



5-day Sesshin

There will be a 5-day sesshin, or meditation intensive, Friday evening, May 30 through Wednesday afternoon, June 4. See page 7 for more information and how to register.

Dharma Talks

Sunday mornings at 10:30 AM

Joshō Pat Phelan Roshi on March 2.

Jakuko Mo Ferrell on March 16.

Lance Ashdown will give a Talk on Practice on April 27.

All-Day Sitting

Sunday, March 16 from 6 AM to 5 PM

The sitting begins with orientation on Saturday night at 7:30 PM which includes instruction in and review of 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 Joshō 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, March 12** at info@chzc.org. For more information on the *oryoki* meal form see: www.kannondo.org/getting-started/oryoki/

Outdoor Half-day Sitting

Saturday, March 29, 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. Please email info@chzc.org for more information or to sign up. 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.

Beginning Zen Practice

A Class with David Guy

Six Monday nights, 7 to 8:30 PM

March 17 to April 21

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 Dōgen

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, and 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.

Instrucción en español

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

Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Sunday morning, May 4

Buddha's Birthday Celebration will be held on Sunday morning, May 4, following regular zazen at 9 AM. 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. Following the ceremony, there will be a **vegetarian potluck picnic**. Beverages and birthday cake will be provided.

Children, families, and friends are welcome!

At 9 AM the children will decorate the pagoda or "flower house" during zazen. Please bring balloons, bubbles, and banners for the procession, and flowers for decorating the pagoda for the Baby Buddha.

Work Morning

Saturday, May 3, 10 AM to noon

There will be a work period to clean the grounds and prepare for the outdoor celebration of Buddha's Birthday. **Everyone is welcome to come to the work period, either for the whole session or for any part of it.** Please bring flowers on Saturday if you can, or by 9 AM on Sunday.

CROP Walk Fundraiser to End Hunger

Sunday afternoon, March 23

Please join fellow sangha members for the Chapel Hill/Carrboro CROP Hunger Walk to help hungry and impoverished people locally and around the world. The 2025 CROP Hunger Walk will begin and end at the Carrboro Town Commons. You can make a donation, walk with us, or both!

Your offering can be made online by going to the Zen Center team's 2025 CROP Walk page: www.CHZC.org/cropwalk.htm.

Study Groups via Zoom

Yogacara Study Group

Monday evenings, 5:30 to 6:30 PM

The Monday night Study Group is reading and 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 a PDF copy of the sutra.

Seeing One Thing Through

Thursday evenings, 7 to 8 PM

The Thursday night Study Group is reading together and studying Sojun Mel Weitsman's book, *Seeing One Thing Through*.

See www.chzc.org/events.htm#study for the Study Group Zoom link. *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.*

Baika

Saturday, April 26, 9 AM to noon

You are invited to join us in singing *Baikaryu Eisanka*, Japanese Soto Zen Buddhist hymns with bell accompaniment. No experience necessary! Please contact Chris at ccensullo@yahoo.com if you are interested in attending. For more information about *Baikaryu Eisanka*, see: www.sotozen.com/eng/practice/baikaryu/.

Virtual Peer Group

Wednesday evenings, March 12 and April 9

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 Peer Group meets monthly on the second Wednesday of the month. For more information, please contact Al-Nisa Berry at alnisa.berry@gmail.com or Maura High at maurahigh@gmail.com.

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. If you would like more information, please contact Carol Klein at carollyklein53@gmail.com or Kris Garvin at krisgarvin@gmail.com. Everyone is welcome.

2025 Board of Directors

Danielle Bouchard, President

Chris Censullo, Vice President

Mike McKillip, Treasurer

Jill Kuhlberg, Secretary

Lance Ashdown and Daniel Rhodes,
Members-at-Large

We offer deep gratitude to John Paredes who is stepping down from the board after serving three years as President, three years as Vice President, and three years as Secretary, and to Al-Nisa Berry who is stepping down after serving three years as a Member-at-Large.

