Dear members and friends,

As I begin this I’m south of Eugene Oregon, at my brother-in-law’s house with Carolyn. We’re enjoying fresh country air after coming down to watch the total eclipse of the sun from the Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge, south of Salem. This was the second total eclipse I’ve seen; the first was in Yakima in 1979. The two minutes of totality on Monday, August 21, were beyond description. Many, myself included, felt struck dumb; no words or pictures can suffice to transmit the experience. I have a nephew in the path of the next total eclipse of the sun as it transits the United States in 2024, and I and other relatives are already thinking about paying a visit.

It was my desire to have this issue ready for publication a couple of weeks ago, but my teaching schedule combined with a crisis at Patacara Community Services, where I serve as the Board President (see Major changes at West Seattle’s city-sanctioned encampment Camp Second Chance) precluded completion before now. Since our last issue was published, there was a wonderful celebration at the end of a Portland zazenai (mini-sesshin), May 27th, to confirm Rev. Genshin Rinzan Pechovnik as Osho (full priest) in our lineage. At Summer Sesshin I ordained a new unsui to our sangha last year associated with the Portland issue of PMN, pages 2, 5-7. Our session was scheduled for September 9th, 9:30am – 3:30pm. It is my hope everyone deeply associated with Chobo-Ji will attend and those who are too far away begin to read and work through the exercises in the book, The Ongo Book: Everyday Nonviolence. Even if you came to the first workshop, please consider coming to this second workshop because Marcia will be approaching the skill set offered in the first workshop in new ways. In addition, “NVC as a Spiritual Practice – Part 2” will soon be announced. Plans are in the works to hold NVC workshops every quarter, with small groups to begin soon to practice and hone our communication skills between workshops.

Despite the loss of several members of our sangha last year associated with the exhaustive and exhausting ethics and reconciliation process around some of my misjudgments (see last Autumn’s issue of PMN, pages 2, 5-7), our sangha is healing and feels strong. Our sesshins are well attended with a wonderful mix of young and old, new and seasoned, male and female, and our participants ethnically diverse. Our Restorative Practice Committee is hard at work supporting the efforts of our Non-Violent Communication (NVC) Consultant, Marcia Christen. The first draft of a complete revamp of our ethics and reconciliation policies is nearing completion and will soon be sent to the Board for consideration and refinement. We had a very successful NVC as a Spiritual Practice workshop for sangha members (which also attracted sangha members from other Seattle Buddhist groups) on July 15, and a second workshop is scheduled for September 9th, 9:30am – 3:30pm. It is my hope everyone deeply associated with Chobo-Ji will attend and those who are too far away begin to read and work through the exercises in the book, The Ongo Book: Everyday Nonviolence. Even if you came to the first workshop, please consider coming to this second workshop because Marcia will be approaching the skill set offered in the first workshop in new ways. In addition, “NVC as a Spiritual Practice – Part 2” will soon be announced. Plans are in the works to hold NVC workshops every quarter, with small groups to begin soon to practice and hone our communication skills between workshops.

Our Great Vow is to care for all beings great and small, animate and inanimate. We support this vow through our various modes of practice at Chobo-Ji. Our zendo is a laboratory to investigate, manifest and actualize our deep nature that is naturally loving and compassionate. Our seven traditional modes of practice stimulate our capacity to be mindful and harmonious with our environment and to dissolve the artificial, egocentric barriers between so-called self and other. Traditional practice modalities make heavy use of what we call “noble silence”; in other words, we work hard to practice together beyond dependence on words or concepts and directly share our heart-mind activity through developing buji (action that is no action), where our ordinary daily activities naturally manifest as enlightened activity. Our seven traditional practice modalities are as follows:

1) Samadhi Chanting (sutras, commentaries, dharani and mantras).
2) Samadhi Seated Meditation (zazen).
3) Samadhi Harmonious Motion (bowing, walking meditation, opening and re-nesting bowls, tea ceremony).
4) Samadhi Work Meditation (sweeping, chopping vegetables, gardening, cleaning dishes, etc.).
5) Samadhi Heart-mind Exchange (one on one Dokusan, Councils, Dharma Dialogues and now our newly developing NVC as Spiritual Practice).
6) Samadhi Study (commandments, precepts, vows, sutras, koans, teishos, dharma talks, and book groups).

Continued on next page…
Beyond these modalities we also offer a residential practice, and have several committees associated with our Board of Directors where we must learn to communicate and work together for the common good and support of the sangha and the local neighborhood.

Note that our practice modalities all begin with the word “samadhi.” This is key! Zen practice is the practice of honing skillful means for samadhi. Samadhi is being harmonious with whatever action we are engaged in, where we lose or at least loosen our sense of self and other. In samadhi bike riding, there is no bike, no rider, no time, and no destination. In samadhi playing of music, there is no instrument, no score, no composer, no musician, no audience, just harmonious music that transcends self and other. I think it is fair to say that up to now Chobo-Ji practice has been stronger in the first four modalities and perhaps weakest in samadhi heart-mind exchange because of our necessary and exemplary emphasis on the use of noble silence.

Recently we have discovered that sometimes we need to be skilled at heart-mind exchange beyond the venue of the dokusan room. Despite my long familiarity with NVC and my training in Zen and psychotherapy, it is clear that my skills at heart-mind exchange beyond the venues of the dokusan or therapy rooms needs work. In fact, I’m convinced that our whole community needs work in this area. This is why I’m very pleased that collectively we are making this concerted effort to move beyond the exclusive emphasis on noble silence to develop skillful means for verbal samadhi heart-mind exchange. Without this effort, no matter what new policies we develop to handle difficult situations, we will find ourselves unprepared to handle the next communication bump that presents itself.

