Dear members and friends,

As I write this, brightly colored leaves fall from the trees outside my window. The rains and mist have returned to the Pacific Northwest. It is less than a week to my third Bearing Witness Retreat with Zen Peacemakers at Auschwitz. We are traveling in the wake of the mass murder at a synagogue in Pittsburgh. This time I will be going with Rinzan Osho and Daichi. It is my hope that we come back more aware of our own shadows and the fears and convoluted twists of the human heart. In this way, we should be more prepared to act with clarity and compassion in our trying times. Intolerance is a slippery slope and must be lovingly confronted now and forever.

I’m very pleased that the Chobo-Ji sangha is actively investigating skillful means to be more aware and caring of each other and the wider world. We continue our NVC right-speech skill building, offering workshops and ongoing practice groups. Rev. Seiho Morris recently led a well-received daylong workshop for people of color and their allies exploring cultural identity held at Nalanda West. In addition, Chobo-ji has begun a white privilege book group meeting once a month called Combusting Delusions.

We recently concluded a wondrous Autumn Sesshin with 29 participants. It was a well-grounded group, with everyone doing their part to hold the form so that we all could more ably explore our deep nature. There were three sangha members doing Jukai (Precept Ceremony) and one Tokudo (Unsui Ordination), more on these ceremonies later in this issue. Our Shika (host-manager) for this sesshin was Rinzan Osho who kept track of all our samu (work meditation) assignments. Rev. Seiho served as our Dai Tenzo (Chief cook) and gave up much to be sure we were well-nurtured on many levels. Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez was our Jikijitsu (timekeeper) and made sure our zazen was solid. Rev. Gendo kept the pace as our Densu (chant leader). Our principal Jisha (tea server) was Anil Seifu Singh-Morales, assisted by Eric Dee and others. It is the Jisha’s responsibility to make sure we are well hydrated and cared for during our journey together. Rev. Sendo was my Inji (abbot assistant) who made sure I had what I needed when I needed it and kept the dokusan line moving smoothly. Rinzan Osho gave the Dharma Talk (www.norankzendo.org/podcast) on the second day, and I gave Teisho the other days. Included in this issue is a transcription of my teisho on Joshu’s Mu, and you can listen to two more podcasts recorded during this sesshin at: http://genjo.libsyn.com.

Many people have asked me about the new Chinese silk color scroll hanging in the hall between the zendo foyer and the lounge. It is a gift from a friend of mine, William Wittmann, from his late father’s art collection. It dates from the late 17th or early 18th century and probably depicts a lord of one of the Taoist heavens. It hangs there as a reminder that Chan Buddhism blended with Taoism in China before coming to Japan and the rest of the world as Zen. It also serves to reminds us that we live in a multidimensional universe only partially discernible with our primary senses and scientific instruments.

On a completely different note, as almost everyone is aware we had an array of solar panels installed on our roof at the end of last summer. This summer the panels worked so well that over the course of four months our entire electric bill for the whole center was about $200, half as much as last year.

Above and beyond what has already been mentioned, you will find announcements for our Rohatsu Sesshin, Toy party, winter break, New Year’s Day ceremony and other events of interest, along with my closing Autumn Sesshin Incense Poem. May we all stay warmhearted as winter approaches.

With gassho,

Genjo
What follows are some significant moments in my journey, with something of what came in between.

**FIRST MOMENT:** Early on in my Zen practice, Genjo remarked apparently casually that I was a follower of the way. Really? I thought. How did you know this? I didn’t even know it myself – though as I thought about it, it felt true, and as though it had been true for a long time – in some sense for my whole life. BUT my path to Zen and serious religious practice was very long and circuitous. I didn’t start practicing until age 72.

**SECOND MOMENT:** It’s 1959, I am 17, just finishing high school in Walla Walla, and I’m the guest on a weekly radio program whose host is a Whitman professor, a family friend. The topic is Jack Kerouac’s *The Dharma Bums*, newly published. I am selected as a representative of the younger generation – moving into what is starting to look like a new age. How would I respond to this book?

The answer: I responded with distaste. Kerouac’s wild ways didn’t appeal to me. The book’s casual misogyny probably didn’t help. And, unfortunately, this was my first exposure to Zen – Kerouac writes here about some of his Zen experience, his friendship with Gary Snyder, etc. So I was turned off by Kerouac, and Zen was part of that package, so for decades thereafter I believed without even thinking about it that that world was not for me.

Was any form of religion for me? To some extent this was, right after high school, an open question. I went to college planning to minor in Philosophy, thinking that it, like literature (which was to be my major) was about Wisdom. Freshman philosophy was taught by a logical positivist who seemed to me a brilliant man. The course methodically demolished each of the arguments for the existence of God. And there was nothing to replace it – philosophy as it was being taught in the dominant Anglo-American school seemed much less about Wisdom than about how you couldn’t know anything, and if you couldn’t know it you couldn’t believe it either. “You can’t know anything” was of course a great preparation for Zen, but that revelation was decades in coming.

Meanwhile, I settled for finding Wisdom in literature. For a career I chose teaching literature at the college level, for two reasons really: I wanted to go on being a student, and I wanted to do work that was socially useful, or at least not harmful. It worked out pretty well: teaching for me always involved continuing to learn, expanding my reach, finding new questions, and this is what I wanted for my students as well. It was always more a vocation than a job.