Washing the Face

by Zenki Kathleen Batson

June 23, 2024

While some religions differentiate between what is sacred and what is mundane, Zen unifies the two. Zen offers the perspective that what some call the sacred does not exist anywhere other than right within our mundane experience. We may have heard Layman P'ang's famous verse about chopping wood and hauling water, or one Chinese Zen story in which a disciple asks his master, "What is the fundamental principle of Buddhism?" and the master responds "Wearing clothes and eating meals." The website for Dogen's temple Eihei-ji says, "Zazen practice itself manifests the enlightenment of the Buddha. The practice is not only zazen, but also every ordinary activity in our daily life: eating, walking, cleaning up, and so on. This is because our life is not anything besides what is in front of us, right here, right now."

We sit in the dynamic stillness of zazen and can become intimately aware of the moment by moment experience of our life. As we leave the zendo and begin moving and talking, it can be very easy to lose touch with that intimate awareness with experience that we cultivated while sitting.

When written in English, *Senmen* is about 14 pages long. Dogen goes into great detail about how to wash the face and care for the mouth and teeth using a willow twig which, when chewed on, frays and becomes like a little broom. He describes the size of the towel one brings to the washstand, how to use it, how to keep our robes and collar dry, and when and how to clean and dry the towel. He also goes into what not to do with it, such as wipe our body with the face towel, or wipe out the inside of our nose. He also gives practical details regarding where to find the washstands and where to get the hot water from in the monastery. I imagine that all this practical information was helpful for a new monk finding his way in the monastery and trying to quietly fit in. But the practicality of the information is only one aspect of Dogen's message. In discussing cleaning the mouth

for example, Dogen indicates that the method he describes is the way the Buddha cleaned his mouth and he expresses that we should follow this method not only because it is effective, but also because it carries on the Buddha's behavior. "To meet the willow twig is to meet the Buddhist patriarchs."

Senmen begins with a verse from the *Lotus Sutra*, "Anointing the body with oil, He bathes away the dirt; Donning a new clean robe, Both inside and out are pure." This verse may sound familiar. We use something very similar as the bathing gatha. You see it by bathrooms at various temples and it is next to the bathroom here in our own annex. Our version is, "With all beings I wash body and mind, Free from dust, Pure and shining, Within and without."

Dogen dedicates the first several pages of *Senmen* to discussing the cleansing of inside and outside and about how we cannot define the difference between inside and outside. I would never claim that I *really* know what Dogen was saying. (Sometimes I am unsure I understand what my spouse is saying and we are living in the same time and place and speak the same language.) All I can share is how I experience Dogen's teachings, how I interpret them according to what I have studied and learned from others, and what I have learned from my own experience. My deep and grateful sense is that Dogen is telling us that washing our face is fundamental practice, and when washing our face and mouth completely with undivided awareness we wash our whole being and our experience of all being. We cleanse/purify our experience with awareness. Dogen states that "This concrete place is where something ineffable exists-explain it as fine or course."

When we are new to Zen, we may start by seeing sitting in the zendo as formal practice, and everything else we do as something else, which we may or may not engage in with awareness. The more we practice however, the more the distinctions between formal and informal practice blur, the more there is just practice. And, the more this becomes the case, the more practice just becomes our way of life; The Buddha way.

One could start by seeing washing the face as a kind of ceremony. If, as Robin Wall-Kimmerer the author of *Braiding Sweetgrass* learned from her elders, the purpose of ceremony is to remember to remember, then all activity can be ceremony from a Zen perspective. Each activity reminds us to return to that activity itself. I think once a special designation can be applied to everything, that designation loses its distinction. As practice infuses our entire life, what was once approached as ceremony just becomes how we now live.

Dogen expresses that purifying the skin can be a way to purify our entire being inside and out. Washing our face and cleaning our teeth, every single activity we engage in, has what some call a spiritual dimension. But perhaps more accurately, there is no difference between this mundane world and what one might label the spiritual realm. There is only one reality, one realm. Form is emptiness and emptiness is form. This is the reality we live in. In our practice, we come to recognize that mundane activity is just another place where reality is constantly expressing itself. We practice Zen with our whole body and mind as one body/mind and try to unify ourselves with the one reality, as opposed to seeing ourselves and others as separate, independent beings. We are all in this together.

Dogen states that "The limits of all dharmas have never been determined, and the inside and outside of the elements are impossible to grasp. Therefore, the inside and outside of the body-mind are also impossible to grasp."

