



# Plum Mountain News

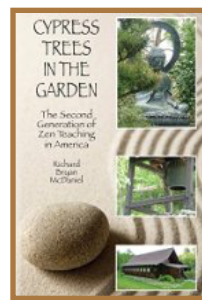
Dear members and friends,

Autumn is reaching its peak in Seattle. The colors, the cool temperature and falling leaves attest to the impermanence of life. The overcast clouds and Seattle drizzle appear to have settled over the region like a wet blanket. After a long clear summer it is time to put on sweaters and coats and accept and treasure our much-needed liquid sunshine. The holidays and Rohatsu Sesshin are just around the corner. May your practice keep you warm and cozy.

Our Autumn Sesshin was a great success. Twenty-four people registered; our Residential Practice Center hosted ten people traveling from out of town on campus. About twenty people did the sesshin full-time. John Daikan Green, who will do tokudo (unsui ordination) at the end of Rohatsu, was our Shika (host-manager). Daikan has served in this capacity before and it showed in his attention to detail. Rev. Rinzan Pechovnik was our Tenzo (chief cook) and though he has not held this post before, you would never know it. Anne Sendo Howells was our Jikijitsu (time keeper) and worked hard in this role to keep us on schedule and respectfully quiet. Rev. Seiho Morris was Jisha, assisted by Robin Fuji Capwell, providing us with just the right balance of tea, coffee and snacks. Robert Tendo Kirkpatrick, who will also do tokudo at Rohatsu, served ably as our Densu (chant leader). Rick Gendo Testa served as my Inji (abbot assistant), overseeing a new dokusan procedure that hopefully provided more equanimous access to this one-to-one dharma exchange. Genko Ni-Osho gave the second day Dharma Talk and served whisked green tea on middle day. I think of Rev. Genko, in many ways, as the backbone of our practice. Eshu Martin Osho, from Zen West in B.C., gave the Dharma Talk on fifth day. Rev. Eshu and I both have chapters in a new book just released, [Cypress Trees in the Garden: The](#)



[Second Generation of Zen Teaching in America](#). On the final day of sesshin Kelli Hobi, a one time student and friend of Genki Roshi, did Jukai (Buddhist Precept Ceremony), more on this later in this issue.



The Senior Student Dharma Talk this quarter was given by Virginia Myoshin Dunthorne. She knocked it out of the park! It was so popular that many have asked me if it could be released as a



podcast for those who were absent, and for those who'd like to hear it for a second time. Myoshin has given her

permission for this release and it will soon appear at [Chobo-Ji's Podcast](#) page.

After Jion's and my visit to the Black Hills of South Dakota for the Native American Bearing Witness Retreat held there last August, everyone in attendance learned of the poverty and plight of life on the Pine Ridge reservation. Winter is approaching and this region in the heart of Turtle Nation (North America) can get deathly cold. The residents of Chobo-Ji along with a few others have sent boxes of second hand winter clothes to the reservation. If there are others reading who are willing to donate winter clothes, I will have an additional box ready to receive them in the zendo closet and will ship this box(es) before Thanksgiving.

Once again I think you will find this issue of Plum Mountain News packed with interesting information and projects. Included is a transcription of my teisho from the sixth day of Autumn Sesshin where I examine a case from seventh century China that I think speaks strongly to today's world. The Program Committee has been working hard to bring new communications offerings to Chobo-Ji for 2016. It is my hope that everyone in the sangha will attend at least one of these offerings, and that residents and ordained in the Seattle area attend all three. The Board is proposing new Mission and

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Vision statements for the temple. Carolyn Josen Stevens has started an appeal for funds to support good work in central Africa. And you will find a book report, an article on the Ten Precepts, and announcements for Rohatsu, holidays and Toya (temple solstice party). Please enjoy the read, and I hope to see you at Rohatsu (our most intensive weeklong sesshin).

With gassho,

*Genjo*

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## Mission and Vision

In May 2015, at a one-day retreat, Chobo-ji's Board of Directors reviewed our mission and vision statements. The original statements had been approved by the sangha approximately in 2008. We are now asking the sangha to review the Board's revised mission and vision statements and provide any questions or comments so that we can finalize them and use them as a policy guide for our future.

