



Many of the central stories about Dongshan relate to recognizing, exploring, or expressing reality, or the suchness of things. Known in Sanskrit as tathata, this suchness is described in Indian Buddhism as ultimate truth, reality, the source, or the unattainable. Experientially, this suchness might imply the direct apprehension of the immediate present reality.... So, in varying contexts suchness may refer to our clear perception of reality, or else to the nature of that reality itself.

— Taigen Leighton

Study Group

The Thursday night Study Group which meets from 6:45 until 8:00, will resume meeting on **Thursday, January 7**. Together we will read Taigen Leighton's new book, *Just This Is It, Dongshan and the Practice of Suchness*. Dongshan, or Tozan Ryokai who lived 807-869, is the founding ancestor of the Soto Zen tradition in China. This book helps us understand suchness and the foundation for Soto Zen practice. Everyone is welcome to come to all or any of the classes, and there is no charge. Copies of the book are available for sale in the entryway.

Taigen Leighton will also lead a workshop on the topic of this book on Saturday, March 26, and he will give a Dharma Talk followed by a book signing on Sunday, March 27.

Beginning Zen Practice: A Class with David Guy

Monday nights, 7:30 to 9:00

February 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, and March 7

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

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 919-286-4952 or davidguy@mindspring.com.

David Guy has been practicing meditation since 1991, and regularly gives sitting instruction. 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*. In 2008 he published *Jake Fades: A Novel of Impermanence*.

All-day Sittings

The all-day sittings for January and February will be on **Sundays, January 31, and February 28**, from 6:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. The sitting will begin with orientation on **Saturday night at 7:30**, and will include instruction on the meal form and one period of *zazen*. The regular Sunday schedule, with *zazen* at 9:00 and 9:50 and Dharma Talk at 10:30, will be open to everyone. The day will include *zazen*, a Dharma talk, *dokusan*, and a work period, as well as breakfast and lunch. The fee is \$10 for members and \$20 for others. It is alright to sit half of the day, but please sign up in advance, and please speak to Josho Sensei if this is your first all-day sitting. For more information on the *oryoki* meal form see: <http://kannondo.org/getting-started/oryoki-manual/>

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Dharma Talks

Josho Pat Phelan will give public Dharma talks on Sunday morning, January 31, and February 28, at 10:30.

Board Members

The 2016 Board Members for the Chapel Hill Zen Center are President, Maura High; Vice President, Ken Wilson; Secretary, John Paredes; Treasurer, Elliott Schaffer; Members-at-Large, Micheal Emberson and Steve Pickett. We thank the returning and new board members for their willingness to serve the Zen Center in the coming year; and we express our deep appreciation for all the time and effort offered by the out-going board members, Robert Haake who served as president, Carol Klein who served as secretary for three years, and Conal Ho who served as member-at-large for two and a half years.

Positions

Zenki Kathleen Batson is now the Ino or Head of the Meditation Hall, training doans and organizing ceremonies. Choro Carla Antonaccio served as Ino for four years before participating this past Fall in a Practice Period at Green Gulch Farm, in California. We offer many bows for all the support that Choro brought to the zendo, leading ceremonies, training many doans, and maintaining the zazen schedule.

Practice Discussion

Jakuko Mo Ferrell is available to meet individually for Practice Discussion. If you would like to set up a meeting, please contact her at the zendo or at Mositwear@gmail.com.

Children's Program

The Zen Center's Children's program offers children four years and older a place in the Zen Center sangha through a variety of activities, including meditation, story, craft, song, and movement, as well as participation in Zen Center events and celebrations throughout the year. In each meeting, the children have the space and time to practice living mindfully and learn about Buddhist teachings and contexts while giving their parents an opportunity to meditate in the

concurrent adult program. The Children's Program meets twice a month, on Sundays, from 9:00 until 11:00; the next meetings are January 10 and 24, February 7 and 21, March 6 and 20, and April 3 and 17. For more information, please visit childrensprogramchzc.wordpress.com or contact Maura High, the program coordinator, at maurahigh@gmail.com.