**THIRD MOMENT:** It’s 1998, I’m 57, I’ve been teaching for more than 30 years, and I’m in the Himalayas, in the Everest region of Nepal. The trek I’ve been on has taken us up to above 13,000 feet, and I’ve been suffering from altitude sickness for two days. I’ve spent the evening before lying in a tent on a high ridge, aware of a tiny village on an adjacent ridge and the great snowy peaks above, listening to our Sherpas partying, playing and singing their music. Despite being sick I loved being right there, then. But the guide has decided I must leave the group and descend to a lower altitude, so I’m assigned my own Sherpa to carry my duffle bag and lead me down a couple of thousand feet to a larger village where I can wait for the rest of the group. Descending, I soon feel better. We get to a fairly level grassy stretch where my Sherpa encounters a friend, a man leading a train of yaks. They stop to talk, the spot is breathtakingly beautiful, and I’m floating. Then, as we continue downhill, the yak-herder, moving uphill with his animals, starts to sing – a beautiful modal melody. I am overcome with joy and gratitude; it is one of the great moments of my life. I’ve had a sort of breakthrough.

I don’t have much of a framework for it. But I am carrying the one book I brought on this trip, Peter Matthiessen’s *The Snow Leopard*, which I have been reading for the third time. This book is the reason why I’m on the trip. I had first read it in the late 70’s, on the recommendation of a new friend who had just returned from a long trek in the Himalayas, and my friend’s experience and the book had planted the seed of a desire to go there too. Now twenty years later I had finally made it there myself, and I must have dimly sensed some similarity between what Matthiessen describes and my own experience. This, plus loving the glimpses of Tibetan Buddhist culture one gets on trails in the Everest region, and the utter strangeness of the large stupas I’d seen in Kathmandu, led to my starting to read more about Buddhism and continuing to travel in Asia.

The effects of further reading were inconclusive. That Buddhism was non-theistic was good. No self was a big obstacle; I wasn’t ready to give up prized notions about individual identity, MY individual identity. Nor was I ready to give up attachment – what would life be, without attachments? Then the varieties of Buddhism were confusing. Zen must be OK, since it’s what Peter Matthiessen did,
but when I tried to read the book where he specifically explores his Zen experience, *Nine-Headed Dragon River*, I felt baffled by it.

So I was sort of stuck. In love with Buddhist art and imagery, with the Buddhist country of Bhutan, with a growing collection of books on these subjects, a few thangka paintings, and a lovely little gold Newari Buddha figure from Nepal, but undiscerning about where to go next. But in 2004, when a Silk Road trip through far western China arose, I signed up for it. A friend who taught Asian art had told me about the Mogao Caves, with their interiors painted with fabulous Buddhist murals, and I wanted to see them.

**FOURTH MOMENT:** Our Chinese guide in the caves is hopeless, doesn’t know what he is talking about (by this time I know enough about Buddhism to know that), I am seeing but I know I wasn’t really seeing, and I feel frustrated. But at the final cave, our main guide on the trip, a European interested in Buddhism, takes over the talking. The cave is pretty large and the wall paintings in quite good shape. It is all about the parinirvana – a traditional scene of Shakyamuni on his deathbed, with deeply grieving Arhats and other followers gathered around – painted realistically, as distinct individuals. Plus scenes of Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, and lots of animals and birds. I am mesmerized. I had visited and of course admired and been awed by the Sistine Chapel, but here, I think, is the Sistine Chapel of Buddhism, and it is affecting me much more intensely. So, another sign.

A year later I retired, moved to Seattle, and was diverted into Unitarianism – another non-theistic religious possibility, welcoming of ideas from non-Christian faith traditions, and an appealingly liberal, politically engaged community. I got very involved in the life of that church and eventually committed myself to a nine-month program of religious exploration, called Wellspring.

For that program I needed to meet monthly with a Spiritual Director, the SD I chose was Genjo, and what followed was nine months of intense inquiry, intense listening to the experiences others in my group were having, a lot of writing in my journal, trying feebly to meditate for 15-minute stretches on my own, and having wonderful monthly conversations with Genjo.

**FIFTH MOMENT:** At the end of the nine months, I go back to Pennsylvania for my 50th college reunion. At the few earlier reunions I’d attended, I’d always felt somewhat wary and defensive. This time, much less so. My heart is open, I connect with classmates I hadn’t known well when we were young, especially two women who had been serious Buddhists for a long time. I choose the discussion groups where we talk about our experiences with religion. I love it. On the culminating morning, our class walk together into the amphitheater where all the reunion classes gathered (it was a small college). As we walk in, tears came into my eyes and I feel I am just swimming in love for everyone. This is beyond a normal feeling of being moved and happy to be somewhere. It is a new experience.

When I came back and reported on this to Genjo, he said you had a breakthrough. He didn’t explain. I had an inkling of what he meant but didn’t really understand it. But now the next step was clear. I had already agreed to be a facilitator of a Wellspring group for the following two years, but I also decided to attend the intro to Zen classes later in the summer, and in the fall of 2013, feeling quite shy and awkward about it, I started coming to Saturday zazen.

**SIXTH MOMENT:** It’s now the spring of 2014, and since January I have been throwing myself more fully into Zen practice, getting here six mornings a week. I’ve been to three or so mini-sesshins and I have decided to try Odayaka, and if I can survive that, Summer Sesshin. Time – the amount of active life I have left – is feeling short, and I am trying to make the most of it. Genjo takes Seiho and me to a half-day sesshin in Ellensburg, flying over there. I go to Dokusan, for only the second or third time. I still am confused by it; I don’t really know why I’m there. But being in Ellensburg has brought to the surface my long-standing ambivalence about Eastern Washington: a deep love for it, for its landscapes, and my adolescent fears of being trapped by it (and in some sense trapped by my relationship with my parents). I have been sitting with this, and also, on the cushion, I have had a strange dream-like experience in which I am seeing time as a river, as on a map, but flowing in two directions, with little arrows pointing the directions.