This is not to say that we will be abandoning the practice of noble silence where it best serves our foundational practice modalities (1-4), but we must continue to learn from our past and improve and expand the latter practice modalities (5-7) in order for Zen practice to be effective and relevant to this century. Please join me in this concerted effort to balance and expand our practice appropriately for the benefit of all beings.

Our seven-day Summer Sesshin, June 23-30, was very strong with thirty-three participants. Anne Sendo Howells was our Shika (host/manager), keeping everyone organized while she prepared for her tokudo (unui ordination ceremony). Sally Zenka Metcalf was Dai-Tenzo (chief cook) and was ably assisted by Rev. Tendo Kirkpatrick. Together they produced delicious, timely meals that nurtured us deeply. Our Kikijitsu (timekeeper) was Rev. Seiho Morris and he worked hard to keep our rigorous pace and noble silence. Gavin Oznakn Mackay kept the beat as our Densu (Chant leader). Rev. Gendo Testa backed up by George Gibbs and Monika Jion Winklemann served as our Jisha (tea and snack servers). Rev. Rinzai Pechovnik served as my Inji (abbot assistant) and gave a fine Dharma Talk on second day. On middle day, Matthew Morgan from the Wenatchee sangha did Jukai (Precept and Dharma Name ceremony). In this issue you will find a transcription of the Teisho from the fifth day of sesshin and my closing incense poem.

Our just concluded three-day Summer Odayaka sesshin had twenty-two participants and many of the same people held the same posts with the exception that Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez served as Densu and George Gibbs was lead Jisha.

Seattle has had a dry, warm and mostly clear summer so far. I’m pleased to announce that Chobo-Ji’s Board has unanimously voted to install solar panels on our roof. There are 32 solar panels that are expected to produce about 34% of Chobo-Ji’s current energy needs, and the system from Artisan Electric should take under 12 years to pay for the $34,600 investment. The installation has been completed! We are hoping to lighten the burden of investing this much of our reserves in this endeavor by conducting a brief fund raising campaign to support the solar installation. If you are a believer in alternative energy and want to support our temple as being an example to other religious and temporal institutions to support solar energy, please consider making a donation to our efforts. You can contribute by sending a check to Chobo-Ji, with “solar energy support” in the memo field, or use our PayPal account and similarly specify the purpose of your donation. These donations are tax deductible and I hope our active sangha will share our excitement about this investment in alternative energy technology.

In addition to what has been mentioned so far in this issue there are announcements for our upcoming Fall Intensive, Autumn Sesshin and Fall Zen Intro Series. Also you will find a listing of New Posts for autumn, a Board Report, and articles by Ganko and Zenka. There were so many offerings for this issue that some will have to wait for the next issue to be published. Please know how much I appreciate everyone’s efforts and support.

Many of you know that Chris Zenshin Jeffries, our Board President, has written the songs and lyrics for the world premier musical adaptation of Jane Austen’s final novel “Persuasion,” that was staged at the
Though the sixteen vows and precepts in each successive ceremony (Jukai, Unsui, Osho) are the same, as we progress our intention deepens and outward manifestation expands. Though the Osho ceremony acknowledges the completion of a certain level of training, one is never finished training. Hence, a Zen priest is always an unsui (person of cloud and water), a training priest/monk. Even after more years of practice when Rinzan completes the Rinzaiz koan curriculum, and is named as a Dharma Heir in our lineage, his training and our training will always be just beginning.

Rinzan began his Zen training under the guidance of Hogen and Ch ozen Bays, at Great Vow Zen Monastery and the Heart of Wisdom Zen Temple in Oregon. This is where he received Jukai, lay Buddhist vows and his Dharma name. For some years now he has continued his training here at Chobo-Ji, where he began formal koan study, and did Tokudo (unsui ordination) in 2014. Soon after his ordination Rinzan began holding meditation offerings at his newly formed Rinza Zen meditation group called No-Rank Zendo in Portland, where Rinzan lives with his wife and works as a private practicing psychotherapist. He has two adult children also living in Portland.

Genjo Osho, who is a Dharma Heir in the Japanese Rinzaiz lineage, presented Genshin Rinzan Mark Pechovnik with new beige robes and a gold kesa befitting his new standing as an Osho.

Rinzan did not return to meditation until many years later when his life hit a series of crises. He said, “I turned back to Zen, knowing that, if I ever needed a religion, Zen would be it. Well, I was so full of suffering and so longing for something more than what my conditioned mind and egoistic striving were offering me and, remembering what meditation had to offer, I dove in head first.”

Though initially he sought relief through practice simply for his own suffering, as the years went by his caring heart arose, he said, “that compelled me, just naturally, to engage the world in a way I hadn’t before and I found that if I responded to the call to be present and caring and warm and tender-hearted, I was given the medicine I needed.” Rinzan said that he was grateful, humbled, even surprised to find himself in the position of Osho, to have digested the practice enough to share it with others and to be able to care for others in ways he had never imagined possible.

Rinzan holds meditation services at No-Rank Zendo including longer retreats, dharma interview, and dharma talks. The No-Rank Sangha continues to grow as members undertake their own Zen Buddhist practice, leading them to their own engagement in vows and a life of service and caring for others.
Four Great Vows
essay by Steve Ganko Hanson

The Chobo-Ji sutra book provides the following translation of the Four Great Vows:

However innumerable all beings are, we vow to care for them all.
However inexhaustible delusions are, we vow to relinquish them all.
However immeasurable gates to truth are, we vow to enter them all.
However endless the Buddha’s way is, we vow to follow it.

I am of two minds about the Four Great Vows. On the one hand, it’s a beautiful recipe for action, for how to proceed, and what step to take next. On the other hand, it’s terribly intimidating – an impossible, paralyzing responsibility.

It reminds me of a recurring dream I had when I was younger. In the dream I’m in charge of building a huge ocean vessel. I’m a boy cast in the role of a man, with hard hat, clipboard, and everyone looking at me for what to do, the pieces of the ship hanging in mid-air from cranes, ready to be fitted together. But I’m frozen in fear and shame, no idea what to do. The Four Great Vows are like that nightmare building project – huge, impossible, beyond me. Actually, I still have versions of this nightmare.