People of Color Sitting Group

Wednesday nights from 6:00-7:30

We begin with zazen at 6:00, followed by kinhin (walking meditation), and then have the option to stay for group discussion and community building. Both those new to meditation, or experienced, are warmly welcome to join us every Wednesday evenings or drop in as you like. Please do not hesitate to contact Conal or Kriti at pocsittinggroup@gmail.com with any questions you may have. As usual, instruction in zazen and an orientation are offered to the public on Sunday morning at 9:00, and on Tuesday night at 7:00.

Recovery Meeting

The Recovery Meeting meets on Tuesday nights at 7:30. This is a recovery group with a Buddhist perspective on the 12-Step Program which meets at the Chapel Hill Zen Center. The meetings begin with twenty minutes of silent meditation. For more information, contact: 919-265-7600 or ZenandRecovery@gmail.com.

Chinese Brush Painting

Jinxu Zhao will teach Chinese Calligraphy on Sunday afternoons from 1:10-2:40, on January 10 and 24, and February 7 and 21. Chinese Brush Painting is from 1:10-3:10. Fees are \$20 for calligraphy and \$25 for brush painting. Please contact Jinxu at (919) 484-7524 or Jxzn@aol.com to register or for more information. Jinxu is also available to teach children's classes.

Prison Outreach

Members of the Chapel Hill Zen Center volunteer in both state prisons in North Carolina and the federal prison at Butner. We can always use more volunteers, and having volunteers present is usually a requirement in order for inmates to meet

for religious services or to sit *zazen*. We are looking for people who have been sitting *zazen* at the Zen Center for a year or more. Orientation is required by each institution. If you would like more information, please contact Josho at (919) 967-0861 or info@chzc.org

The Joy of Suchness

Taigen Dan Leighton will lead a workshop from 9:00-5:00, on Saturday, March 26, on the joy of “suchness” – the ultimate nature inherent in all appearance – which shines throughout the teachings attributed to Donghan Liangjie, the legendary founder of the Caodong lineage of Chan Buddhism, transmitted to Japan by Dogen as Soto Zen. Based on Taigen’s most recent book, *Just This Is It: Dongshan and the Practice of Suchness*, we will discuss select teaching stories from Dongshan that reveal the subtlety and depth of teaching on the nature of reality, including the complexity of self and non-self, and the immediacy of awakening. These subtle teachings about engagement with suchness remain vital today for Zen people and for all those who wish to find meaning amid the challenges to modern lives.

Taigen will also give a Dharma Talk on Sunday, March 27, followed by a book signing.

Taigen Dan Leighton is a Soto Zen priest in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki of the San Francisco Zen Center, and he is the Dharma Teacher of the Ancient Dragon Zen Gate temple in Chicago.

Looking Ahead

April 29 - May 2 – **Spring Sesshin** will be led by Kokyo Henkel, senior teacher at the Santa Cruz Zen Center. This will be a three-day teaching sesshin, beginning on Friday night, April 29, and ending on Monday afternoon, May 2. Kokyo will give two talks a day on Nagarjuna teaching’s. Nagarjuna, the brilliant second-century Indian teacher, wrote one of the most profound and influential expositions of Buddha-Dharma, the *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way*, elucidating the teachings of the interdependent arising of all things and emptiness of independent existence. Kokyo will focus on Chapter 24 of this great work which clarifies the heart of the Middle Way.

May 13-15 – **Death and Dying Workshop** by Andrew Holecek, author of *Preparing to Die, Practical Advice and Spiritual Wisdom from the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition*. This is a guide for those facing death and for their caregivers, including from the great masters and useful advice on navigating end-of-life issues.