I tell Genjo all this. He says, welcome home – and then he says, everywhere is home, and where you are welcome. I’ve come to see that to the degree that I am free of the burdens of self, that this is deeply true. The photo I chose for the Temple Happenings announcement of this talk (lacking a good photo of myself in robes), shows me last winter in Tanzania, standing in front of the Olduvai Gorge, an area where archaeologists have found layers of evidence of early humans stepping into a landscape very similar to how it looks today. This is a spot I’d long wanted to see, and I am finding that in Africa, I’ve felt I was coming home.

**NOW:** I’m living at Chobo-Ji, having left home by selling my rather grand house in April, and feeling wonderfully at home in my quite ordinary little apartment here. Still surprised to be an unsui and still feeling my way into what being a priest means to me, but glad to be working at it and re-inspired by Seifu’s beautiful Tokudo ceremony. Feeling less at home in my other new abode, Horizon House, where I have a more luxurious apartment, but feeling my way there into an environment where there’s no end to old age and death, AND there’s no old age and death.

I’m beginning again every day, every hour, there’s always more to learn and I’ll be a student forever, happy in not knowing, facing the multifarious challenges of the Four Great Vows, and exploring the depths of ordinariness.

**TO BE CONTINUED.**
Mumonkan
Case I: Joshu’s Mu
First Day Autumn Sesshin, 2018

Koan: A monk once asked master Joshu, “Has a dog Buddha Nature or not?” Joshu said, “Mu.”

Mumon’s Commentary: In studying Zen, one must pass the barriers set up by ancient Zen masters. For the realization of incomparable satori, one has to cast away one’s discriminating mind. Those who have not passed the barrier and have not cast away the discriminating mind are all phantoms haunting trees and plants. Now, tell me, what is the barrier of the Zen masters? Just this Mu. It is known as the barrier of Zen. It is also known as the gateless barrier of Zen. Those who have passed this gateless barrier will not only see Joshu clearly but will go hand and hand with all the masters in the past, see them face to face. You will see with the same eye as they see and hear with the same ear. Wouldn’t that be wonderful? Don’t you want to pass this gateless barrier? Then concentrate yourself into this Mu, with your three hundred and sixty bones and eighty-four thousand pores, making your whole body one great inquiry. Day and night work intently at it. Do not attempt nihilistic (absolute) or dualistic (relativistic) interpretations. It is like having a red-hot iron ball stuck in your stomach. You try to vomit it but cannot. Cast away your illusory discriminating knowledge accumulated up until now and keep on working harder. In the readiness of time, when your efforts come to fruition, all the oppositions such as in and out, life and death, right and wrong, will naturally be identified and seen through. You will then be like a person who cannot speak but has had a wonderful dream. You know it personally within yourself. Suddenly, you break through the barrier, and you will astonish heaven and shake the earth. It is as if you have snatched the great sword out of the hands of General Kan. You kill the Buddha if you meet him. You kill the ancient masters if you meet them. On the brink of life and death, you are then utterly free, and in the six realms and the four modes of life, you live with great joy a genuine life in complete freedom. Now, how should one strive? With might and main, work at this Mu and be Mu! If you do not stop or waver in your efforts, then behold when the Dharma candle is lighted, darkness is at once vanquished.

Mumon’s Poem:

The dog, the Buddha nature, the truth already manifested in full, a moment of yes and no, lost are your body and soul.

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For me, the beauty of Zen practice is that it points consistently at our own infinite depth. There’s no mistaking it, our practice points us directly at true nature and prods us to look deeper. When we look deeply enough, we begin to feel the bottomless infinity that we vocalize as “Mu.” There’s something so restorative about moving past all the layers of our discriminating mind and feeling at a cellular level the vastness of which we’re all a part.

By investigating and listening on all channels of perception with our three hundred and sixty bones and eighty-four thousand pores, making our whole body one great inquiry, we move past our layers of conceptualizations and identities. If we’re not able to move beyond all the conceptualizations arising from the discriminating mind, Mumon warns us that we’re all just phantoms haunting trees and plants. We’re stuck in a phantom existence anytime we are not able to regularly look beyond the constructions of our discriminating mind, which manifest as our conceptualizations, attachments, delusions and identities.

In the course of this one week together, every one of us has the opportunity, and I think the high probability, of feeling this vast, restorative infinity that I sometimes call a loving presence. Anytime we are able to feel this loving presence around and through us, we realize that everything has always been manifesting it. All of us have artificial barriers that we’ve created in the course of our human development. Sesshin is an opportunity for dissolving or at least seeing through these artificial barriers. Facing our deep heart-mind, we get the chance to break through all the cobwebs we’ve created and experience the unity and seamless loving harmony we hopefully experienced in the womb. We may even transcend the moment of our human conception and momentarily dissolve into the intimate multidimensional infinity we call MU. In the course of this week, it’s really not that difficult to feel it and to be enriched and restored. All we need do is sit, breathe and listen. This practice should be enough to invite and allow the feeling to arise naturally breath after breath, sit after sit, day after day.

In our tradition, feeling the loving presence is just the beginning of our practice together. I’m not saying experiencing our own infinite depth is not meaningful, but this transitory feeling is only the starting point of our real practice and training. The real point of practice is to figure out how to manifest loving presence through action in our everyday lives inside and outside of the zendo. This is our big life koan. Of course, it’s a lot easier said than done. We start by inviting and investigating our own depth; slowly but surely, we begin to realize that there’s no bottom.