As you may know, a Mission is a brief statement of why an organization exists. A Vision is a statement of a desired future state, a direction in which the people want their organization to move. Following are the original statements, approved by the sangha in 2008, and the statements that the Board recommends for your approval.

To comment on these proposals, please email your thoughts to Seishun Dee Endelman ([dee@keysconsult.com](mailto:dee@keysconsult.com)). Please provide your input no later than December 15, 2015.

### 2008 Mission and Vision Statements

#### Our Mission

We are a community that does deep spiritual inquiry through silent meditation for the sake of all beings, great and small, animate and inanimate.

#### Our Vision

Our vision is to create a center that will allow more of this to happen for more people.

### Proposed Mission and Vision Statements

#### Our Mission

We are a diverse community doing deep spiritual inquiry through silent meditation and caring action for the benefit of all beings great and small, animate and inanimate.

#### Our Vision

We envision Chobo-ji as:

- A Buddhist practice center, informed by the Rinzai Zen tradition, that provides a safe and nurturing environment for current and future generations of practitioners to inquire into their own deep nature;
- A diverse and geographically-dispersed community of lay and ordained members who practice together in equality and harmony;
- A sustainable organization managed by a Board of Directors elected and guided by the sangha; and
- A sangha engaged in the life of the practice center and in heart-centered service to the broader community and to the world.

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## Save the Dates

Program and practice committee has planned three separate all-day **communications workshops** for 2016; **all sangha members are strongly encouraged to attend at least one.** This is a way to build our collective skills in an essential aspect of being a successful community. Registration and cost information will be available shortly, but please mark your calendars now for the following dates, all Saturdays:

**February 27:** Nonviolent communications with Kathleen MacFerren

**April 23:** Crucial Conversations with Donna Bellew

**June 4:** Gestalt process with Leonard Shaw.

Of course out-of-town sangha members are welcome to arrange a visit to Chobo-Ji in order to attend any of these workshops.

In addition to developing our communications skills, our program for 2016 will emphasize an ongoing discussion on the precepts. To allow for the greatest possible participation this will be conducted online, with a series of questions to ponder posted each month in Temple Happenings, beginning in January. Details will follow soon.

*Genko Blackman*

*For Program and Practice Committee*

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## Rohatsu Sesshin

Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> to Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>

Please help us get an accurate count by sending a **deposit and application** by **Nov. 23**, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Make your deposit check, \$75 or more, to Chobo-Ji and leave it the bowl by the zendo entrance or mail it to: Chobo-Ji, 1733 S. Horton St. #7, Seattle, WA 98144.

The cost of sesshin is \$440 (less one month's dues). We will leave from Chobo-Ji, on 11/28, by 3pm with informal supper, introductions and orientation to follow upon arrival at Camp Indianola. Sesshin concludes the morning of Sunday, Dec. 6th around 10am. Departure flights should be made for no earlier than 2PM, 12/6. Please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, sitting clothes with layers, work clothes and a towel.





## Josen's Fund Appeal for women in the Congo

Dear friends and colleagues,

As many of you know, Genjo and I traveled to Rwanda in April 2014 as part of a citizens' peace delegation. We were part of a group of thirty "internationals," who, together with thirty Rwandans, spent ten days learning, meditating, listening, and sharing about the genocide that occurred in April 1994. As I'm sure you can imagine, we were deeply moved by our experiences, which ranged from horror about the past to hope for the future in this profoundly troubled and exquisitely beautiful country.

The trip was sponsored by Zen Peacemakers, a socially engaged Buddhist organization that lives by three principles: not knowing, bearing witness, and taking action. On a personal level I have translated the principles to mean: not judging, listening, and taking action. These principles served me well in Rwanda and have continued to resonate. This letter is about actions I am taking in response to that trip.