So how do we approach these Vows? What are we supposed to do with them? How are they supposed to work on us? Let’s look at some other translations to help us see what the Four Great Vows are saying, and how others have approached them.

Thich Nhat Hanh’s version isn’t so much a translation, as a re-imagining, and provides a more practicable recipe. In the face of cosmic-scale suffering we are asked not to complete some cosmic-scale project, but smaller scale responses: to “meet,” “touch,” “explore” and “surrender.”

In an attempt to get at the core ideas, I’ve used Google Translate to produce the following version. Entering each ideogram one by one into Google Translate, you get the following crowd-sourced / no-sourced result:

Many Beings No Edge Oath Sincere Limit

Vexation Anger Never Exhausted Oath Sincere Sever

Law Gates No Measure Oath Sincere Learn

Buddha Road No End Oath Sincere Complete

With a bit of punctuation and interpolation, we get the following:

Many Beings No Edge, (I make a) Sincere Oath (to go to the) Limit (for them)
Vexation, Anger Never Exhausted, (I make a) Sincere Oath (to) Sever (them)
Law Gates No Measure, (I make a) Sincere Oath (to) Learn (them)
Buddha Road No End, (I make a) Sincere Oath (to) Complete (it)

It’s interesting that we have to add a subject (“I”, “we”, or “you”) to create complete sentences. I really appreciate the original, uninterpolated result from Google Translate: it’s open and spacious, capable of m a n y d i f f e r e n t interpolations, with no subject, no audience, just pure compassionate voice. And it has its own cosmic logic – the same logic lies behind the Koranic injunction: ‘Whoever kills a single person, has killed all people. Whoever saves a single person, has saved all people.’ – a logic that yokes together the small and the vast as partners. In the similar vein, Osho Pat Phelan has written:

When we take these vows, an intention is created, the seed of an effort to follow through. Because these vows are so vast, they are, in a sense, undefinable. We continually define and redefine them as we renew our intention to fulfill them. If you have a well-defined task with a beginning, middle, and end, you can estimate or measure the effort needed. But the Bodhisattva Vows are immeasurable. The intention we arouse, the effort we cultivate when we call forth these vows, extends us beyond the limits of our personal identities.
But for all of this cosmic talk, I think it is easy to dismiss the Vows. In moments of despair, I sometimes hear this ‘version’ in my head – let’s call it the Anti-Four Great Vows:

Innumerable suffering beings – go to hell!

Vexation at every turn – what did you expect?

Dharma Teaching without measure – I’d rather not know.

Buddha’s way – good luck with that!

It’s important to recognize this voice in us: this is the voice that only wants to interact with definable things and tasks, is helpless in the face of anything bigger, and is blinded by deep suffering. This voice is one of the innumerable beings, and needs to be cared for. It is also the voice that can make our nightmares real.

To return to my original question: How are these vows practicable?

One way the Vows can be practiced is as a source of inspiration. Rinzan has said in an earlier Plum Mountain article that ‘as you mature, vows become inspiration instead of a burden.’

They can also be used as a reminder for what to do next. With this in mind we can render them as:

Limitless beings, I vow to care for one today

Suffering without end, I vow to comfort the next person I meet

Gates without measure, I vow to walk through this one

Buddha’s road is endless, I will take this one step

Wallace says that the moment we objectify anything – point a finger out at life to idolize or criticize – in that very instant we are thrown into the separated self. We become all edges. Whether we cling, or spun, or just don’t care, the moment we objectify, we’ve missed IT by a mile.

This realization led to paying close attention to my clinging and spurning, very close. It was familiar territory. Then I saw my indifference, in the guise of my neutrals. It was a brand new landscape. What seemed to be neutrals were actually a host of people and things deemed unworthy of notice by my sorting and discerning self. This included everything from a garden stone to a man at the store. Zap! went a snap judgment and a vast, beautiful world was hurled into my numb zone.

As many readers know, I'm studying lojong, a Tibetan training in compassion that centers on fifty-six slogans for daily practice. Alan Wallace authored several helpful books on lojong. Two of my favorites touch on the edgeless in a unique way: The Seven Point Mind Training and Buddhism with an Attitude.

My lojong slogan for a couple of months has been the three poisons:

Three objects: friends, enemies, and neutrals

Three poisons: clinging to what we like, spurning what we dislike, and indifference to our so-called neutrals;

Three seeds of virtue: in exchanging self for others, poisons become seeds of compassion and loving-kindness, seeds of virtue.

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A few Saturdays ago, we had our first Restorative Practices (NVC) Training at Chobo-Ji, in hopes of sharing more loving communication and understanding together. Fundamentally, the teaching is listening deeply to the communicator – to words, yes, but more closely to feelings, and even more intimately to the heart of the matter, to

Continued on next page...
unmet needs longing to be fully heard. We might be outraged at someone, fearful, offended, or contemptuous. But discovering the deep needs that drive their actions shakes our tangle of angry inferences about them to the roots. Snap! goes the taproot of judgmentalism! Suddenly we are not two, but One – deeply intimate in the ground of love.

It’s dawning on me that intimacy is being wholly present. Like samadhi. Present to the sound of the fountain, or the wind in the cedars, to the desperate needs of an enemy. Present to each person, each thing, each experience, each shimmering drop of time. Right here and now, being intimate with all sentence. No edges! Might this simple wholehearted presence be true forgiveness, true compassion?

In every intimate moment, it seems, there is nothing other than togetherness. This togetherness feels like heaven. Intimacy, then, could be the antidote for edges, the entrance to the One. Now, passing my so-called neutrals, I look them in the eye, and smile. And they smile back! Even the stones in the garden notice, and settle deeper into my bones, breathing.