"To bathe the body-mind, to apply fragrant oil, and to get rid of dust and dirt, are Buddha-Dharma of the highest priority. To put on a fresh and clean robe is a method of purification. When we bathe away dust and dirt and apply fragrant oil to the body, inside-and-outside will be totally clean. When inside-and-outside is totally clean, object-and-subject is pure and clean."

I think Dogen is asking us to recognize that we can experience the activities of washing the face and

cleaning the teeth both from a mundane perspective and the ultimate perspective. From the perspective of simply washing the face, and also the perspective of washing our entire being and all being, ultimately emptiness. This is something we can ponder every time we clean our face and mouth. Dogen says, “We utilize emptiness to bathe emptiness and utilize emptiness to bathe the body-mind.”

If we think in terms of the logic we see Dogen use in other writings, washing the face is washing emptiness (or we can use the word boundlessness or Buddha nature if we want. They are all expressing the same indescribable reality.) Washing emptiness (Buddha nature) is washing the face, therefore washing the face is washing the face. If the mundane is at the same time truly the ultimate we do not have to give the ultimate a different name, we can simply call it what it is.

Another dimension that Dogen touches on in *Senmen* is what I, as a former Montessori Toddler teacher, think of as the “Grace and Courtesy” dimension. Perhaps in Zen terms this is part of the bodhisattva mind set of living for the benefit of all being. I see the “Grace and Courtesy” dimension as having the power to reunite what our minds differentiated into two things. This grace and courtesy, or bodhisattva mindset can unite the practical or mundane aspect of washing the face and caring for our mouth, with the spiritual or ultimate aspect of these activities.

What I am separating out as this third component of “Grace and Courtesy” is how Dogen beckons us to engage in these activities in a way that expresses care for our world, and what is right in front of us, in a way that also offers care and respect for others.

For example, Dogen says, “Do not let tears, spit, or nasal mucous fall into the hot water in the washbowl.” To not do these things keeps us from spreading germs to the next person who will use the washbowl. He also says, “Do not use up the hot water immoderately, spilling or splashing it from the washbowl so that it runs out too soon.” This of course prevents the personal inconvenience of running out of water.

It also keeps us from taking water for granted and wasting it, and it will help keep the space clean for the next person.

“While washing the face, do not make noise by clanking the dipper loudly against the washbowl. And do not get the surrounding area wet by making a mess with the hot and cold water....we should wholeheartedly rejoice that, receiving the authentic transmission of the dignified behavior of eternal buddhas, we can enjoy untainted practice-and-experience. On the way back to the Cloud Hall the footsteps should be light and quiet. The cottages of aged monks of long-accumulated virtue should always have a washstand. Not washing the face goes against the Dharma.”

One could maybe interpret this paragraph to be admonishing noisy, messy, immature monks, but I believe he is asking us to pay attention to all of our activity and be polite citizens within our community and therefore within the one reality. For me the implication is that we should be aware of how our activities affect others. The amount of sound we make affects others. How we use a space, and how we leave it when we are done, affects others.

When reading this section I began thinking about airport bathrooms with rows of sinks. Have you ever walked into an airport bathroom with soap scum and water puddles all over the counters, the paper towel bin overflowing with soggy paper, and felt that perhaps you were getting more dirty than clean in using that sink?

I began to consider what it might be like if we each wiped down the airport sink and counter area after we used it. Or we at least cleaned up after ourself if necessary. What if we stayed present to what we were actually doing in the airport bathroom and how the space we used looked when we were done, even while we felt concern about catching our flight? Would we feel more care for and connection to the people who used the sink before us and those who will use it after us? Would we experience our life as part of a bigger picture in which we were caring

for others and others were caring for us? What if all beings cared for all activities in this way? Would it create a more fundamentally peaceful world? I wonder.

We don't even have to contemplate something as exotic as the airport bathroom. What about our homes? Am I present and caring enough to wipe up my coffee splatters and remember to not leave my pajamas on the bathroom floor for my family when they wake up? Do they do that for me? Or, am I sometimes ironically in too big of a hurry to get to the zendo to sit down and *practice* being present, that I don't have time to *be* present for cleaning up after myself before I leave? What an absurd contradiction!

I think we have a tendency to conceptualize bodhi-sattva activity as something grand; saving all beings, feeding the multitudes, creating peace on earth, while we separate out our day to day activities as much less grandiose than this, but maybe there is a seamless relationship.