Every day in Rwanda, we listened to testimony from individuals involved, in one way or another, with the genocide. But as time went on, I became aware that one of the international delegates, Marie Amisi, also had a story to share even though she was not a scheduled speaker. I sought her out, and through interpreters learned about her homeland and her work. My heart broke open, and I promised her that I would return home and do what I could to help.

Marie lives in Uvira at the north end of Lake Tanganyika in South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She is the executive director of *Solidarité des Femmes de Fizi pour le Bien-Etre Familial* (Fizi Women in Solidarity for Family Well-Being – SOFIBEF), a grass roots organization that works to stop sexual violence by providing emergency shelter, medical and legal support, advocacy for reform, and economic development for women. The DRC's Kivu provinces, north and south, are the areas most affected by the violence that is a direct outgrowth of the Rwandan civil war and the African world

war that followed. While peace has returned to Rwanda, the Kivus continue to be plagued with marauding armies, militias and criminal gangs. The prevalence there of sexual violence as a tool of war has prompted United Nations officials to refer to the DRC as the "rape capital of the world." During 2015, civil unrest in neighboring Burundi has spilled over into South Kivu, spiking the violence yet again.

Marie is an impressive and eloquent spokesperson for the rights of women in the DRC. She and her dedicated staff work on so many levels to provide emergency help



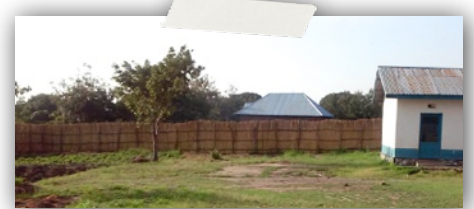
for victims of sexual violence. They advocate for legal and judicial reform, and educate and help women and their children achieve economic independence. SOFIBEF has received support from NGOs in both Europe and North America, including general operations funding for the past several years from both the Fund for Global Human Rights and American Jewish World Service. The need, however, is much greater than the support offered, and that's where I come in.

Last November, with primary support from the Zen Center of Los Angeles, Marie and her program officer, Obed Kakowzi, traveled to Los Angeles and Seattle to learn about work in the US to address sexual



violence. During their three days in Seattle, we visited with state funders in Olympia, the King County prosecutor's office, and leaders of sexual violence prevention and treatment programs in Western Washington. We had the good fortune to meet with a psychology professor at the University of Washington who offers training on intensive treatment strategies for sexual violence survivors in Bakavu, the provincial capital of South Kivu, DRC. At each meeting, and with Zen practitioners and students at Seattle University, Marie and Obed described the horrors of mass violence they have witnessed over and over, the stories of women raped by soldiers and then rejected by their families, and the stories of women coming together to heal and begin their lives again as they are able.

I have sent money to support their work, enough to make some difference. Last spring, SOFIBEF needed to build a security fence around one of their safe houses in the bush. The surrounding region is unsafe, and women were afraid to stay there without a fence. Marie appealed first to the United Nations peacekeepers, and then to the local government authorities. When neither was



forthcoming, I sent money via the Fund for Global Human Rights, which agreed to be my fiscal conduit without taking a fee. Now SOFIBEF is asking for funds to support an economic development project. With \$5,000 they will start a [soap manufacturing project](#), a project selected by the women themselves. A shed inside the fenced compound will be constructed, materials purchased, and training provided. Women who sell the soap will repay the cost of their raw materials to SOFIBEF so that more can be purchased, and more women trained.

Five thousand dollars is more than I can send on my own, so I'm asking for your help. *The Chobo-Ji board of directors has graciously agreed to accept tax-deductible contributions for this project*, which in turn

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will be disbursed to SOFIBEF via the Fund for Global Human Rights. I would like to raise this amount by the end of the year, and will be very grateful for any amount you contribute to help me reach this goal.

I expect that all of you have met people or come across situations when you knew you needed to reach beyond your comfort level to offer assistance. Marie, Obed, and SOFIBEF speak to my heart in that way. I trust them and I trust their track record. I want to help as much as I can and I have promised to do so. Please join me in helping SOFIBEF in its important work to stop sexual violence and help the women of South Kivu rebuild their lives.