“Heaven is here, there is no other place. Heaven is now, there is no other time.”
A Course in Miracles

### Autumn Sesshin

**Sept. 22** – **29**th

Please help us get an accurate count by sending a deposit and application by **Sept. 17**, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Please drop it by or mail it.

The cost of sesshin is $250 (less dues for this month). Sesshin will start Friday evening, 9/22, 5:30pm with informal supper, introductions and orientation. Sesshin from Saturday to the following Thursday runs from 5am-10pm. We provide sleeping accommodations for those traveling from out of town (an additional $10-$20 per night); please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, sitting clothes, work clothes and a towel. The final Friday, 9/29, begins at 5am and concludes around 10am.

### Ling’s Question

**The Hidden Lamp**

*China, Probably Ninth Century*

**Fifth day of Summer Sesshin, 2017 - Teisho**

**CASE:**

Ling Xingpo visited master Fubei Heshang to pay her respects. They sat together and drank tea, and she asked him, “If a true word can’t be spoken no matter how hard you try, how will you teach?”

Fubei said, “Fubei has nothing to say.” Ling was not satisfied. She placed her hands in the opposite sleeves of her robe and cried out, “There is grievous suffering even within a blue sky!”

Again, Fubei had nothing to say. Ling said, “To be a human being is to live in calamity.”

**STUDY QUESTIONS:**

What difference would it make if you never read the newspaper or followed the news? In the midst of great joy, what do we do with the pain in the house next door?

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Having passed the peak of this summer sesshin, our bodies are relatively adjusted to the rigors of our schedule. To the extent that the rigors of sesshin can help wear away, or at least temporarily drop, the artificial barriers that our ego identity sets up between self and other, then we’re as raw, exposed, vulnerable and transparent as we’re going to be. Therefore, it’s incumbent upon all of us not to waste this precious transparency. Now that we’re in the groove of sesshin, it’s possible to just coast and that would be such a waste. Instead, I hope we all make full use of the opportunity – I’m also pointing at myself – to experience “Mu,” to commune with the depth of our true nature, sometimes referred to as the absolute, the infinite, the Dharma or Shunyata. It goes by so many names, which are all entirely inadequate. Right now is our time to dip into the inconceivable, to commune with it. Diving deep into our true nature opens us up to a great joy, which I hope we can all feel from time to time, and to the great sorrow for the suffering in this world.

This sesshin there have been several people who have had breakthroughs and have seen into their deep nature. This affirms that our practice is a catalyst for transformation. With the realization that comes with breakthroughs, there is the sorrow that we’re not in touch with the innate loving presence of the absolute more often. In addition, we become acutely aware that most human beings, most of the time, are not conscious of their communion with the infinite. We are always seamless with the absolute, but we are not often aware of it. It is a great sadness to realize that nearly everyone feels separate and isolated most of the time.

Our practice and rigorous form does help us to become more vulnerable and transparent. With growing vulnerability and transparency we become better able to commune with the inconceivable. I’m asking all those who encounter the wonder, joy and love that comes with awakening to hold in our lap not only our personal suffering, but also the suffering of the world. This kind of effort is the kickoff to live up to our Great Vow to care for all beings great and small, animate and inanimate. We say the Bodhisattva vows many times each day, but to actualize them we have to be big enough and willing enough to recognize and share in the sufferings of our family tree, our society and our world. Does this sound impossible or overwhelming? When we are feeling our own deep communion with beyond-the-beyond, our lap can easily embrace the whole universe. When we get up and leave the temple grounds, for a time we find it is easy to be kind and caring with everyone we meet.

We say Zen is pretty dang simple. When hungry, prepare a meal. When tired, prepare a bed. When it’s time for samu, then chop vegetables, sweep the floor, clean the toilet, and pull weeds. The actions of our daily life are the enlightened life. But probably most of us find that our inspiration and dedication quickly fade once we leave the relatively safe and contained laboratory of sesshin. It is not easy to continue to be aware, bright and caring in all that we do. I recall that just a few days before sesshin began, while on the train downtown with Carolyn, I got a text message from a client of mine saying that there would be Black Lives Matter rally at Westlake for the woman recently tragically killed by Seattle
police. Carolyn and I spontaneously decided to get off at a different downtown stop than we had planned in order to participate in the rally. I’m glad we made this decision to appropriately respond to changing circumstances, but how often are we ready to do this? I suspect not as often as we would like.

Everyday when I give a teisho I now mention the Duwamish ancestors on whose land we sit. They were among the first peoples to populate this continent. Today, the Duwamish are struggling for their existence as a people in their homeland, and they’re not even officially recognized as a tribe anymore. Their numbers have become small but they’re real and still here despite the burning down of their longhouses and the stealing of their land. When a representative of the federal government said to a great, great, great grandson of Chief Seattle, “But you don’t have a reservation.” Ken Workman replied, “No, I live in my homeland, I have a Seattle address. Are you saying I can’t be recognized because I never left my home for a reservation?”

Ling Xingpo is mentioned in several sources, Transmission of the Lamp, Women of the Way and also in Entangling Vines. The reason she is mentioned is because of the importance of this line in our tradition, “To be a human being is to live in calamity.”

If we are at all awake to reality, then we must realize and accept the calamity that the human species is severely out of touch with nature and that we are selfishly poisoning the planet in many ways. For example, I think we all understand that carbon dioxide is not innately poisonous or harmful (in fact, all plants need it the same way we need oxygen), but we should also be aware that human activity is overwhelming the capacity of the planet to absorb or make use of it. We’ve produced so much carbon dioxide that the plants have done all they can to convert it, besides, we keep cutting down forests, and we keep killing the plankton in the ocean. Therefore, one calamity of our time is that we are cooking the planet with the greenhouse gases that we are producing.

