



# CHAPEL HILL ZEN CENTER

NEWSLETTER

May & June 2026



## Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Sunday morning, May 3

**Children, families and friends are welcome!** At 9 AM the children will gather for the Children's Program and to decorate the *pagoda* or "flower house" for the Baby Buddha. At 10:30 AM, following regular zazen, 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.

Please bring balloons, bubbles, and banners for the procession, and flowers for decorating the pagoda for the Baby Buddha.

## Summer Sesshin

LED BY JOSHO PAT PHELAN ROSHI

Friday evening, June 5 through

Wednesday afternoon, June 10, 2026

For more information and to register, see pages 6 and 7.

## Work Morning

Saturday, May 2 from 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 encouraged to come to the work period, either for the whole session or for any part of it. Please bring flowers, if you can on Saturday, or by 9 AM on Sunday.

## Dharma Talks

Following two periods of zazen at 9 and 9:50 AM. Everyone is welcome to all or any part of the morning program.

### REV. CHORO CARLA ANTONACCIO

**Sunday morning, May 17 at 10:30 AM**

Choro Sensei is the Guiding Teacher at Austin Zen Center

### JOSHO PAT PHELAN ROSHI

**Sunday morning, June 7 at 10:30 AM**

### SESSHIN DHARMA TALKS

Josho Roshi will be giving Dharma Talks during sesshin, Saturday, June 6 through Wednesday, June 11 at 10:30 AM. Everyone is welcome to attend.

## Silent Outdoor Half-day Sitting

**Saturday, June 27 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](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.

## Practice Intensive Teas

Our last two Practice intensive teas for those who signed up for the Practice Intensive in April will be Sunday, May 24 and 31 after temple cleaning.

## Monday Evening Zazen

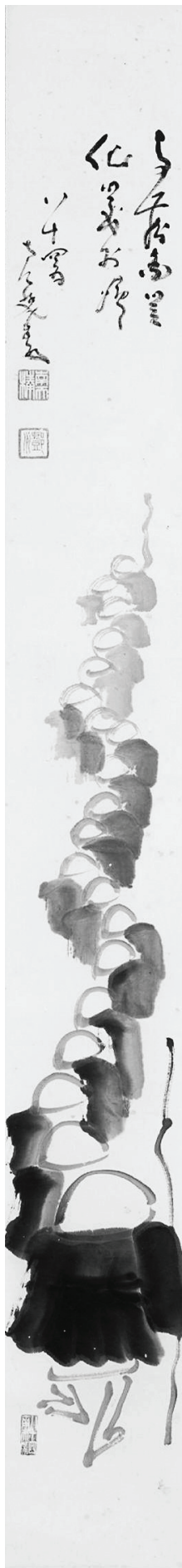
As part of the Spring Practice Intensive we will continue to have one period of in-person zazen on Monday evenings at 6 PM, except for Monday, May 25.

## Study Hall

During the month of May, we will have Study Hall on Monday mornings after service, 7:45 until 8:30 or 9 AM, except on Monday, May 25. Everyone is welcome to attend. During Study Hall, it is appropriate to study Buddhist teachings, copy sutras, or sew Buddha's robe.

## Way-seeking Mind Talk

Kit Hill will speak about how he came to practice on Tuesday evening, May 5, instead of the second period of zazen. Kit began formal practice at the Rochester Zen Center in 1967. Everyone is welcome to attend.



## Looking Ahead

### ALL-DAY SITTING AND PUBLIC DHARMA TALK

**Sunday, July 12**

All-day Sittings begin with orientation Saturday evening at 7:30 PM. The Dharma Talk on Sunday morning begins at 10:30 AM following two periods of zazen at 9 and 9:50 AM. Everyone is welcome to all or any part of the Sunday morning public program.

### HARMONIOUS PRACTICE: WHAT TO DO WHEN IN THE ZENDO

**Saturday, July 18**

In this workshop, open to both new and more experienced practitioners, we will go over various forms of practice such as when and how to bow, which direction to face at various times in the zendo, how to hold and care for sutra books, and how to move and carry objects. We will also take a short tour of the Center and have a question and answer period. We will end the morning with a period of zazen and a short service.

## Virtual Peer Group

**Wednesday, May 13 and June 10 from 7 to 8 PM**

This is a monthly online meeting that gives 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 on the second Wednesday of the month. Please contact Al-Nisa Berry at [alnisa.berry@gmail.com](mailto:alnisa.berry@gmail.com) or Maura High at [maurahigh@gmail.com](mailto:maurahigh@gmail.com) for more information.