With deep gratitude for your support,

*Carolyn Josen Stevens*

[SOFIBEF FGHR Description](#)  
[SOFIBEF 2013 ANNUAL REPORT](#)  
[SOFIBEF SOAP MAKING PROJECT](#)

Donations can be made by check (with memo to SOFIBEF) or through [The Seattle Foundation](#) or [Paypal](#)

## Meeting the Masters

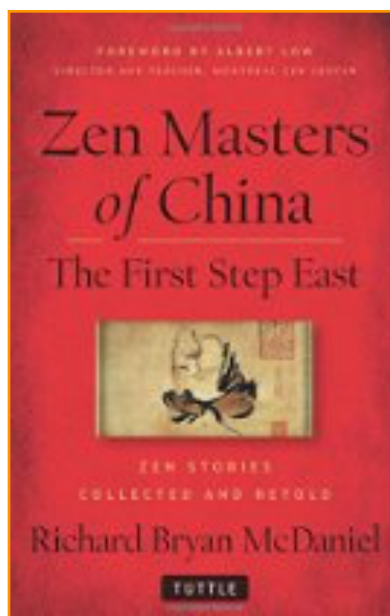
by Anne Sendo Howells

As Zen practitioners, we come to inhabit a world of stories. A few of them involve Shakyamuni Buddha himself, but most are odd, enigmatic accounts of encounters between ancient Chinese masters and their students. We meet these encounters as koans, and in so doing we enter a stream of Zen students going back to the Linji school of the Tang dynasty.

Now Richard Bryan McDaniel, a longtime practitioner from Canada, has completed a four-volume project in which he collects the Zen stories of China, Japan, and America. His final volume, *Cypress Trees in the Garden: The Second Generation of Zen Teaching in North America*, has just been published by the Sumeru Press. The longest of the volumes, it's packed with interviews of contemporary Zen teachers – including whole chapters from both Genjo and Eshu

Martin – telling their own stories. Some of us are already reading it with fascination. The first three volumes are also well worth spending time with, and with this issue of *Plum Mountain News* I begin a sequence of brief reviews of each volume.

In *Zen Masters of China: The First Step East* (Tuttle Publishing, 2012), McDaniel is modest about his aims: he doesn't claim original scholarship, he's not writing history, he's just "retelling" a selection of the Chinese stories along with the bits of their context that were passed along as part of the tradition, and occasional comments about the distinctive styles of particular masters. He moves from one master to the next in roughly chronological order, from Bodhidharma to Wumen (Mumon), and he provides helpful lineage charts as he goes along, though dates are scarce. The result is something like an anthology of poems or short stories in which we can browse, dipping in here or there. An added gift is the illustrations which appear between chapters, lovely reproductions of Zen art, like the Song portrait of Huineng (Eno) chopping bamboo, and all the ox-herding pictures. You'll find beauty and pleasure throughout the book; the stories can be good bedtime reading; I'd love to tell you about my favorites. But when I finished reading all of them, in sequence, I felt I'd had a taste of the experience Mumon promises to those who pass through the gate of "Mu": seeing Joshu clearly, and going "hand in hand with all the Masters of the past."



## Hidden Lamp

### Chen's Mountain Flowers

Sixth Day, Autumn Sesshin, 2015

*Chen was a laywoman who traveled far and wide, visiting famous masters. After she realized enlightenment, she composed the following verse:*

*Up on the high slopes,  
I only see old woodcutters.*

*Everyone has the spirit  
of the knife and the axe.*

*How can they see the mountain flowers  
reflected in the water—glorious, red?*

**Study Questions:** Is it possible to enter and witness the wilderness without taking something away from it? Why is it so easy to forget to pay attention to the beauty all around us?

It's certainly our collective intention and hope that we can really see the flowers reflected in the water. At this point in sesshin, we hear the birds singing, the flowing fountain, the wind and even that traffic in a new or deeper way.