We are all a manifestation of an alive multidimensional infinity. This is the starting point of the Mu koan. I have so much gratitude for this practice for constantly drawing me back to this starting point. In the course of sesshin, in the midst of my own tunnel vision, stickiness, anxiety, and egocentric smallness, the Mu koan invites me to experience the infinite depth that’s the complete opposite of the tunnel vision from which I often operate. The big life koan is to discern how to bring this harmonious feeling into my daily life in the most mature and effective ways. What is that going to look like? How will it be manifested? How do I clean up relationships or stuck circumstances? How do I respond with open-hearted kindness to myself and the world around me?

The line that keeps jumping out at me this morning is: “Those who have not passed the barrier and have not cast away the discriminating mind are all phantoms haunting trees and plants.” In other words, those who have not felt their own infinite depth, by casting away their discriminating, conceptual cobwebs, will remain phantoms haunting trees and plants. How sad to remain only a fraction of our real potential; it’s almost criminal considering the vastness of our being.

Chobo-Ji is in the lineage of Zen Master Rinzai. Our founding abbot, Genki
Takabayashi, painted this calligraphy, behind me to my left, which illustrates one of Rinzai’s key points: the true person transcends dependence on rank, post, position, or function. Once we get past our preferences, conceptualizations and identities, we find we are able to live a life in complete freedom with joy and open-heartedness to do what needs doing, even at the brink of life and death. To have joy and gratitude for this day, to know that it’s a good day, to live it fully with loving open-heartedness, that’s freedom! But to realize this kind of freedom we have to move beyond our attachments to rank, post, position, hierarchy and so much more! Our discriminating mind tends to keep us in a tunnel vision, usually either an idealized or diminished view of who we think we are. For real freedom we must get past our fixed sense of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and cultural heritage, past our identity as educated or less educated, past our identity as teacher or student, past our identity as better or worse, even past our identity as a human being. With continued practice we can open up to the being-ness of the rest of the animal kingdom, of the plants and trees, of the earth and heavens.

Each day in our morning sesshin service we start with the Atta Dipa, which reminds us we are the light! The Buddha wants us to know we are the light, the light is the Dharma; therefore rely on the Dharma! In other words, we are told to rely on our own deep nature, our deep infinite being-ness, and to walk in the freedom of that being-ness far beyond our gender, sexual orientation, age, nationality, ethnicity, personal history, rank, position and preferences. As we sit here in the zendo, we work to relax and let go into the infinitely soulful and loving being-ness of our deep nature. Anytime we feel this depth it is easy to walk freely in this world with gratitude, joy and loving kindness. However, we are so beautifully complex that we can easily get stuck in a very narrow egotistic idea of who we think we are or who we think we’re supposed to be. No wonder we need so much practice!

Tell me what is the barrier of the Zen masters? Just this Mu. Just this infinity. Just this inconceivable depth. It’s a gateless barrier though because we’re already it, but most of the time we don’t realize this. When we pass through all the gateless barriers of attachments, delusions, sense of separation, sense of identity, then unquestionably and immediately we see with the same eyes as Joshu. We hear with the same ears as all the masters, male and female from every time, every culture, on every continent and from every planet. We see with the same eyes, hear with the same ears, and even if you don’t have ears or eyes, you feel with the same heart-mind as all of the masters of the past and the future.

Wouldn’t that be wonderful? We need only to investigate our own depth, beyond all of our narrow egoistic thinking of who we think we are or who we think we are not. With our three hundred and sixty bones and eighty-four thousands pores, feel it, be it, manifest it. Don’t get stuck in dualistic or nihilistic interpretations. Working through our artificial barriers of discriminating mind, we sometimes get stuck, and we reach an inner barrier of frustration, fatigue and pain. At such times we may be holding on to our egoistic identity so intently that it’s like having a red-hot iron ball bolted in our belly. We try to vomit it but find we’re not ready to release our own artificial barriers created by our discriminating mind. Undoubtedly, there will be times in this sesshin when I feel stuck while sincerely working to burn through or combust my attachments to yesterday, today or tomorrow. Going nowhere, I’ll be totally absorbed in my fatigue, frustration, anxiety, worry or hate.

Mumon says, “Now, how should one strive? With might and mane, work at this Mu and be Mu!” In other words, we work at feeling our own infinite depth. We must not stop or waver in our efforts. I’m not here to sit like a lump on a log and just coast my way through sesshin. Very often we will feel stuck, like there is a red-hot iron ball in our belly that we can’t vomit. The situation may feel untenable; we can relax, but don’t coast. Keep the posture strong and bright. Keep breathing slow whole breaths. We must work to keep our attention on observing the world around and within us just as it is, listening for the silence between

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and within each note of this symphony of now. Then with each breath we combust a little bit. Even if you can’t feel it, each breath is a bit of combustion. Remember to listen on all channels. Mu is shouting at us from every corner and speck of the universe.

Remember: the dog and Buddha Nature are already fully manifested. Even when I’m stuck with a red-hot iron ball in my belly, this too is Mu, Mu manifesting as a knot of tight, hot entangled energy waiting for release.

A moment of this is it, and this isn’t it… what a headache!

In clarity and confusion, sit, breathe and listen. Settle into a grounded, attentive posture. Work at fully feeling what is. With each slow and gentle breath, combust a little. Listen with your three hundred and sixty bones and eighty-four thousand pores making your whole body one great inquiry. No self-deluded barrier can stand in the face of perpetual busting. No barrier can stand in the face of perpetual combustion. "barrier" will either dissolve, or transform itself into some sort of insight and energy.

