*, primarily the translation by John Powers titled *Wisdom of Buddha*, and Reb Anderson's book, *The Third Turning of the Wheel*. There will be no class on May 26.

### Seeing One Thing Through Study Group

Thursday Evenings from 7 to 8 PM

We will continue reading *Seeing One Thing Through: The Zen Life and Teachings of Sojun Mel Weitsman* through May 1. The group will resume meeting on June 5, and there will be no class on July 3.

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.

### To Join All Zoom Study Groups

Via computer: [www.zoom.us/j/821378615](https://www.zoom.us/j/821378615)

Via phone: (646) 558-8656

Meeting ID: 821378615

## Zuise — Abbot for a Day

In May, Zenki Kathleen Batson will travel to Japan to participate in a day of ceremonies both at Eihei-ji, founded by Eihei Dogen Zenji in the 13th Century, and at Soji-ji, founded by Keizan Jokin Zenji in the 14th Century. These are the two Head Temples for Soto Zen. Zenki will be officially recognized by the Soto Zen Registry in Japan which qualifies her for further advancement as a teacher in the ranks of Soto Zen.

## All-day Sittings

June 29, July 20, and August 24

All-day Sittings begin **Saturday night at 7:30 PM**, and continue Sunday, 6 AM until 5 PM. Orientation on Saturday includes instruction in the oryoki meal form, and assignments. 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 Wednesday** at [info@chzc.org](mailto:info@chzc.org). For more information on the oryoki meal form, see [www.kannondo.org/getting-started/oryoki](http://www.kannondo.org/getting-started/oryoki).

## Outdoor Half-day Sitting

Saturday, June 14, 6 AM–12:15 PM

Please bring a bag breakfast which you can 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](mailto:info@chzc.org). If you would like to join us for only a portion of the morning, please let us know when signing up. There is no charge, but donations are appreciated.

## Virtual Peer Group

Wednesdays, May 14, and June 11 from 7 to 8 PM

A monthly online meeting, giving members an opportunity to share 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 to help one another deepen practice in daily life. The Virtual Peer Group meets monthly on the second Wednesday of the month. For more information, please contact Al-Nisa at [alnisa.berry@gmail.com](mailto:alnisa.berry@gmail.com) or Maura at [maurahigh@gmail.com](mailto:maurahigh@gmail.com).

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## Baika

Saturday, May 24, and June 21 from 10 AM to noon

You are invited to join us in singing *Baikaryu Eisanka*, Japanese Soto Zen Buddhist hymns with bell accompaniment. No experience is 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).

## Living with Impermanence

by Zoom Once a Month

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. 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.

## Sangha Net

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](mailto:krisgarvin@gmail.com), Senmyo Jeff Sherman at [jeffsherman3333@gmail.com](mailto:jeffsherman3333@gmail.com), or Carol Klein at [carollyklein53@gmail.com](mailto:carollyklein53@gmail.com).

## 2025 Board of Directors

Danielle Bouchard, President

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Mike McKillip, Treasurer

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Lance Ashdown and Daniel Rhodes,  
Members-at-Large

Josho Pat Phelan, *ex officio*

## Looking Ahead

### The Werk of Getting Free

Lama Rod Owens will visit the Triangle  
July 24–27

On Thursday evening, July 24, Lama Rod will offer a public talk at the Eno River Unitarian Church. He will also offer a Retreat, Friday, July 25 at 3 PM through Sunday, July 27 at 3 PM at the Avila Center for Community Leadership in Durham, NC. Registration required for both. For more information, see: [www.chzc.org/events.htm#lamarod](http://www.chzc.org/events.htm#lamarod).

### Lay Precepts

On Sunday afternoon, August 10, Tim Hinton will receive the precepts as a layman from Zenki Kathleen Batson.

### December Sesshin

December Sesshin will be led by Zenki Kathleen Batson, December 5–12.

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## Examining Samantabhadra

by Jakuko Mo Ferrell

Some years ago during sesshin, I began wondering about Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. During our formal oryoki meals in the zendo, we chant the names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas which includes Samantabhadra, the shining practice bodhisattva. I realized that there are not too many other times this bodhisattva is mentioned compared to Avalokiteshvara or Manjushri. I remember my sewing teacher and former Abbess of the San Francisco Zen Center, Zenkei Blanche Hartman, used to talk about Samantabhadra as her favorite bodhisattva. I associate Samantabhadra, as I do Zenkei, with diligent practice.