## Living with Impermanence

This is an informal discussion group in which we share 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 from 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.

If you would like more information please contact Carol Klein at [carollyklein53@gmail.com](mailto:carollyklein53@gmail.com), or Neil Bolick at [nebolick@gmail.com](mailto:nebolick@gmail.com). Everyone is welcome, regardless of age.

## Baika Gathering

Sunday, June 14 after temple cleaning

*The moon dwelling in the unclouded  
water of the mind. The waves are breaking.*

*The light is shining, the light shining.*

Zazen Goeika (Jōshin),  
Poetic Song of Zazen

The Baika Group is now meeting on Sunday after temple cleaning. Bring a bag lunch or a snack to enjoy before gathering with others to learn Soto Zen Buddhist Hymns with bell accompaniment. Contact Chris Censullo at [ccensullo@yahoo.com](mailto:ccensullo@yahoo.com) for more information.

## Children's Program

Sunday mornings from 8:50 to 10:30 AM

The Zen Center's Children's Program meets weekly on Sunday mornings, except when there is an All-day Sitting. The program gives children three 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. The children have the space and time to practice living mindfully and learn about Buddhist teachings while giving their guardians an opportunity to join zazen. For more information, please contact Will Savery or Edward Markus, the program coordinators, at [chzckidsprogram@gmail.com](mailto:chzckidsprogram@gmail.com).

## Holiday Closures

The Zen Center will be closed on Monday, May 25 and on Friday, July 3.

## Instrucción y orientación en español

Instrucción y orientación sobre zazen ahora disponibles en español. Envíenos un correo electrónico a [info@chzc.org](mailto:info@chzc.org) para programar.

## Donations Gratefully Accepted

If you would like to support the Zen Center through a monetary donation, please mail checks to P.O. Box 16302, Chapel Hill, NC 27516, or make a donation online via MoonClerk at [CHZC.org/donate.htm](http://CHZC.org/donate.htm).

Teaching donations can be made online via MoonClerk at [CHZC.org/dana.htm](http://CHZC.org/dana.htm).



## Additions to the Members' Library

*The Formless Record of the Transmission of Illumination*, Giun Inoue

*The Other Shore: A New Translation of the Heart Sutra with Commentaries*, Thich Nhat Hahn

*Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet: Harnessing the Power of Mindfulness for a Regenerative World, Personal Growth, and Inner Peace*, Thich Nhat Hanh

*Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*, Lawson Fusao, Inada, Patricia Wakida, et al.

*Open Reality: Meeting the Polycrisis Together with all Beings*, Shodo Spring

*Spreading Indra's Net: the Columbia Lectures of D.T. Suzuki*, Richard Jaffe, editor

*Tale of a Zendo Teapot*, PJ Mooney

*Painting Peace: Art in a Time of Global Crisis*, Kazuzaki Tanahashi

*In Praise of Shadows*, Junichiro Tanizaki

*Lotus Girl: My Life at the Crossroads of Buddhism and America*, Helen Tworok

*The Golden Age of Zen*, John C.H. Wu

*The Zen Monkey and the Lotus Flower*, Tenpa Yeshe

*The Sounds that Perceives the World*, Kosho Uchiyama

## Zen Center Board Members

**Danielle Bouchard**

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**Josh Pat Phelan**

ex officio · [joshochzc@gmail.com](mailto:joshochzc@gmail.com)

Left and right, *Procession of Monks*  
by Nakahara Nantenbō (1839–1925), circa 1922

# Effort in Practice

## PART II

by Josho Pat Phelan Roshi

I would like to continue talking about how to make effort in practice by looking at what makes effort “Right Effort.” After Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, he first taught the Four Noble Truths which end with the Eight-Fold Path. Right Effort is one aspect of this path. The traditional meaning of Right Effort is one’s endeavor or energetic will to abandon unwholesome states and develop wholesome states. Wholesome states are those whose roots are non-greed or generosity, open-heartedness; non-hate or loving-kindness; and non-delusion or clarity. But I think of wholesome activity simply as that which supports disentangling from our karmic knots.