The cost of sesshin is $440 (less one month’s dues for members). We will leave from Chobo-Ji, on 12/01, by 3PM with informal supper, introductions and orientation to follow upon arrival at the Gwinwood Conference Center in Lacey, WA, near Olympia (6013 30th Ave SE Lacey, WA 98503). Sesshin concludes the morning of Sunday, Dec. 9 around 10 AM. Departure flights should be made for no earlier than 3PM, 12/9. Please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, sitting clothes with layers, work clothes and a towel.

From the North:
Take I-5 South to Exit 109 Martin Way. Turn right onto Martin Way and take immediate left onto College St. Turn left on Lacey Blvd (One Way). Follow directions below.

From the South:
Take I-5 North to Exit 107 Pacific Ave. Turn right onto Pacific Ave. Proceed through round-about as Pacific Ave becomes Lacey Blvd. Follow directions below.

From either direction:
Turn right onto Ruddell Rd. Turn left on 25th Ave. Turn right on Hicks Lake Dr follow to end and turn left onto 30th Ave. Gwinwood is at end of 30th Ave on the right.

Rohatsu Sesshin
Dec. 1 - 9

Please help us get an accurate count by sending a deposit and application by Nov. 24, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Make your deposit check, $90 or more, to Chobo-Ji and leave it in the bowl by the zendo entrance, mail (Chobo-Ji, 1733 S. Horton St. #7, Seattle, WA 98144) or use PayPal. The online application is a fillable pdf, which you can drop off at the zendo, send by post or email it.

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, or an affiliated temple, 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 fifth day of Autumn Sesshin, Wednesday, September 26, 2018, Allyssa Arnold, Eric Dee and Jonathan Swift did Jukai (Precept and Dharma Name Ceremony).

Allyssa began training with Genjo Osho at last winter’s Odayaka sesshin. Here are some of Allyssa’s own words on why she wanted to do this ceremony:

As to “why do I believe that now is the right time to Jukai?”: At this point on my journey, I believe there is nothing that could be more important or deserving to dedicate my time and energy to. When Now is all that we are guaranteed, whenever could there be a better time? It is my hope that my Jukai leads to more stability in our small sangha, and that it will serve as a continual
reminder of the endless work I have to do on myself for the betterment of all beings. I also hope it inspires others to take their own practice even just a little deeper.

What does Jukai mean to me? I see Jukai as an intimate acknowledgement and celebration with the sangha and those closest to me. As I formally celebrate my most heartfelt of intentions to dedicate the entirety of my existence to serving the greater good of all, I am acknowledging my place in this interwoven family that is Everything ...

With my study and practice of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism, Gnosticism, Qigong, and Reiki, I’ve begun to slow down, heal, and find a deeper power and acceptance as I work to tame my mind and benefit the world around me ....

On my path, I hope to inspire more people to question their beliefs and start living lives that are more fulfilled and empowered. I hope to do this through sharing my story, deepening and persisting in my practice, offering Love, growing in patience, and having a kindhearted acceptance and compassion for anyone I meet, wherever they are on their journey. I wish to bring hope, celebration, strength, and love to all I do. None of us are evil or broken, we just occasionally get lost in the darkness of suffering and confusion.

Concerning her study of the precepts Allyssa writes: To think anyone of these precepts will be easy now seems a humorous and naive thought. I’ve come to realize the importance of forming an intimate relationship with them. The more I have studied them the more I’ve realized how interconnected they are, and the less able I am to say which is easiest and most difficult to uphold. ...

As I spent time thinking about what nature symbols and or Dharma sentiments that I may like to incorporate in my name, one thing has really stood out. The last few incredible years I have been given some important gifts that have all related to the moon. ... I took refuge with my Tibetan teacher and was given the name Dawa Drolma ("Moon Tara").

Genjo Osho gave Allysa the Dharma name: Tsuki - pronounced “ski” (月) – Satsu (薩), Moon – Buddha (or Tara).

Eric Dee writes: In high school, I had read mentions of Buddhism through deep ecology philosophers like Joanna Macy and Gary Snyder. The Te of Piglet was published when I was 16. I was studying Chinese history on my own, and of course Buddhism figured into much of the cultural and spiritual life of my far-removed homeland. In my first year of college, I clumsily attempted zazen with an Asian Art History professor who sat mostly by himself, and the occasional dabbling student. It didn’t go well, as the only other professor who sat in the group asked me with annoyance one evening if I was really serious about Zen. I wasn’t, so I didn’t go back.

I sat with MCPS for a year or two. ... That was over 15 years ago. I meditated in short spurts, compelled after reading Thich Nhat Hanh or a Tricycle magazine, like watching our heroes Bruce Lee or Gordon Liu as a kid then practicing push ups and flying kicks. Two summers ago, I decided to really, seriously start practicing again. This time, however, I was motivated by a desire to be a better human being with the people I care about, and the people I don’t care about. I sat at SIMS for Rodney Smith’s last year as a teacher, and the beginning of Tuere Sala’s. At the end of summer, about to switch back to my normal swing shift at work, I started another search. My criteria had nothing really to do with a teacher; but I knew that I probably wanted to practice Zen, and that I wanted to find a community that emphasized social justice and engaged Buddhism. I read through the website of Chobo-Ji, and knew I had the right match. And it worked with my schedule, so I knew that the Heavens willed it! ...

I know that at Chobo-Ji, there is just the right amount of ritual and form that suits my personality and temperament. I know that to sit zazen for hours unmoving suits me. I appreciate your description of the zendo as a laboratory, but obviously it is more than that. It is more than the sterility conjured by that word, it is a space to be vulnerable with and to find strength and support with friends in the Dharma. It is a community of people, some that I am drawn to, some that I am indifferent to, some that annoy me, but all of us working on it. Working on breaking through the veil. Working on maturing, and growing open, loving, caring hearts. ... All I know is that in the midst of this vastness, the only responsibility we have in this world is to affirm life and to love and care for each other. I hope that I have made some small

Continued on next page...
progress over my life in working on this, and that when my end comes, that I will be able to say that I did honor and respect this divine responsibility.