In Taigen Leighton's book, *Faces of Compassion*, he has a chapter that presents a very full picture of Samantabhadra. This book has thorough descriptions and histories of the major bodhisattvas, and he explains their relevance to us today. Taigen said, "A bodhisattva, carrying out the work of Buddhas,

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vows not to personally settle into the salvation of final Buddhahood until she/he can assist all beings, throughout the vast reaches of time and space to fully realize this liberated experience.” Taigen introduces Samantabhadra as “the bodhisattava of enlightening activity in the world, representing the shining function of wisdom. And that she embodies the luminous web of interconnectedness of all beings, similar to Indra’s net. Her name means ‘Universal Virtue’ or ‘Worthy’.”

Taigen said, “Samantabhadra and Manjushri are often paired as attendants on either side of Shakyamuni Buddha, with Manjushri on his lion representing the essence of wisdom, and Samantabhadra mounted on an elephant, representing the application of wisdom actively benefiting the world.” Taigen said, “riding majestically on her slow mount has a feeling of calm, deliberate activity, imbued with clear intention.” In our lives she can be an example to inspire us to be beneficial in our community.

Suzuki Roshi’s disciple, Jakusho Kwong, said that he placed a statue of Samantabhadra in the entryway to the zendo, “to remind us...of the importance of uninterrupted training in the practice of ‘just sitting.’” Samantabhadra is the patron of the *Lotus Sutra* and known to have made the 10 great vows that are the basis of the bodhisattva (vows). Typically she is shown riding a white elephant with six tusks symbolizing purity, wisdom, and the power to overcome obstacles on the path to enlightenment.”

Samantabhadra is described as being particularly radiant. She is described in a variety of ways. She may have long flowing hair and robes, or hair in a topknot as in early India. Her/his hands may be in *gassho* or holding a lotus, sutra scroll, teaching staff, or sword. “There is a rare depiction showing her/him with 20 arms holding implements to help beings.”

In our temple our focus is our daily Zen practice, primarily just sitting *zazen*. Magical icons are not emphasized, and we hardly mention Samantabhadra. If you find it difficult to relate to these stories, I hope you find inspiration by thinking of the beneficial intentions embodied in this bodhisattva. My hope is that our practice can be inspired by

bodhisattvas to bring positive energy into our practice and into our daily lives.

Other than shining radiance, Samantabhadra is known for her set of ten vows. These are, “venerating buddhas; praising buddhas; making offerings to buddhas; confessing one’s own past misdeeds; rejoicing in the happiness of others; requesting buddhas to teach; requesting buddhas not to enter nirvana; studying the Dharma in order to teach it; benefiting all beings; and transferring one’s merit to others.” Taigen continued, “Samantabhadra’s first three vows, venerating, praising, and making offerings to buddhas, show the aspect of bodhisattva practice of our devotion to awakening and to those who have actualized such awareness.” They are a way for us to express our humility and heart felt gratitude. I think that feeling and expressing our gratitude is a good place to begin.

In the zendo practice here, we primarily express our gratitude by chanting and bowing. We pay homage to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, in the meal verse, in the monthly Bodhisattva Ceremony, and in the Lay and Priest ordination ceremonies.

Sometimes when people come to Zen Center, they might be uncomfortable with the practice of bowing, or wonder why we are bowing to the statue on the altar. Many of us grew up in churches and synagogues and were taught that bowing to idols is a sin. But that isn’t what we are doing. We are not bowing **to** an idol of Buddha, because we are not bowing to a god outside ourselves. We **are** Buddha. The Buddha figure on the altar represents an example of practice, still sitting, a path to awakening, a way of life based on Buddha’s example and teaching.

Taigen said, “We might also make the mistake of believing in a ‘perfect teacher,’ that our enlightened teachers can do no wrong. But we need to see that our teachers are worthy spiritual guides that have greater experience. And Teachers have the responsibility to reveal their humanity to their students. Images of buddhas or bodhisattvas represent awakened qualities in ourselves.”

The third vow is making offerings to buddhas, and Taigen said, “Buddhist legend stresses that the spirit

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of the offering is much more important than the quality or quantity of richness of the offering. Sincere offerings to a buddha of a piece of fruit...have been highly praised and considered the cause of great resulting benefits.” In a former life, as a young child, Ashoka was supposed to have sincerely given Shakyamuni Buddha a mud pie. The Buddha gratefully accepted the child’s offering and took it back to add to the sand being used to construct a wall of his monastery, resulting in Ashoka’s later kingship. With a devotional attitude, “we can offer buddha a beautiful sunset, drifting clouds, and wildflowers... or our efforts to act with kindness.”