I’ve been arrested twice, once for protesting the war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and once at the Trident submarine base, crossing an invisible line trying to give a letter to the commandant about how these submarines are an abominable first strike weapon. All it took was just going up to the gate of the base for all of us trying to deliver the letter to get arrested. The area around the Bangor submarine base on the Kitsap peninsula, across Puget Sound from Seattle, is known as Ground Zero. As we are all probably well aware, this base contains more firepower than every bomb that’s ever been dropped throughout world history. [The bomb dropped on Hiroshima that killed 150,000 people was 14 kilotons. There are 140 warheads on every Trident submarine, each warhead -- 455 kilotons!] All this is sitting in our backyard. This is a calamity!

When we break through our own egocentric barriers into our deep nature, our hearts open; it’s not like we have a choice. When our hearts are open we experience the wonder, love, joy, and the ecstasy of life, and we experience tears of sorrow for the selfishness and cruelty manifested in the human condition. Another thing that also becomes decidedly clear is how out of communion we are so much of the time. You don’t need to be a woman to get this point about the calamities of the human condition, but it’s not surprising to me that it is more often women with a deep practice who will share this aspect of awakening.

Not much is written, that I could find, about either of these characters. Ling Xingpo seems to be famous for this one excerpt about calamity that has been passed down for generations. I can’t find anything more about Fubei and frankly that’s probably just as well. I guess he was considered a Zen Master in his day, and Ling Xingpo goes to investigate him. First, they have tea together, which is very nice, and then she begins a Dharma dialogue, “If a true word cannot be spoken no matter how hard you try, how will you teach?” This is a dilemma for any Zen teacher; to say anything is like putting a hat on top of a hat already on your head. The Dharma cannot be taught. It can be felt, but you cannot teach a feeling. The most we can do is say, “Be mindful!” or “Look! Look!” or “Listen! Listen!” or “Sit down and listen.”

If the Dharma can’t be taught, why say anything? It’s okay to try, words don’t need to be abandoned; some of those listening might be inspired rather than confused. Some speakers will wax more eloquently than others, and may speak extemporaneously in a kind of poetry, which is at the very least pleasant to listen to. However, if those listening haven’t at least experienced a modicum of what is being intimated, it’s not going to make any sense.

If you were asked the question put to Fubei, what would you say? I would say, and it’s quite traditional and not at all rocket science, “Look. Look. Listen. Listen. Sit down here on this cushion, breath gentle whole breaths, listen on all channels of perception, be mindful, and pay attention to things just as they are.”

Fubei responds to Ling Xingpo, “Fubei has nothing to say.” I already don’t like this guy, but I think he is trying to impart, “I have nothing to say because it cannot be taught.” Ling was not satisfied. I wouldn’t be either. She placed her hands in opposite sleeves. “There is grievous suffering,” she cries out, “even in a blue sky.”

Genki Takabayashi, our founding abbot said, “We’re here at sesshin to commune or realize blue-sky-mind; even when it’s cloudy, there’s blue sky above. Remember that the blue sky is always there.” This was Genki’s teaching.

Continued on next page…
“Remember the blue sky is always there.” If you are going to teach something, that’s a good teaching. However, Ling Xingpo reminds us that in the midst of the blue sky and open heartedness that comes with realization is the thought, “Why don’t I see this more often? How is it that humanity on the whole sees so little of this that we continue with such prejudice, arrogance, violence and selfishness?”

Again, we read that Fubei had nothing to say, but this time I don’t think he’s being arrogant. I think he’s being stumped. I don’t doubt he’s had some insight, but to Ling’s second question, he doesn’t know how to respond and so says nothing. She leaves with this most important retort, “To be a human being is to live in calamity.” We must not deny the calamity of our collective selfishness and arrogance, or the fact that most of the time with our eyes wide open we are not seeing the suffering all around us.

One of the two study questions developed for this case challenges every aspiring bodhisattva, “In the midst of great joy, what do we do with the pain in the house next door?”

As you know, Chobo-Ji has something called “A Hundred Meals Program,” which is organized by Dee Seishun Endelman to make a hundred vegetarian meals a month. With the support of Polly Trout, the executive director of Patacara (Seattle’s Buddhist service organization), the food prepared by sangha volunteers has been delivered to several locations, including two Seattle homeless camps. This effort is one of the ways in which members of our sangha are addressing the calamities of our times.

Polly sits on our Board and I sit on Patacara’s Board. The other day, Polly and I, with other Patacara board members, were at Camp Second Chance, a city sanctioned homeless camp that is administered by Patacara. The camp is self-organized and self-run, and recently there was a bit of trouble with the city, and the city was questioning us as we are administering the support contract. But the elected camp board said, “Hey. Why didn’t you tell us about this trouble sooner? Doesn’t it involve us?” We said, “You’re right. We should have involved you more directly. It’s not just between Patacara and the City. If something happens to us as Patacara, something is going to happen to you. We should have called you right away. Thanks for calling us on this error.” We could see that our respect and invitation to participate more actively in their process, and they in ours, had an impact. It didn’t feed them. It didn’t house them, but our genuine efforts made a positive impression.

Sesshin is a laboratory for seeing – we come here to look, listen, breath and feel. We all work so that we can investigate our deep nature together, but this is not enough. Sesshin is just a laboratory for stepping out into our complicated and sometimes crazily difficult daily lives. The practice in this zendo is at best a stepping-stone in how to face our complex lives and the calamities of our times.

We say, “Before enlightenment, chop wood and carry water, and after enlightenment, chop wood and carry water.” But hopefully, after sesshin concludes, we find that we love our neighbors and ourselves a bit better. After exploring our deep nature for a time we realize that there is no other. We are, after all, just lumps of clay or stardust spinning on this little lifeboat called Planet Earth.