Mid-May -- June Practice Period

August 5-10 – **Genzo-e Sesshin** led by Shohaku Okumura Roshi. For this sesshin, Okumura Roshi will teach on two shorter fascicles or texts, from Dogen Zenji’s *Shobogenzo*, *Dotoku* or *Expressing the Truth*, and *Mitsugo* or *Intimate Words*. Okumura Roshi will be making his own translations which will be available before he arrives. Translations are also in Kaz Tanahashi’s *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, Vol. 1, p. 439, and in Nishijima and Cross’s *Master Dogen’s Shobogenzo*, Book 2, p. 269.

Library News

Recently the CHZC Member’s Library was given 19 issues of the Springer publication, “Mindfulness.” These journals feature papers that examine research findings, exploring the nature and foundation of mindfulness, it’s mechanics of action, and it’s use across cultures.

Also new this past month, the book *Buddhism on Air: Televised Kaleidoscope of a Growing Religion* by Kenneth Kenshin Tanaka, and a DVD, *Inquiry Into the Great Matter: A History of Zen Buddhism* including interviews with the historians and practitioners, Stephen Addiss, Martin Collcutt, Taigen Leighton, and Thomas Kirchner.

The Practice of Forgiveness

Josho Pat Phelan

Developing awareness is one of the key endeavors in Buddhist practice. I see awareness as one part of a three-legged stool, the other two legs are self-acceptance and a kind, open attitude toward whatever we find. Jon Kabat-Zinn said that “...loving-kindness is the ground of mindfulness ... requiring the same nonjudging, nongrasping, nonrejecting orientation toward the present moment...” In Buddhism, awareness and acceptance are considered to arise together since we

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can't accept a mental or emotional state that we aren't aware of, and we can't be fully aware of something that we are ignoring or denying. I think the idea that loving-kindness is the ground of mindfulness makes an even stronger statement about the importance of practicing loving-kindness. The way I understand this is that when we push a part of ourselves under the rug, or fight it, or feel punished by it, we close off from our wholeness of being. The more we can become aware of, accept, and develop a caring attitude to all the aspects of ourselves, no matter how difficult or shameful some of these parts are, then they can join us in our endeavor to wake up. When all the parts of ourselves are supporting our practice, we'll have a much fuller consciousness to practice and wake up with.

The cultivation of loving-kindness is part of what is known in early Buddhism as the Four *Brahma Viharas*. These four are loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. "*Brahma Vihara*" literally means heavenly abode, and these practices are referred to as Measureless Meditations, or Boundless, Unlimited States of being, because they reduce the barriers between self and other, and lead to an open heart and mind. One of the effects of doing these practices is to make the mind of loving-kindness and compassion, of sympathetic joy and equanimity our True Home.

The first Unlimited State – loving-kindness is *metta* in Pali, and *maitri* in Sanskrit, and it includes the feelings of friendliness, goodwill, benevolence, fellowship, amity and concord. *Metta* means wishing well for others or the wish to provide others with what is useful. The second Unlimited State is compassion or *karuna*, which means wishing to relieve the suffering of others, and its literal meaning is experiencing a trembling or quivering of the heart in response to another's pain. The third Unlimited State is sympathetic joy or *mudita* which is feeling happiness at the good fortune of others. Sympathetic joy is characterized by freedom from despondency, and it is considered an antidote to coveting what others have as well as an antidote to depression. So, cultivating a joyful attitude toward the good fortune of others may be one way to work with

depression or help prevent depression. The Fourth Unlimited State, equanimity or *upeksha*, is even-mindedness toward all. Equanimity is sometimes confused with its near enemy, indifference or detachment; but equanimity does not mean withdrawing from others, rather it is having equal regard for all beings, including one's self. It is important to include one's self in whatever kindness and regard, safety or generosity we are wishing for others. One function of equanimity is providing balance and equilibrium toward the suffering we face within and without. Through compassion, as we open our hearts to suffering, equanimity helps ground us and prevent us from being overwhelmed so we don't tip over into despair. Again, the practice of these Four Unlimited States both reduces the separation between self and others, and it gives us access to open, boundless, non-dual aspects of consciousness.