Genjo Osho gave Eric the Dharma name: Sei (青) – Ku (空), Blue – Sky.

Jonathan wrote: I first started coming to Chobo-Ji a little over eight years ago. I've always felt welcome at the zendo, and it did not take long for me to feel that I arrived home. I both enjoy and am challenged by being a part of Chobo-Ji and would like to make a formal commitment to the community. I am ready to formally receive the precepts.

Zazen was initially an outgrowth of my aikido practice at Tenzan and an exploration of being present when there's turmoil or even physical violence swirling around. My early work in aikido focused on how to cultivate an “unfettered mind” and not lose your shit when under duress or even being attacked. ...

I came to Chobo-ji after several years at Tenzan. I was experiencing a constant nagging anxiety at the time and felt exhausted by it; I needed to explore beyond the dojo. Two of Genki Roshi's paintings hang prominently in Tenzan -- one of “Bu” and the other of “flowering mind”. What an odd and perfect invitation to Chobo-Ji!

Over the first year or so of practice at Chobo-Ji, I took some time to be present with my discomfort, shifting from “What is this pain? Go away!” to “There you are again, what do you need?” What I began to uncover was that, within my felt anxiety and work on this “unfettered mind,” is a deep-rooted aversion to rejection and loss.

Soon after this realization, I caught a few extended glimpses of kensho, and the experience was like being immersed in a warm gooey state of connected awareness with everything. This helped me more fully grasp that, in day-to-day life, I was having a hard time feeling much of anything! Sadly, my felt connection had narrowed to not much more than my young daughter. At Odayaka Sesshin I spoke with Genko Osho, and she encouraged me to explore meta

practice, particularly around forgiveness and compassion. This practice along with daily sitting and extended sesshins has helped immensely.

On an almost daily basis, I return to one of the phrases within the meta sutra:

Even as a mother protects with her life
Her child, her only child
So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living things.

For me, this phrase is the essence of what I need to do and be within the world. As a matter of practice, I only need to imagine holding my child; my gaze softens, tension drops, and I feel a subtle radiance. I then carry this gaze and radiance into the world a little more each day. This same practice has helped deepen my aikido practice and teaching as well, evolving to something softer, more responsive and spacious.

As I've grown, my different practices have merged together and my desire to be present for others and the world has strengthened. For me, the four great vows are an amazing aspiration and each day, by connecting and giving, I am seeing simple ways to live them.

Genjo Osho gave Jonathan the Dharma name: Kai (海) – Cho (潮), Ocean – Current.

Tokudo Ceremony

On September 28th, 2018, the last day of Autumn Sesshin, Genjo Osho ordained Anil Seifu Singh-Molares as an unsui (cloud and water person – Zen monk and priest in training). Seifu did Jukai just last September, but has been doing Zen training for 38 years, and has completed all of our temple’s unsui prerequisites.

What follows is an essay that Seifu wrote that mirrors the Dharma Talk he gave us just after his ordination...

After a 38 year journey, Genjo Roshi finally ordained me, adding a new dharma name to my existing one, so that I will now be known as Rev. Shin (静) Fu (風) ("Deeply Transmitted Tranquil Wind"), a beautiful name to aspire to.

Someone recently asked me: “Why are you ordaining?”, and “What does it mean?” Both good questions.

For me, ordination represents a deeper level of dedication to the practice, and a core commitment to the meditative path as a way to access the mystical core of the Universe or God, or however you might refer to the Ground of All Being.

Since “Zen” literally means “meditation,” this entails continuing my 38 year practice, but with a renewed determination to go deeper. Without fear, or expectation of favor, with determination, humility and acceptance, Gliding and flowing through form and formlessness.

It also signifies the aspiration to live more fully into the Bodhisattva vows I recite every morning, namely: to help all sentient beings as they progress on their path to greater spiritual awareness; to live a life free of bondage to attachments and delusions; to never flag in my commitment to greater and greater understanding and insight; and to honor and follow the example of the Buddha’s life and insights. All of these also flow and are in harmony with my role as a Spiritual Companion.

Living into my vows is now an even deeper daily aspiration, even when (and specially when) I am not in the mood, or angry, or dissatisfied in some way.

A martial arts teacher told me decades ago that “our true measure is how we behave when we are under the most extreme duress,” not just when we are feeling at our best, when it is so much easier. Thankfully, we all have good days. But it is how we respond on the bad ones that truly matters. Wise words and a difficult test.

My ordination also brings me closer to aligning all of the facets of my life into a coherent whole: the fulfillment of my calling as a Zen Priest and as the Executive Director of Spiritual Directors International; my desire to be a more
loving, supportive, and thoughtful father to my six children and an involved partner to my wife; to be responsive to my friends and to the communities that I am part of; and, specially, to be a good companion and helper to those who may be interested in getting closer to their own sense of the mystery and wonder of The Universe.

Basically, to fall into increasing alignment, with all parts merging seamlessly into the whole.

I did a little scholarly digging into the term “Unsui” with the help of Kangan Glenn Webb, and we both concurred that the most discernible Japanese origin is Dogen’s famous Harvest Moon poem (although since Dogen wrote this particular poem in Classical Chinese, there is little doubt that the provenance is from China and much older).

Unlike the traditional (and quite poetic) rendering of the last lines of the poem, where Dogen enjoins us to be “like drifting clouds or flowing water,” Kangan believes the more accurate translation should be “like scudding clouds or flowing water.”