It’s a temporary lifeboat. Everything is impermanent. In a couple of blinks of cosmic time, our sun will destroy our planet. With or without our efforts there is no way to save this Earth; it’s hopeless, this planet is doomed. In the meantime, I don’t see any reason for us not to wake up and patch our boat; there is no reason to sink prematurely. I don’t want to overwhelm myself with what’s in the newspapers, but I don’t want to ignore it either. It won’t help to put my head in the sand. Sesshin is a chance to open our bodhisattva heart to a sustained caring, openhearted attitude in the midst of our human made calamities and the deep truth of impermanence. May we continue to make our best effort to see past our narrow egotistic view of life.

With gassho,

Genjo

Closing Incense Poem
Summer Sesshin 2017

Facing the inconceivable,
Who sees the river flowing smoothly?
Bubbles in the stream are quickly gone.
Is it just a dream?
Reality, as it is.

Jukai Ceremony

Jukai (受戒 – Precept Receiver) candidates need to petition in writing to the Abbot at least one month prior to the ceremony. Jukai candidates usually have attended regular zazen at Chobo-Ji for a minimum of six months (including at least two weekend sesshins), taken two precept classes or completed a course of equivalent study, must be regular financial supporters of the temple, and feel ready to give themselves to the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma & Sangha), working to live our Great Vow to care for all beings great and small, animate and inanimate. At the ceremony candidates take the Precepts and Four Bodhisattva Vows, and receive a rakusu and a dharma name.

On the middle day of Summer Sesshin, Tuesday, June 27, 2017, Matthew Morgan did Jukai (Precept and Dharma Name Ceremony). He began training with Genjo Osho in April of 2016, but has been an active participant with the Stone Blossom Sangha in Wenatchee a bit longer than that. In addition to Summer Sesshin he has attended two Odayaka Sesshins here at Chobo-Ji and intends to participate in every weekend sesshin here at Chobo-Ji for the foreseeable future.

Here are some of Matthew’s own words on why he wanted to do this ceremony:

I have been a serious and dedicated student and practitioner of Zen for the past two years. And yet, my journey on the Path as an earnest, dedicated, and focused seeker of Truth has been very deliberate since the age of ten (23 years ago). When I was ten years
old, I had a minor kensho moment in which I suddenly saw the world with blunt clarity and was struck dumb with a profound puzzlement as to why there was so much unnecessary suffering in the world. I felt like an alien outsider who landed on a strange, inexplicably confused world. It made no sense to me whatsoever why people felt the desire to harm, steal, lie, cheat, and so forth. I wondered why people competed with one another rather than worked cooperatively together to meet their mutual needs. I realized my greatest desire in life was to deeply understand the fundamental nature of reality, from that, understand why there was unnecessary suffering in the world, and then apply that understanding to alleviating the suffering in the world. All of this was impressed upon my mind at the time on an intuitive level, revealed without the aid of thought. Looking back now, I recognize that was the first time I had become aware of my life purpose and that I have been a bodhisattva-in-training from that day on.

. . . Until a couple years ago my approach, though necessary and useful, was almost exclusively intellectual or academic, and lacked the element of having direct, personal conscious perception of the Absolute. Like the blind men in the parable, although they could compare notes amongst themselves they were still unable to truly grasp the overall nature of the Elephant directly. Although I had studied some of the ideas of Buddhism before, it wasn’t until I truly came to notice Zen a couple years ago that I felt I had found a suitable form of practice for directly experiencing “It.” When I was first introduced to and understood the concept of “bodhisattva,” I immediately thought, “aha! Finally, a word to associate with what I have always known my true nature and purpose to be.”

. . . At this point in my study and practice of Zen, I recognize that the traditions of Zen, including Jukai, are forms just as “empty” as any other aspect of dualistic, relative manifestations of the Absolute, and, therefore, is not something for the ego-self to be concerned with attaining. Personally, I’m more concerned with maintaining a “beginner’s mind” as I continue deepening in my practice and development of spiritual maturity. As Shunryu Suzuki Roshi once said, “If you keep your original mind, the precepts will keep themselves.”

On the other hand, I recognize from personal experience that the forms of Zen and the Rinzai tradition are of enormous benefit and value to all sentient beings, directly and indirectly. Zen keeps unnecessary embellishments to a relative minimum and is a very straightforward (if nevertheless challenging) way of approaching the Absolute through the practice of direct realization. I believe also that the Rinzai tradition in particular is, more often than not, most suited for the average mind of the Westerner, as the koan element of the tradition serves as “ocean cliffs” upon which the waves of ego-thinking are forced to crash upon and be dispersed. For these reasons, I wish to genuinely support, uphold, and be a part of the evolution of Rinzai Zen here in the U.S. It appears the best way for me to do so is to support and help grow Stone Blossom Sangha here in Wenatchee. Meho and Daiko have served the dharma well for many years.

. . . For the sake of the sangha and all sentient beings on Earth, I formally request to publicly receive and commit myself to upholding the Precepts and honoring the Three Treasures for the rest of this life, and those to follow.

When Genjo asked Mathew about what sentiment he would like for his Dharma name he talked about the desire to be a “peaceful stream” of the Dharma. Genjo Osho gave Mathew is: Sui (出) - Hei (平), Flowing - Smoothly.

Tokudo Ceremony

On June30th, 2017, the last day of Rohatsu Sesshin, Genjo Osho ordained Anne Sendo Howells as an unsui (cloud and water person – Zen monk and priest in training). Sendo did Jukai in 2014 with Gendo and Tendo, who also have followed the path of ordination as unsui. She has completed all the unsui prerequisites and has committed to do four sesshins a year as long as life allows.