Today I'd like to talk about the practice of forgiveness because being able to forgive ourselves is necessary for self-acceptance, which is important for developing loving-kindness. It doesn't matter which comes first, forgiveness, self-acceptance, or loving-kindness, because they are all interrelated and necessary to the process of waking up. According to the Buddhist monk Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "The Pali word for forgiveness – *khama* – also means 'the Earth.' A mind like the Earth is nonreactive and unperturbed." He said, "When you forgive me for harming you, you decide not to retaliate, to seek no revenge. You don't have to like me. You simply unburden yourself of the weight of resentment and cut the cycle of retribution that would otherwise keep us ensnarled in an ugly samsaric wrestling match. This is a gift you can give us both, totally on your own, without my having to know or understand what you've done."

Once I knew someone who was in the process of dying. Because of earlier choices this person had made that led to rigid barriers, it became clear to me how important it is to resolve any issues around anger, resentment, or guilt which are all obstructions to surrendering to death, as well as surrendering to the life we are right now. I think surrendering the past to the past is what allows us to be alive for our present living as well as our

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dying. Right now, I don't feel like I am holding a grudge or have a clear need to practice forgiveness. But at the same time, I think there are milder aspects of regret that create a hindrance to deeply settling in *zazen* which may take the form of a subtle nagging feeling, a persistent thought or image, or perhaps something that we might sense in the periphery, you know, over here just out of view. These less perceptible niggling or nagging feelings are subtle obstructions to settling and being still. I think working with forgiveness can help bring these hindrances to light where they can be consciously addressed and then released.

In practice, we try to nurture awareness for all of our experience, including recognizing when we make a mistake because when we don't, it's likely that we'll repeat it, and because recognizing what we've done indicates that we are connected with what we are doing. But at the same time, if we are going to stay in the present moment, there isn't enough space or time to get involved in feeling guilty, and *the self-rejection that comes with guilt is not useful in practice*. Through guilt, we direct aversion and hatred toward ourselves. Guilt tends to make what we did, that we regret, seem more permanent than it is, by making the "me" who did it more solid. Guilt magnifies our regrettable actions, making them larger, or a larger part of our identity than they were initially, and it actually keeps us in a self-centered state. Guilt keeps us fastened to the past, diminishing the present. Instead, we want to recognize our actions for what they are, but without dwelling on them. By letting go or emptying ourselves, moment after moment, we are free to meet the present. This is a way to reinforce our intention and effort to practice rather than dwelling on our lapses which actually strengthen self criticism and self-rejection, both of which are hindrances to practice.

Whether we've harmed someone else or ourselves, forgiveness helps us move from the past into the present. Someone told me that *A Course in Miracles* described forgiveness as giving up all hope for a better past. In the context of practice, forgiveness is something we do primarily for ourselves, it's something that lightens and frees

our own state of mind. And although I think forgiveness has a wider effect which goes beyond ourselves; in forgiveness we primarily work with our own state of mind and in this context, forgiveness does not mean reconciliation. The Tibetan Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron compared holding a grudge to "...eating rat poison and thinking the rat will die."

The book *Forgive for Good* by Fred Luskin offers a clear path to healing. He carefully analyzed and then described the three components necessary in order to hold a grudge. The first is to take a particular interaction or situation that was painful too personally, as if whatever happened, whatever was said or done, was done with the intention of hurting us. The other person may have been thoughtless, unskillful, self-centered, dishonest, or even intentionally lied. But when we take the view that whatever was done was done first and foremost as a way to hurt us personally, not only is it likely to be inaccurate, it also serves to keep us in a painful state and stuck in the past. There are always many, many factors that effect how we behave, and certainly ignorance and self-centeredness may be strong factors, but most likely the person was not calculating the very best way to hurt you, using that as the primary motivation for what they did.