Samantabhadra’s fourth vow is to confess his own past misdeeds. We can only awaken to our radiant nature by examining and acknowledging our mistakes, and the self-grasping nature of the conditions that prevent us from realizing our deeper reality. The best example of this confessing may be in the Bodhisattva Ceremony. We begin by chanting, “All my ancient, twisted karma, from beginningless greed, hate, and delusion. Born through body, speech and mind, I now fully avow.” This verse is also chanted in the lay precepts ceremony, in priest ordination, and in the wedding and funeral ceremonies. We publicly acknowledge our failings and mistakes. To see and acknowledge is the first step. Apologizing when we have caused harm is a good way to make amends and then let it go.

“Samantabhadra’s fifth vow is rejoicing in the happiness of others, and in others’ virtues.” Taigen said, “When a bodhisattva realizes non-separation from others, their sincerest wish is simply that all beings be happy.” We chant the *Lovingkindness Metta Sutta* which states, “May all beings be happy.” Taigen said, “Seeing others enjoy their lives, and develop their capacity for bringing joy to others is what truly gives Samantabhadra the greatest pleasure.” Yet, we are human. So even this simple wish can be challenging. Feelings of envy can arise when you see another’s good fortune and opportunity. But these feelings arise when we see others as ‘other’ because of our habitual dualistic thinking. When we free our thinking from our judgements, and try not to decide if someone else deserves their good fortune,

this frees us from our suffering. This vow includes seeing the virtue in others not only their faults.

The Zen priest, Ed Brown told a story. When he was head of kitchen practice at Tassajara, he complained to Suzuki Roshi about how the kitchen staff were not paying attention and not listening to him. Ed did not receive the sympathy he expected, instead Suzuki Roshi told him, “It takes a calm mind to see the virtue in others.”

“Samantabhadra’s sixth and seventh vows are requesting buddhas teach and not to enter nirvana.” Taigen wrote, “...these vows stress the value of a buddha’s presence in the world, because of its fragility. When Shakyamuni was first awakened...he thought that nobody would be able to understand what he had realized, and that he may as well pass away into nirvana right then.” But the Indian deity Brahma spoke to Shakyamuni “after his great awakening, convincing him to remain in the world in order to find ways to teach others.” We now know that, from Shakyamuni’s first students up to today, many people have been able to understand and embody Buddha’s teachings and teach others.

The eighth vow is to study the dharma in order to teach. Taigen said, “Samantabhadra reads, recites, ponders, and questions the sutras and the traditional writings...in order to be ever more fully in accord with awakened compassion and wisdom...” She finds ways “to share her study with others, either by expounding the teachings...or by expressing it in daily activity...in a way that allows other students to inquire and learn about the practice...” “But the dharma Samantabhadra studies includes teachings not only from sutras, but available in everyday activity, in upright sitting, and from lotus blossoms, sunsets, and moonlight reflected on the ocean, as well as in fear, anxiety, and from old age, sickness, and death.” I have always been deeply influenced by our teachers in the way they express the dharma in the way they step, bow, sit, their way of being and moving in the zendo. I’ve watched Josho, with full attention carrying a cup, sutra book, or zafu with both hands.

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Samantabhadra's ninth and tenth vows, are to benefit all beings and transfer one's merit to others. Taigen said, "Carrying out the ninth Vow, Samantabhadra does whatever is necessary to help beings, taking on complex roles in social settings for the sake of those who are suffering.... also recognizing the systematic problems of society that may produce suffering, and then finding ways of facilitating necessary changes." Our sangha has been involved in visiting prisons and corresponding with inmates. We have helped the transition of released incarcerated people. Sangha members support the Interfaith Council for Social Services with time and food donations and participate in the Crop Walk each year.

Taigen said, "Samantabhadra's tenth vow of transferring merit, has a technical meaning that is common to all bodhisattva practice. Developed bodhisattvas have the special power to extend the merit accrued from their own insight and compassionate activities to other beings." In our chanting service we offer the merit to others in each Dedication. After chanting the *En Mei Jukku Kannon Gyo*, we dedicate the merit to the ease and well being of our great friends. After the *Dai Hi Shin Dharni*, we dedicate the merit to deceased priests and benefactors of the world, to members and supporters of this practice, and our great abiding friend who passed, and to all sentient beings.