Sendo reveals her reasons for wanting to be ordained in the following transcript of her Tokudo Dharma Talk:

First, some gratitudes: To the Chobo-Ji Sangha, for welcoming me so warmly and for so wonderfully modeling Zen practice both within and outside the zendo. To Genjo Marinello Osho, for nearly five years now of patient nudging, gentle correcting, and inspiring encouragement. I met Genjo in September 2012. I was beginning an intensive spiritual exploration program at University Unitarian Church here in Seattle, and one of the program’s requirements was that I meet monthly with a “spiritual director”—a job category I had not heard of before then. I picked Genjo off the list of suggested directors because he was a Buddhist, and I had been interested in Buddhism for quite some time—though not necessarily Zen because I knew little about differences among Buddhist practices. I almost decided to go with someone else, not a Buddhist, because Genjo, as you may have experienced, does not always have the most friendly telephone personality, but fortunately I summoned up the courage to persevere. During our amazing monthly conversations that year, I realized that though he wasn’t proselytizing, his responses to my questions and the ideas I tested out on him came from a Zen perspective. This perspective felt so right to me that the following summer I took the
Introduction to Zen classes and in the fall began attending zazen on Saturday mornings, then morning zazen and then sesshins, and here we are today!

Finally, gratitude also to so many others, especially to the fellow unsuis in whose steps I will happily follow and whose practice has been a beacon to me; to the participants of this sesshin, who hold me today; to my sister Eleanor, who has observed my new path with supportive interest; and to all the other guides and traveling companions on my life’s journey.

During the last few months, when people have asked me how I was feeling about this step I was soon to take, I often answered, “It’s no big deal” – except for the head-shaving, about which I would grimace. I told them, I’ll just be continuing to do what I’m already doing, though I’ll be wearing fancier robes. “No big deal,” then – but of course also very serious indeed. How it’s both has been crystallized for me by my “koan text” for this talk. I came across this text in Maurine Myo-on Stuart’s Subtle Sound and have already written about it in a review of that book in the Winter 2016 Plum Mountain News. Stuart repeats this old story about someone becoming a monk:

Funyomitta told his teacher Bashashita that he wanted to become a monk. Bashashita asked him what he would do as a monk. “Nothing special,” Funyomitta said. His teacher then asked, “What will you not do?” Funyomitta replied, “Secular affairs.” Bashashita asked again, “What will you do?” Funyomitta said, “Sacred affairs.” His teacher questioned him further: “What do you mean by sacred affairs?” Funyomitta answered, “When I am tired, I sleep. When I’m thirsty, I drink.” Bashashita said, “You already have true wisdom. I am sure that your renunciation will be extremely meritorious, and I now ordain you as a true monk.”

I read this story January 1 of this year, knowing I was on this unsui path. It’s at the heart of why I love Zen. It’s “Ordinary Life is Zen” and “Everything we do is practice.” What is the monk renouncing? Self-importance, I think. This is a huge step toward maturity, and one I am trying to make.

So – this step is no big deal, and it’s also deeply serious. With the falling away of self-importance, and with the replacement of secular glamour by sacred ordinariness, the way for the practice of the bodhisattva ideal opens up. The cries of the world become more distinct and responses to them become more numerous and more heartfelt. I see this process at work on people around me at Chobo-Ji, and it has started to work on me.

I now want to talk a bit about a peculiarity of my situation as a new unsui. For months after I realized this is the path I wanted to take, I told myself it was impossible, absurd even. The reason: my age, 74 at the time. I didn’t even start Zen practice until I was 72. The usual unsui commitment is to 10 years of sesshins, and there is the possibility of eventually becoming an Osho. It’s possible that I’ll manage all the sesshins, but also quite possible that I won’t, and I don’t envision the Osho step for myself.

So I kept imagining conversations in which I’d ask Genjo his opinion about this, and he’d say yes, it just isn’t realistic, and that would be that.

However, I watched Seiho and Tendo become unsuis, and I saw almost daily what this was meaning for them. Tendo was my Jukai brother, and I knew that my second Jukai brother, Gendo, was also on the path to ordination. If this was worth doing, it was worth doing one day at a time; perhaps one needn’t think in terms of 10 years and more. Why not try it with whatever active time I have left?

There’s more to say about my decision process, but I’ll cut that short and say that last May I got up the courage to ask Genjo, and he didn’t reject my request, and here I am, now 75, and winding down physically but not mentally. This decade of my seventies has been, so far, the greatest adventure of my life (and I’ve had a pretty rich life). Among the many discoveries I’ve made, two big ones stand out. The first is “beginner’s mind.” Looking back at my life I realize it’s something I’ve always valued, I’ve always sought new tasks, new experiences which would keep me alive in that way. So Zen’s straightforward insistence on how crucial it is attracted me right away, and Rinzai Zen’s koan study, which I love, is keeping the beginner’s mind fresh. The second big discovery is that I have way more growing and maturing to do. This is true for any of us, of course, but by the time I was around age fifty, I had thought that I’d probably finished whatever moral growing and maturing I was capable of. But now I’ve realized in myself a new drive to do this. I set our great vows in front of myself and work at changing old habits so I can take small steps towards fulfilling them. I have a lot left to do in my life!

As an unsui, I have promised to work to support the continuation and flourishing of Rinzai Zen practice – this gives me a lot to do too! I have already spoken to this in a passage Genjo has read to you from my letter requesting ordination, so I won’t talk more about it now.

Finally, Genjo mentioned in yesterday’s teisho, Kakuzan Shido’s Dagger, that Chobo-Ji’s model for unsui is that we have significant involvements outside Chobo-Ji: jobs and/or volunteer work. For a long time playing music, as an amateur violinist, has been an involvement which both brings me a great deal of personal pleasure and allows me to give back to the community. I’m a member of the Cascade Symphony, a volunteer orchestra based in Edmonds. Our concerts sell out to enthusiastic audiences, so we provide something listeners need, and at least as importantly, the presence of each of us in the orchestra makes it possible for all of us to experience the satisfaction of making music together. I also play chamber music, both informal sight-reading sessions with friends and more formally as part of a music club whose members perform for each other. As no one can play orchestra music alone, no one plays chamber music alone, so this activity too helps create a culture in which music-making is part of ordinary life.