The second component necessary for holding a grudge is blaming others when we feel hurt, angry, resentful, bitter, jealous and so on. This may be an appropriate response to a painful experience for a period of time. But when we are still dominated by these emotional states a year later or ten years later and blame someone else for them, then psychologically we are giving the other person control of our state of mind, now, in the present. Again, it may be appropriate to experience all of these feelings when we are hurt at some point in time, but it is not helpful to carry them around with us as part of our daily experience, identifying with them for years to come. Because we have a choice. We can learn from a situation and decide not to let ourselves be in that kind of situation again. But, instead, if we allow negative states of mind to become habitual and then blame someone else for them, we are keep

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ing ourselves enslaved to the past and enslaved to pain. Blame is a trap where we trap ourselves, giving our power and our choice away, so we are no longer taking responsibility for our reactions.

The third component necessary in order to maintain a grudge is a grievance story about what happened. Reviewing the story of how someone else hurt us and keeping this story alive is how we relinquish responsibility for our present state of mind and actually continue a relationship with that person internally, choosing that past story over our present life. Our stories are very dear to us – they're how we create our self identity. Luskin suggested making use of our story by writing an ending where we learn from the hurtful situation. He said that when we learn from a painful situation, we can change our grievance story into a forgiveness story where, instead of being the victim, we become the hero through the wisdom of what we've learned. This will allow us to finally drop the story.

Luskin described forgiveness as “the decision to free ourselves from the personal offense and blame that have us stuck in a of cycle of suffering” and he said that forgiveness is an “...experience of peacefulness in the present moment.” Although, forgiveness does not change the past, it allows us let to go of the past so we can more fully inhabit the present. Sharon Salzberg said that “...to be able to forgive is so deep a letting go that it is a type of dying.” And she said that “Forgiveness does not mean condoning a harmful action or denying injustice or suffering. It should never be confused with being passive toward violation or abuse.” “Forgiveness is an inner relinquishment of guilt or resentment both of which are devastating to us in the end.” She talks about forgiveness in terms of asking forgiveness from those we have harmed, offering forgiveness to those who have harmed us, and forgiving ourselves for whatever harm we have caused ourselves, whether the harm was intentional or not.

Now, I would like to shift to the practice of forgiving ourselves for the harm we have caused. The Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Trungpa Rinpoche said that “If we label ourselves as hopeless cases or see ourselves as villains, there is no way to use

our own experience as a stepping stone.” He said, “If we take the attitude that there is something wrong with us, we must constantly look outside ourselves for something better than we are.” Life is a learning process and Buddhist practice is something that can be applied to all of our experience. Actually, until we can look clearly at our actions and see them for what they are, including our intention at the time, they can't be resolved and released.

Tibetan Buddhism teaches a four-fold practice for working with our harmful actions by changing the cycle of our unwholesome karmic patterns, and Pema Chodron refers to these as neurotic actions. She described neurosis this way, “...in limitless, timeless space – with which we could connect at any time – we continually have tunnel vision and lock ourselves into a room and put bolts on the door... putting on dark glasses, putting in ear plugs, and covering ourselves with armor.” She said that in “confessing our neurotic actions... we learn to see honestly what we do and develop a yearning to take off those dark glasses, take out those earplugs, take off that armor. It's...another method for letting go of holding back, for opening up rather than closing down.”

The four-fold process of changing unwholesome habits or karmic patterns begins with recognizing and acknowledging what we have done that has caused harm either to ourselves or to others, now or in the past. Mindfulness is essential for doing this. If we aren't aware of feeling some heaviness or doubt about what we have done, if we aren't aware of our harmful actions, there is no way to work with them. So, first we need to be aware that we have done something off the mark and look at it clearly and thoroughly. By acknowledging actions rooted in ignorance for what they are, we know unwholesome action as unwholesome, delusions as delusions, and neurosis as neurosis. The first step in undoing guilt is disclosure, no longer hiding our misdeeds through ignorance, carelessness, shame, by being too busy, or intentionally. Hiding or being in denial about what we have done nourishes guilt.