When I think of disentangling and waking up, I’m reminded of a passage in Aldous Huxley’s book, *The Island*, which I read more than 55 years ago and can’t remember except for this one passage. In it, Huxley referred to the dualistic Manichean religion or thought which divides everything into either good or evil. Huxley wrote:

*Nobody needs to go anywhere else. We are all, if we only knew it, already there.*

*If I only knew who in fact I am, I should cease to behave as what I think I am; and if I stopped behaving as what I think I am, I should know who I am.*

*What in fact I am, if only the Manichee I think I am would allow me to know it, is the reconciliation of yes and no lived out in total acceptance and the blessed experience of not-two.*

*Knowing who in fact we are results in Good Being...*

But he said,

*good doing does not of itself result in Good Being.*

*...Good Being is knowing who in fact we are; and in order to know who in fact we are, we must first of all know, moment by moment, who we think we are and what the bad habit of thought compels us to feel and do.*

*A moment of clear and complete knowledge of what we think we are, but in fact are not, puts a stop, for the moment to the Manichean charade.*

*If we renew, until they become a continuity, these moments of knowledge of what we are not, we may find ourselves all of a sudden, knowing who in fact we are.*

*...Good Being is in the knowledge of who in fact one is in relation to all experiences.*

*So be aware—aware in every context, at all times.... This is the only genuine yoga, the only spiritual exercise worth practicing.*

One of the things I like about this passage is that Huxley does not define Good Being in terms of behavior, actions, or feelings, but only in terms of moment-by-moment non-judgmental, non-rejecting awareness of what is. (Awareness itself is a wholesome state, and it is necessary in order to turn around our ingrained habits and conditioned responses.) This reminds me of Katagiri Roshi saying, “There is nowhere to go. This is liberation. It’s very simple. Too simple. If you touch it, it’s gone. Freedom is very intimate. It’s like a secret in your heart.”

If we take the traditional definition of Right Effort, one’s endeavor or energetic will to abandon unwholesome states and to develop wholesome states, and look at it from the perspective of Soto Zen, we might say that it means to abandon activity which is unwhole or incomplete, haphazard activity, and to develop wholeness, to develop activity which reflects that we are already Buddha.

Suzuki Roshi spoke of pure effort. Pure effort doesn’t mean right effort as opposed to wrong effort or unwholesome effort. Pure effort means nothing but effort, nothing in addition to effort, just 100% effort the way Ivory Soap is supposed to be 99.44% pure soap. In pure effort, there’s no room for anything else like ambivalence, or comparison, or regret. We make our best effort moment after moment, breath after breath, again and again. And when we blow it, there is no time out for regret, we just continue with our whole-hearted effort.

In one of my favorite passages of *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*, I think Suzuki Roshi captures the essence of Soto Zen practice, both in zazen and in our every day activity, when he talks about the metaphor of a bonfire. He said,

*...when you do something, you should do it with your whole body and mind; you should be concentrated on what you do. You should do it completely, like a good bonfire. Zen activity is activity which is completely burned out, with nothing remaining but ashes. This is the goal of our practice.... So our practice is not a matter of one hour or two hours, or one day or one year. If you practice zazen with your whole body and mind, even for a moment, that is zazen.*

Master Dogen used the phrase “practice/realization” as one term to mean practice and realization occur simultaneously rather than practice being a cause and realization its effect. Dogen taught that we practice in order to realize the non-dual Way that is always right here, wherever we are. For Dogen, realization is the practice of non-dual effort, not the result or accumulation of earlier practice.

He used an exchange between Master Hui Neng, the sixth Chinese ancestor whose name we chant as Daikan Eno Daiosho, and his disciple Nangaku or Huai-jiang, as an example of this. When Nangaku met Master Hui Neng, he had already been practicing for some time and his practice was fairly mature.

During their first meeting, Hui Neng asked, “Where are you from?”

Nangaku, taking him at his word, replied, “From Mt. Song.”

Hui Neng asked, “Who is it that thus comes?” (I’ve read that in Chinese, this is literally, “What is it you really are?”) In the version of this story that Dogen referred to, Nangaku couldn’t answer, so he left Hui Neng’s room and continued practicing at Hui Neng’s monastery for eight years, when one day he had a realization.

So, after eight years, he returned to Master Hui Neng’s room, and continued where he left off, presenting his response to the question, “Who is it that thus comes,” by saying, “Speaking about it doesn’t hit the mark.”

Hui Neng then asked, “Does it rest on practice and realization?” (The “it” refers to Original Mind, the open, boundless quality of consciousness before thinking is engaged. So the question could be stated, “Is Original Mind contingent upon practice and realization?”)