I’m also planning a shift in my living situation which will give me plenty of opportunities for bodhisattva practice. I’m
going to give up the beautiful house where I now live, and move to a retirement community in downtown Seattle. At the beginning of 2014 I made two New Year’s resolutions having to do with the rest of my life. One of them was to plunge much more fully into Zen practice – to attend zazen six mornings a week, to attend my first mini-sesshin, and to build up to full-week sesshins. I figured I’d give myself until my 75th birthday, a little more than a year and a half later, and then see where I was. As it turned out, by the time I turned 75 I was on this unsui path and glad I hadn’t waited any longer before beginning serious practice.

My second New Year’s resolution was to put my name on a waiting list for this retirement residence, Horizon House. With no children to rescue me when I become old enough to need assistance, I knew I had to get myself to a place where I can be looked after when the need arises. The Horizon House community is a vibrant, active one, but I’ll be living there with people mostly in their 80s and 90s. People will be dying. This great matter of life and death will be unavoidable. A dear friend of mine who lived there, a man I’d known for more than 50 years, died last month; in the months leading up to his death I visited him almost weekly. Though he was in a lot of pain, moved with great difficulty, he wanted to talk and had a lot to talk about. He needed to talk more than he needed to listen, but he was much taken with my Zen life and plans – something not at all foreseen by either of us. I’m sorry I can’t tell him about today. Being a friend in this way and belonging to a community of people supporting each other through the end of life; this is going to be my ordinary life and part of the core of my Zen practice.

To conclude this talk, I have a story about a stream. The inspiration for my dharma name, Sendo (River Way), came from a number of rivers in my life, including famous ones, but right now I want to tell you about my earliest memory of a stream. The summer I was three, almost four, my family moved to our first real house – this was in Walla Walla, in Eastern Washington. My brother was two; our little sister was on the way to being born. Our mother took us on walks to a spot a couple of blocks away, to a corner where we could look over a bridge and down to a creek that ran under the road on that side. I probably had to be held up to see it, at least at the beginning, and I was fascinated by it. I called it “the creek that runs to the corner,” and it gave me my first experience of mystery and wonder. It came from somewhere and it was going somewhere else – just as I am today.

Sendo wrote in her tokudo petition that she was deeply inspired by the the teisho given by Genjo Osho in May of 2016 on Ryonen Scars Her Face, found in The Hidden Lamp, a story from Japan, seventeenth century. This case examines the dedication and sacrifices sometimes made to follow the Way, and examines Ryonen Genso’s exquisite death poem (jisei). Hearing of this Genjo extended Sendo’s Jukai Dharma name by prefacing it with the kanji (Ryō - 了然 川). So Sendo’s full unsui Dharma name then becomes Complete Reality – River Way (Ryōnen Sendo – 了然 川道).

Fall Intensive

An intensive covers roughly the same time frame as the traditional temple kesseki period, beginning with the first sesshin for that season and ending with the second. It’s a time for concentrated study and practice. Chobo-Ji participants receive dokusan twice weekly between sesshins. Zenka says, “I’m deeply grateful for how supportive regularly doing the intensives is to my practice and highly recommend them.”

Chobo-Ji’s Fall Intensive will start Sept. 10, with mini-sesshin, and conclude on Dec. 10. The purpose of the intensive is to give students the maximum opportunity to release entanglements by giving one’s self to the Dharma.

To participate one must commit to:

1) ZAZEN: Five hours of zazen per week, most, if not all, mini-sesshins, and full-time (or nearly full-time) attendance at two weeklong sesshins. This is the most important ingredient of the intensive.

2) Do a minimum of five hours of samu (working meditation - gardening or cleaning) per week. Most of these hours can be in your own home, garden or community, but at least one should be at the temple.

3) Read one book of your choosing from the Chobo-Ji Bookstore (or consult with Genjo about a alternative selection) and write a review of what you have read.

4) Keep a journal about your practice, at least one paragraph per week, and email a minimum of one paragraph per week each Friday to Genjo Osho on how the intensive is working on you.

5) Come to Dokusan at least once a week or if out of town try to schedule a Skype video call with Genjo Osho. Skype calls can be short, 5-10 minutes maximum per week, or up to 20 minutes every two weeks, or 45 minutes once a month.

6) If local to Puget Sound, it is also expected that participants will attend the weekly Sunday night Dharma Dialogues.

New Posts

Beginning Sept. 1st

Rev. Sendo Howells
Sally Zenka Metcalf
Shika (Host - Manager)

Rev. Tendo Kirkpatrick
Eddie Daichi Salazar
Tenzo (Sesshin Cooks)

Rev. Seiho Morris
Gavin Ozan Mackay
Jikijitsu (Timekeepers)

Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez
Gavin Ozan Mackay
Densu (Chant Leaders)

Rev. Gendo Testa
George Gibbs
Chris Doelling
Jisha (Tea Servers and zendo care)

Rev. Rinzan Pechovnik
Edwin Kyosei Beatty
Inji (Abbot Assistants)

Carolyn Josen Stevens:
Fusu (Accountant)

Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez, Eddie Daichi Salazar, Gavin Ozan Mackay, Chris Zenshin Jeffries

Introductory Zazen
## Important Dates to Remember

**Daily zazen:**  
M-T: 5:30-6:30 AM; Sat: 7-8:30 AM; M & W: 7:30-8:30 PM; Sun: 6:30-7:30 PM

Dharma Talks, Sundays, 7:30pm: 9/17, 10/1, 10/22, 10/29, 11/5, 11/19, 11/26, 12/17

Zen Intro: Tuesdays, 7:30-8:45pm (except 9/26, 12/5 & 12/26)

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To learn more about membership see: http://choboji.org/membership-and-no-ranks/