In early Buddhist practice, disclosure was done by openly confessing to fellow monks or nuns in the

sangha. Disclosure can also be done to a spiritual guide or inwardly to the open, boundless nature of our own mind. In Mahayana Buddhism, particularly in Zen, disclosure is usually done inwardly. You look at what you are doing, and recognize it for what it is. You have the power and the ability to forgive yourself and to resolve not to repeat it.

After realizing that we have caused harm, the second step in changing the cycle of our unwholesome patterns is feeling regret. As regret strengthens, it becomes contrition or feeling truly sorry for the misery we have caused and feeling that under the same circumstances we would not do it again. If you find that you seem to have a pattern of causing harm unintentionally, then try to become more conscious of your intention or motivation.

The third step is doing remedial or virtuous activity – doing something which changes our direction away from unwholesome patterns and which reinforces wholesome patterns. The most common way of doing this is taking refuge in the Three Treasures. I think what taking refuge really is, is returning, reconnecting with our own open heart so we aren't so tangled up in our habit energy and reactivity. Reconnecting in this way helps strengthen our commitment to living an awakened life.

The fourth step is making a commitment to break the cycle, resolving or vowing not to repeat the action. Once we see, clearly and intimately, how our neurotic patterns work, it is much easier to refrain from repeating them. For example, when you know ahead of time that you will be in a difficult situation or a situation where you have strong karmic patterns for interacting, such as being with your family over the holidays, try to bring the focused presence and non-reactive awareness of *zazen* to the situation, as a way to be present and refrain from automatically reacting. I think of this as “facing the wall” in the sense of bringing the same unwavering commitment to being aware that we have in *zazen*, into the activity of interacting with others. In our deeply habituated relationships, this takes continuous awareness. When doing this work of recognizing the harm our actions have caused, we want to cultivate the same gentle attitude toward our-

selves that we would use toward someone else whose been hurt.

Although we can't undo the past, through disclosure and contrition—through really realizing the unwholesome effects of our unwholesome actions and resolving not to repeat them—we can alleviate the karmic force of our past actions. Again, this four-fold process is recognizing the harmful nature of what we have done, deeply regretting it, doing a practice that reinforces wholesome actions, and resolving or vowing not to do it again. Our resolution not to repeat regrettable actions, helps us stay focused on the present rather than getting mired down in guilt about the past. Both our known and forgotten burdens of mind, taking the form of guilt and resentment, weigh and pull on us when we sit *zazen*. The ability to resolve these burdens frees up more of our attention and energy for practice. The more self respect we have and confidence in our own inherent wholeness, or goodness, or Buddha Nature, the better this practice works.

I would like to end with a forgiveness meditation by Sharon Salzburg:

“If I have hurt or harmed anyone, knowingly or unknowingly, I ask their forgiveness.”

“If anyone has hurt or harmed me, knowingly or unknowingly, I forgive them.”

“For all the ways I have hurt or harmed myself, knowingly or unknowingly, I offer forgiveness.”

I suggest doing some form of forgiveness meditation regularly. I often do it at night before I fall asleep, as a way to release any burden or residue of regret for ways I wished I would have behaved differently during the day which may be holding me back as I try to let go into sleep.

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Chapel Hill Zen Center



P.O. Box 16302
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Schedule

Sunday Morning Tuesday Evening

9:00 zazen	7:00 zazen
9:40 kinhin	7:40 kinhin
9:50 zazen	7:50 zazen
10:30 service	8:20 service

Monday to Friday

<i>Thursday Evening</i>	6:00 A.M. zazen
6:00 P.M. zazen	6:50 A.M. zazen

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

Joshō Pat Phelan, Abbess

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The Snow Man

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

— Wallace Stevens

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.