The implied response is “no,” based on Nangaku’s reply which was, “It is not that there is no practice and realization, it’s just that they cannot be defiled.” (In Zen, “defiled” often means colored or stained by dualistic separation.)

Master Hui Neng then responded, “This nondefilement (or non-duality of practice and enlightenment) has been maintained by all Buddhas.” And the dialogue ends with Hui Neng saying, “You are like this and I am like this” confirming their mutual understanding.

Master Dogen used this story to illustrate his view that Original Mind or the open, boundless quality of mind before thinking and judgment arise, does not increase or improve due to practice, nor is Original Mind diminished by our ignorance of it. Dogen commented on this in his text *Bendowa* when he wrote,

*You should know that in order not to defile realization, which is inseparable from practice, Buddha ancestors always caution not to be slack in your practice. If you release the inconceivable practice, original realization fills your hands; if you become free from the original realization, the inconceivable practice is upheld with your whole body.*

To me, the way that Dogen referred to practice as “inconceivable” is another example of his emphasis on practice rather than enlightenment as the destination of our practice.

We might think that if we could just engage in Right Effort, that things would turn out better. But our effort in this moment is its own reward; and unfortunately, Right Effort, does not imply right result. What allows our effort to be whole-hearted is to let go of any expectations or hopes of what the outcome of our effort will be. When we try to attain something or set up a goal to accomplish, we create a duality between who we are right now, and who we want to be. As long as we conceptualize an ideal or a goal, our comparative thinking will create separation the way reaching out for an inner tube in the water automatically propels it away. Likewise, reaching out mentally for something outside this moment divides us, creating a gap between our mental world and our immediate experience.

So, we place our attention with our effort—our effort is our effort, and the outcome is the outcome; they are connected but at the same time, each one is complete in itself. Similarly, each moment of time is unique and non-repeatable with its own past and future. In Zen, this is referred to as absolute time. But, although each moment is absolute in itself, it also communicates with adjoining moments, and there is no gap between moments. In practice, stay in this moment, with your whole-hearted effort—without looking ahead or outside the present moment for the outcome of your effort.

In *How to Cook Your Life*, Uchiyama Roshi suggested we practice by putting our whole attention into each task, throwing our whole life into each encounter, as a way to meet each situation with whole-hearted effort and whole-hearted acceptance. In this way, everything we encounter, everything that arises for us, we recognize as our life, as not being other than what we are. He said, “If we fall into hell, then we need to resolve to see that hell is our home. When we are being boiled in the demon’s cauldron, that is where we have to do zazen....” So, don’t try to run away if you find yourself in hell, don’t rejoice if you find yourself in heaven. Wherever you find yourself, just let yourself be there fully.

When we no longer try to escape from delusion or pursue enlightenment, we can accept whatever we meet as our lives. This means, for example, if you get stuck in a traffic jam, the activity of sitting in traffic is your life, not an obstacle to remove so you can get on to your real life. In the realm of practice, there is nothing to get away from and nothing to rush to. Practice is always right here if only we accept this moment—the fullness of our life right now. According to Suzuki Roshi, in this way of practice, Right Effort means, “when you do something, you should do it with your whole body and mind.” Our effort is to engage completely in the activity of this moment.

I like to think of Right Effort as the energetic will to enter each moment whole-heartedly, with no reservation. One way to develop Right Effort is to try letting go of reservations. Without holding back some part of yourself, without trying to protect yourself, simply try to enter each moment, completely, with no reservation or hesitation. I think of it like walking on a stone

path in the dark, where there is a single stone for each foot-step. In darkness our feet are our eyes. So, just step forward, trusting your foot to find the next stone. And it is like bowing, the practice of prostrations. The bowing of throwing ourselves completely into the bow, of throwing away duality, throwing away our ideas, throwing away anything that separates us, so when we join the floor, we join everything.

Sometimes people get confused by the figure of Buddha on the altar. But this is just a piece of metal or wood or stone or whatever, a configuration that reminds us that we are Buddha, we can never really be separate—our delusions and thinking make us feel that we are separate. But we are always Buddha. When we do floor bows, we physically drop—so our body leads our mind in letting go of who we think we are and what we think the world is. Without hesitation, just drop and join everything. Zazen gives us a form and a safe environment in which to practice not holding back, so we are available to breathe each breath without reservation.

What Right Effort is, will be different for each of us. No one can say how much effort will be the right amount for you. Each of us has to find out for ourselves, over and over again. And even when we find it, what Right Effort is will change as we change, and it will change with each set of circumstances. For example, the effort it takes to walk quietly on a wooden floor will change as the weather changes and, of course, it will be different with each floor.