"Samantabhadra's tenth vow means that she does not practice hoping to achieve such results." "All practitioners take on this vow of transferring merit when they practice with the attitude of extending its benefits to others."

Let's look at examples of Samantabhadra today. I want us to think of bodhisattvas not as magical beings, but as beings that inspire our practice and lives. Taigen encourages us to engage in situations that might benefit beings. There are numerous Buddhists and others that are addressing social issues and conflicts with their wisdom and compassion.

Looking to human examples, Taigen said, "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. remains one of the great American exemplars of Samantabhadra in our time.... Dr. King has most fully come to symbolize and embody in

the national consciousness the struggles for social justice of that movement. With his indomitable spirit and willingness to speak of the truth and suffering of many people, he bravely persevered while facing numerous arrests and threats, culminating in his assassination." "Dr. King's example encouraged and galvanized many to live and act with hope for a promised land of justice and equality, which he saw in the distance, even if he could not enter himself.... His celebrated dream of a just and harmonious 'pure land' in which the very mountains and valleys ring out freedom, included a vision of all people fighting for human rights, with nonviolence and dignity but also determination."

Taigen said, "...because Samantabhadra sees each part of the universe as precious and of equal value, he is sometimes designated as the bodhisattva of the environment. This is to see the world as an intricate, sensitive system in which all the parts are integral to the whole. Samantabhadra's teachings are about guarding and caring for the world."

Another person that I think of is Sojun Mel Weitsman. His practice was authentic, not charismatic. When he visited I felt he was 100% present. On the surface seeming very ordinary, but in the moment, paying close attention. Until he became ill, he just kept sitting and teaching. At one point he was going to retire as abbot and eventually did, but as long as he physically could, he taught. At 90 years old, he was still ordaining students and giving Dharma talks.

Zenkei Blanche Hartman was also an inspiration to me and the hundreds of students she taught to stitch Buddha's robe. Her steady practice was very visible. Besides showing up everyday in the zendo to sit into her mid-80s and leading sesshins, she was also the head teacher for sewing Buddha's robe. The number of stitches she made teaching the tiny *namu kei butsu* stitch for countless rakusu and okesa over the years is as numberless as the grains of sand in the Ganges River. She taught in a subtle way, letting a student discover their rhythm. When someone made a mistake, I watched her take a breath, examine it, and if necessary undo it, and then restart the person's stitches good naturedly. Her calm, caring

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sewing practice inspired countless students. She taught many of them to be sewing teachers, who are now carrying on this tradition. I feel very fortunate to be among them. I hope in our lives, we can try to follow this diligent way of Samantabhadra.

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## Donations

Donations are gratefully accepted through the mail at PO Box 16302, Chapel Hill, NC 27516, or online at [www.chzc.org/donate.htm](http://www.chzc.org/donate.htm).

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## Spring Sesshin

Led by Josho Pat Phelan Roshi

Friday evening, May 30 through Wednesday afternoon, June 4, 2025

*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 priority will be given to those sitting the whole sesshin. Please come to orientation on Friday night, and commit to sitting for at least two consecutive 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.*** Please contact Danielle at [Danielle.Bouchard@gmail.com](mailto:Danielle.Bouchard@gmail.com) if you would like to request a scholarship. 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, May 21, with a \$50 deposit.

**The registration form is available online at [www.chzc.org/sesshin.pdf](http://www.chzc.org/sesshin.pdf).**

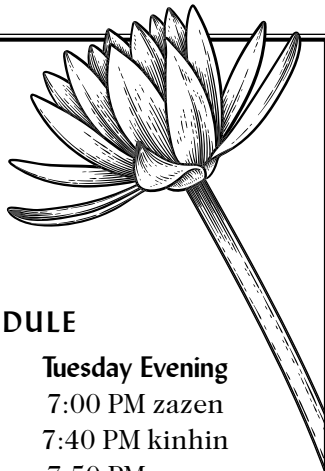
You are welcome to sleep at the Zen Center, and there may be some space available in members' homes nearby. Please bring a portable bed or pad for the floor, a sleeping bag, pillow, a towel and washcloth, slip-on shoes, work clothes, and layered clothing. Opportunities for bathing are limited. Please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

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



# 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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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

*I've been asked many times whether this is the  
aquarian age and it's all just beginning,  
or if this is armageddon and this is the end,  
and I have to admit I don't know.*

*Whichever way it goes, my work is the same.  
My work is to quiet my mind and open my heart  
and relieve suffering wherever I find it.*

— Ram Das



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.