And that’s my aim, as the Rev. Seifu. To flow briskly. To set as good an example as I can. To admit my limitations when I inevitably fall short. And to keep coming to the light, and help as many of you as want my help to do the same.

May The Universe bring you into greater and greater alignment with your true nature.

As with all scholarly digging into the term “Unsui” with the help of Kangan Glenn Webb, and we both concurred that the most discernible Japanese origin is Dogen’s famous Harvest Moon poem (although since Dogen wrote this particular poem in Classical Chinese, there is little doubt that the provenance is from China and much older).

We say “realizing peace” because the present moment is always ripe with an underlying peace for us to discover together. To uncover this presence of peace amidst seeming conflict requires us to bear witness to and engage with the truth of our feelings and the needs they express, both within ourselves and with each other. In human affairs, this process of honoring our needs and those of others is the path to peace, but it is only possible through effective communication. Realizing peace through Right Speech is a form of wisdom and compassion in action and I think is essential to any restorative process human beings might engage in with one another.

As with all elements of the Noble Eightfold Path, our degree of success and benefit depends on how developed and integrated our skillful means and capacities are. Skillful and meaningful communication requires an equal measure of deep listening and effective speech, on both sides. As Henry David Thoreau relates, “It takes two to speak the truth – one to speak and another to hear.” Fortunately, our traditional Zen practice already devotedly develops our capacity to listen with greater clarity, depth, and engagement, through the three traditional modes of practice (zazen, kinhin, and samu). Yet, these modes of traditional practice only develop our skillfulness with the listening side of effective communication.

Most Buddhists in the Western world, not living a monastic lifestyle, are actively engaged, on a regular if not daily basis, in social relationships with family, friends, and their wider community that require a great deal of two-way communication, to unravel
and resolve complex or dynamic problems. As Genjo Marinello Osho related during a private interview conducted by myself and Monika Jion Winkelmann:

Here in the 21st century, we’re principally a lay practice, which I think this is a good thing because we interact therefore more with our political and socioeconomic realities. Obviously, we need healthy communication skills to integrate ourselves in a positive way, to bring our noble silence, practice of mindfulness, and daily compassion into our complex, conflicted world. We particularly need healthy skills at communicating that can de-escalate problems rather than escalate problems and polarities.

Pressed by the realities of what is primarily a socially engaged Buddhist practice in America and our cultural emphasis on democratic rather than hierarchial approaches to resolution, Genjo Osho sees the need for American Zen to formally develop an additional mode of samadhi that transcends our dependence on words and letters. As Genjo Osho related during a private interview conducted by Jion, which hints at Marcia’s response in a post-workshop interview conducted by Jion, which hints at how beneficial and life-changing her use of NVC techniques had been in improving her relationship with her daughter. Marcia’s response in a post-workshop interview conducted by Jion, which hints at how beneficial and life-changing her use of NVC techniques had been in improving her relationship with her daughter.

At these workshops, attendees are seated in a circle. In the circle there is a sense of genuine excitement, curiosity and hope. For some attendees, this mood was fueled by the pain of recent conflicts within the sangha and the need revealed by them for greater skillfulness in communication. For others, the mood was informed by the positive experiences they had previously had using NVC techniques in their professional lives. Still others have expressed their hope that better communication skills would improve the quality of their personal relationships. Marcia shared that she became devoted to spreading the practices of NVC because of how beneficial and life-changing her use of NVC techniques had been in improving her relationship with her daughter.

Many attendees at these workshops have frankly expressed their shortcomings or lack of skill in communicating effectively with others, yet this angst, shared openly, was being held and positively transformed through the attentive listening of the group. There was a mutual recognition of our shared interests and feelings, and a growing sense of our connectedness. In essence, the overall design and facilitation of the workshop (not just the group exercises) was, itself, an embodiment of the NVC model and an ideal opportunity to practice it.

The course material provides that “NVC is a process to prioritize connection. …Living NVC, in relating to others, involves: The intention to connect mutually in dialogue, to see the humanness in the other, and to authentically reveal one’s own humanness. This intention and connection results in mutually valuing each other’s needs and enjoying giving to one another.” Indeed, Marcia has stressed that, “It is not our needs that are in conflict, but rather our strategies for meeting those needs.” We all share the same basic needs – the same essence of being. In recognizing and communicating our needs effectively through the techniques of NVC, we are able to more easily find common ground and mutual understanding in a respectful way that encourages appreciation and cooperation.

NVC training concentrates on how to skillfully make use of our feelings and emotions to help us discern what needs are or are not being met. In zazen, we become more and more adept at intimately encountering feelings and emotions that we might otherwise suppress or fail to notice, yet we do not traditionally practice translating and communicating those feelings into the needs that are not being met. Similar to the bridge between zazen and ‘everyday life’ that kinhin and samu offer, NVC seems a natural extension of our traditional Zen practice, as the core principles and skills in NVC include that of “Empathic Hearing” (listening to our and others’ feelings and emotions in a fully engaged and compassionate way), as well as taking responsibility for our feelings and actions, prioritizing connection, and promoting equal care of everyone’s needs.

NVC’s natural compatibility with Buddhism is further apparent through Marcia’s response in a post-workshop interview conducted by Jion, which hints at “no-self” and a nondualistic view as being elements important to effective use of NVC techniques:

If the purpose of NVC is to create a quality of heartfelt connection where all needs are held with full care and needs are met from natural giving, then if the NVC language [I’m using] is not connecting, I want to check in with my intention. …So often we begin to ‘use’ NVC ‘on’ people rather than being the consciousness and letting our words and actions simply come from that intention.
...I also have learned that there is no way to know what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and so there is less attachment to resisting life or being attached to it being a certain way. It has been at my most deep times of despair that this practice has been my lifeline and I have been able to find compassion, empowerment, and hope. This brings me more and more trust.