In zazen, often it is useful to be strict about following the forms, about sitting upright and trying to be awake while not moving. And other times it works better to accept and observe our minds and bodies which may be resisting these forms. Wherever you find yourself, let your effort be undivided. Allow yourself to just follow the forms, follow the instructions wholly, undividedly. But, on the other hand, if you find yourself ambivalent, don't resist it. Don't fight your own ambivalence, don't fight your resistance. Try to enter your resistance with wholehearted acceptance. Don't move away from it. Use whole-hearted effort to stay right here in this moment with whatever arises, whether you find ambivalence, resistance, anger, comparative thinking, or joy, clarity, transparency of being. Just be present without trying to hold on to pleasant states and without trying to get rid of unpleasant ones.

Suzuki Roshi emphasized daily practice, practicing evenly rather than making a big burst of effort now and then. He emphasized making regular, steady effort, that we can maintain day after day for the rest of our lives. He said,

*Whether it is difficult or easy to practice, difficult or easy to understand, you can only practice it...the point is to resume your actual being through practice, to resume the you which is always with everything...which is fully supported by everything. Right now! You may say, it is impossible. But it is possible! Even in one moment you can do it! It is possible this moment! It is this moment! That you can do it in this moment means you can always do it.*

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# Summer Sesshin

LED BY JOSHO PAT PHELAN ROSHI

Friday evening, June 5 through  
Wednesday afternoon, June 10, 2026

*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.** If you would like to request a scholarship, please contact Danielle at [Danielle.Bouchard@gmail.com](mailto:Danielle.Bouchard@gmail.com). 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 27, with a \$50 deposit.**

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 Zenki at [info@chzc.org](mailto:info@chzc.org) for more information.

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



# Summer Sesshin Registration Form

Friday evening, June 5 through Wednesday afternoon, June 10, 2026

**Registration Due Wednesday, May 27**

Chapel Hill Zen Center, PO Box 16302, Chapel Hill, NC 27516

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Liability waiver:** Prior to sesshin, you will be required to sign a waiver whereby you release the Zen Center from any liability for accident or injury, and agree not to sue. You may request a copy of the form in advance.

I have a medical condition:  Yes  No

For example, diabetes, heart condition, pregnancy. Please attach a short statement of explanation if yes.

I have an allergy or food restriction:  Yes  No List allergy and severity:

I have an oryoki I can bring:  Yes  No

I need a chair for zazen:  Part time  Full time

I plan to arrive at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. I plan to leave at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

I am sitting only part of sesshin / I have a modified schedule:  Yes

If sitting a modified schedule, please write out the details.

Modified schedule (if applicable):

I can help set up (Friday, 5-6PM):  Yes

I can help clean up on last day:  Yes

I have enclosed my sesshin deposit or sitting fees: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like toward donate to the scholarship fund: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I paid my deposit / sitting fees or made a scholarship fund donation online  Yes (chzc.org/donate.htm): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If this is your first sesshin with the Chapel Hill Zen Center, please attach a short statement about your zazen practice and history: How long have you been sitting zazen? How often are you currently sitting? Have you sat a one-day sitting or longer sesshin before? If so, when and with whom?

I have room in my home for someone from out of town to stay?  Yes

Where do you plan to sleep?

# CHAPEL HILL ZEN CENTER



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## SCHEDULE

### TUESDAY EVENING

7:00 PM *zazen*  
(Zen meditation)  
7:40 PM *kinhin*  
(walking meditation)  
7:50 PM *zazen*

### SUNDAY MORNING

9:00 AM *zazen*  
9:40 AM *kinhin*  
9:50 AM *zazen*  
10:30 AM service  
or Dharma Talk

### 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

**(919) 967-0861 • CHZC.org**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

*To express our spirit or way, it is necessary to express it through action, through our bodies. Our physical action is very important. Actually, when you are trained, your demeanor will be different. Your conduct will be refined. Without a well-trained body, it is impossible to express the truth and help others.*

— Suzuki Roshi



### WELCOME TO THE CHAPEL HILL ZEN CENTER

Embracing diversity, the Chapel Hill Zen Center honors the fundamental connection of all beings by welcoming everyone to join us for silent meditation.

Our aim is to provide an environment where we may all meet ourselves at our most fundamental level, and one that supports trust, safety, and harmony in our community and beyond.

May all beings realize their true nature.