"We can do no great things, only small things with great love." said Mother Theresa. Katagiri Roshi said something like, "Enlightenment is knowing how much toilet paper you use." My intention is not to discourage large scale actions that benefit others. My intention is to just point out that how we spend each moment is how we spend our lives.

I think Zen practice is asking us to take care of, and clean up our own messes. Both the ones we create in the external environment, as well as our internal mental environments. When we are attentive to what we are doing with our body and mind, we are better able to care for our world both inside and outside.

I see care of the internal environment as working to take responsibility for my own emotional responses to things as opposed to blaming others for the ways that I feel when I am irritated, angry, or unhappy. My sense is that if we each really learned to truly take care of our own messes, internal and external, then there wouldn't be as much need to save others because if we all truly took responsibility for how our actions affect others, maybe we wouldn't harm

others to begin with. I think one of the places where we can experience the intimacy of mundane activity and the ultimate, is in the moments when our mundane actions that may appear to have nothing to do with anything of great import, express a deep awareness of the interconnectivity of our life with all life.

As I read *Senmen*, I started to contemplate how most sinks here in the U.S. have a mirror above them. Our culture seems to be obsessed with gazing at itself, with beauty, youth, and individuality. In Zen we study the Buddha way to learn what the true self really is and how it is beyond all our concepts. Have you ever stared at your reflection in the mirror long enough to no longer recognize yourself? What is the self? Who are you? How have you come to be who you are?

When I look in the mirror I see impermanence clearly in the way I am aging. I experience the teachings of non-self when recognizing various features my parents passed on to me. I consider co-dependent arising when I look at the color and tone of my skin and recognize how a whole level of societal experiences is affected by this factor; the extent to which I am trusted in a store, how easily I will get a loan, the extent to which the doctor will believe me when I say I am in pain and how much I get to see myself reflected in the culture around me. I think perhaps all of the Buddha's core teachings can be experienced in real time just by looking in the mirror!

We can engage in washing with wordless awareness of our activity, and we can look in the mirror and contemplate the teachings discursively. It is all right there. It reminds me of the *Genjokoan*, "Here is the place; here the way unfolds. The boundary of realization is not distinct, for the realization comes forth simultaneously with the mastery of buddhadharma. Do not suppose that what you realize becomes your knowledge and is grasped by your consciousness. Although actualized immediately, the inconceivable may not be distinctly apparent. Its appearance is beyond your knowledge."

Chapel Hill Zen Center Newsletter – March & April 2025

In *Senmen* Dogen wrote, “The dimension of the mind cannot be known by thinking and discriminating, and cannot be fathomed by not thinking and not discriminating. Because the dimension of the body-mind is like this, the dimension of bathing is also like this. To grasp this dimension and to practice-and-experience it is that which the buddhas and the patriarchs guard and desire. We should not see our conception of ourselves as foremost, and we

should not see our conception of ourselves as real. Thus, when we bathe and wash like this we perfectly realize the dimension of body and the dimension of mind and we make them pure and clean.”

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5-day Sesshin

Led by Josho Pat Phelan Roshi

Friday evening, May 30 through Wednesday afternoon, June 4

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 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.

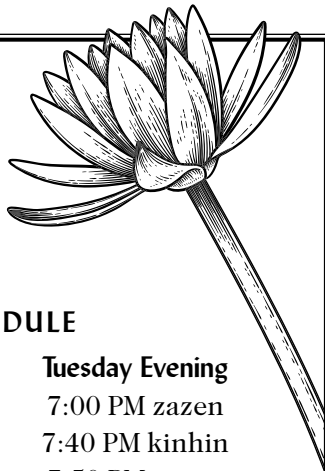
The registration form is online at www.chzc.org/sesshin.pdf

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 or 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	Tuesday Evening
9:00 AM zazen	7:00 PM zazen
9:40 AM kinhin	7:40 PM kinhin
9:50 AM zazen	7:50 PM zazen
10:30 AM service	

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
(919) 967-0861 · www.CHZC.org

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Penetrating Cold

If this greatest cold

does not penetrate into our bones,

*How will the fragrance of the plum blossoms
pervade the entire universe?*

— Master Dogen, *Eihei Koroku*



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.