...I have such trust that I don’t need to have all the answers – that if I am present with an intention to connect, the strategies and answers will come from the empathic space we create. I have worked with and been part of myself, many hierarchical structures: prisons, schools, businesses, hospitals, etc. Using NVC at the systemic level was [Marshall Rosenberg, the founding developer’s] dream. He longed for the structures in society to support the worth of all beings, to support all needs being honored.

During one exchange after a Chobo-Ji NVC day after a NVC workshop, Sally “Zenka” Metcalf offered that:

NVC has really grown up over the last many years – this is not your father and mother’s NVC. This is kind of a transcendent NVC, in my view. And so what we are really talking about on the restorative practices committee is restorative practices and restorative systems. And nonviolent communication underlies those practices and those systems. So many wonderful people, including Marshall Rosenberg, have taken it to a new level. So we’re really working with this beautiful new technique and new structures and new ideas within this community to help people. And I think it’s really going to help us.

At the same time, sangha leaders clearly recognized and emphasized that the NVC techniques learned at the workshop would serve us no good if we fail to routinely and consistently practice them. Rev. Anne Sendo Howells humbly shared:

One of the things that was clear to me yesterday was that a one-off workshop does no good at all. I went to the one last year. I thought, ‘Well, this is really interesting. It would be nice to spend some time on it. But ‘I’m going to forget it,’ and I did forget it. So I was starting from the beginning again yesterday and realizing how hard this is. I’m not very good at it. I need to practice.

As a relatively new member of Chobo-Ji, I have been impressed by Genjo Osho and sangha leaders’ careful but courageous efforts to adapt Zen to better harmonize with American culture in a way that maintains the essential integrity of the tradition and its core practices. Genjo clearly hopes the sangha’s efforts to extend formal practice to include ‘Right Speech’ will help set a meaningful precedent and trend in this ongoing process:

If, and it’s a big if, Chobo-Ji really makes it a big part of our practice that communication samadhi is part of our training, I can’t imagine that that won’t be infectious for other Zen groups. Because every spiritual community... has had conflicts and difficulties that have led to people feeling hurt enough, teachers and students, to dissolve communities or leave. ...I do think there’s a great need. And if we can demonstrate that we can pull it off and make it a part of our practice, that is bound to be attractive.

Thich Nhat Hahn points out, in the Right Speech chapter of his book The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching, “In the Lotus Sutra, a bodhisattva named Wondrous Sound was able to speak to each person in his or her own language. For someone who needed the language of music, he used music. For those who understood the language of drugs, he spoke in terms of drugs. Every word the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound said opened up communication and helped others transform. We can do the same, but it takes determination and skillfulness.” Perhaps NVC is the vehicle by which we can all access the capacity of Wondrous Sound within us all, helping us realize peace in our relationships, sangha, and community.

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Bernie was born in Brooklyn New York on January 18, 1939. His parents were both Jewish immigrants, his mother was Polish and lost much of her family in the Holocaust. Bernie got a PhD at UCLA in mathematics, lived for a time in a kibbutz in Israel, and after studying for 20 years with Mazumi Roshi, became his first Dharma Heir.

Bernie moved away from the traditional forms of the Soto school of Maezumi Roshi. He worked to find ways to engage social problems and this became his major focus. He started the Greyston Foundation in New York and the Greyston Bakery, which employed and trained unemployed people in the neighborhood, who were often ex-convicts. Bernie eventually disrobed as a priest, although he continued to teach and explore a variety of training modalities including “street retreats,” to find ways to integrate social engagement with the disciplines of Zen.

He felt to me like an older, much wiser and compassionate Dharma brother, more like an uncle. I once had the pleasure of flying him in my small plane from Santa Fe to Albuquerque. And one time we were very happy to have him visit Chobo-Ji. I attended four weeklong Bearing Witness retreats led by him and other Zen Peacemakers, two in Poland, one in Rwanda and one in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

His work continues as I am with many others this day in Poland just about to begin a Bearing Witness retreat at Auschwitz. Bernie gave Dharma Transmission to over 20 men and women, including Joan Halifax Roshi, making him one of the most prolific and significant Zen Masters in the West.

J ust before this issue of PMN was going to press, on Nov. 4, I learned of the passing of Zen Master Bernie Glassman. His wife, the Zen teacher, Eve Marko was with him. He was 79 years old.
### Important Dates to Remember

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<td>Dharma Talks, Sundays, 7:30pm: 11/4, 11/11, 11/25, 12/16, 1/6, 1/20, 2/3, 2/17, 3/3, 3/17</td>
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<td>Zen Intro: Tuesdays, 7:30-8:45pm (except 12/4/18 &amp; 12/25/18 &amp; 1/1/19)</td>
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<td>Zazen (1/2 day sit) with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk...</td>
<td>Nov. 18, 5am - 11:15am</td>
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<td>Board Meeting...</td>
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<td>Rohatsu Sesshin (weeklong Zen intensive) ...</td>
<td>Dec. 1 (3:00pm) - 9 (11am)</td>
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<td>Zendo CLOSED for Holidays ...</td>
<td>Dec. 24 evening - evening Jan. 1st</td>
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<td>New Year's Day Celebration and Pot Luck ...</td>
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<td>NVC as a Spiritual Practice Workshop (part 2) ...</td>
<td>Jan. 5, 9:30am - 4:30pm</td>
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<td>Zazen (1/2 day sit) with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...</td>
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<td>Board Meeting ...</td>
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