But even after six days of sesshin, it's hard to put down our knife and axe! We're so conditioned to rely on our acutely sharp discriminating mind that it becomes habit forming. I guess you could say, we are addicted to it. When we live a life dominated by just the few millimeters of our brain tissue called the cerebral cortex, which is an extraordinary evolutionary advance, we become overly dependent on it and we miss the forest for the trees. As much as sesshin attempts to bring the horse to water, no one can make you drink. We have to be thirsty enough.

It's not an either/or kind of circumstance. In fact, what we're working towards is a blending and integration of a deeper kind of experience with our already sharp, refined discriminating consciousness. We're not trying to abandon our analytic mind.

Our discriminating consciousness is wonderful for solving problems, for taking



things apart and examining how something works. It's a fabulous tool! But long ago I gave a talk called "[Discriminating Mind](#)." In this talk I compare the discriminating mind to a hammer. A hammer is a wonderful tool, but if you start using it when you need a toothbrush, bad idea! We have to realize that there are other tools in our toolbox other than a hammer or else, "Gee, look at that flower!" (makes hammer sounds) "What interesting parts!" We miss the intrinsic beauty of THIS if we approach everything that way.

We may understand the parts of a flower better by taking it apart. We could even use an atom smasher and see what quarks are in it! Perhaps we will see the beauty of the patterns of the quarks released by blowing the flower apart, but still we would have missed the flower's essence, for example, the glorious red of a rose or a peony.

"Reflected in the water" is a reference to how reality is reflected in our own mind. Is there anything we *actually* know? What you see around you is a construct developed in your mind that artificially separates this from that, you from me. From a Zen perspective everything is the multi-dimensional fabric of Emptiness folded up in different ways. Our mind interprets what our senses are reporting as this or that, self or other, right or wrong, animate or inanimate. Fold multi-dimensional nothing up in a certain way and it's you, fold it up in a different way and it's me. Fold it up in another way and it's a flower. When you really see into a flower or yourself, you're seeing into the multi-dimensional fabric of Emptiness and will undoubtedly experience its Aliveness. In a flower or anything, a speck of dust, the moonlight, or a leaf, you will discover an infinite depth and the seamlessness with the whole Universe and beyond. In this infinite, timeless depth we are all woven together and part of one multidimensional fabric that, by itself, has no substance, cannot be grasped and is indivisible. When we have the eyes to see, we just enjoy in awe the essence or beauty of whatever we are examining, no need to hammer or cut.



they kill a camel is that the butchers stab them in the heart and let the blood flow out; it gushes like a waterfall and it's very, very red.

I can tell you that the person wielding the knife —remember "everyone has a spirit of knife and axe"— was *not* seeing the camel. They were seeing a ritualized object and, in the light of their mind's conceptualization, understood a celebration with a good meal would follow. The slaughter was so ritualized and habitual that it was obvious the butcher was not seeing. When we walk around, you can see people who are seeing and those who are not seeing. You can see people who are seeing as they are laying out the meal bowls on the dining table, and you

can see people who are not seeing while doing the same action. You can see people who are seeing as they put the teacup in front of them, and you can see those who are not seeing as they put the teacup in front of them. The actions look very similar, yet it is easy to see the difference in mindfulness.

Sometimes we're seeing and very often we're not. Through the course of practice at sesshin, most of us are seeing more often than not, and this helps us negotiate life with more awareness and caring. We all could use a bit more awareness. Often our species is lost in the rationalizations, habits and rituals that can blind us.

During sesshin we make strange sounds while chanting, light incense, sit zazen, and often experience much pain and fatigue. In zazen we are very often lost in our fantasies, future thinking, or our past history. Occasionally, we don't see beyond the hierarchical rules, rituals and forms in our basement clubhouse. Though any practice will have its shadow side; nevertheless, as a community, we do have a good intent: to *see* the flower, the teacup or the camel as all a part of one indivisible, lovable whole.

Death is happening all around us and we get immune to it until it's right in front of us. When someone close to us is dying or we get some information that says *we're* mortal, *then* we pay attention! Otherwise, it's just meat in the grocery store, very little thought about how it got there. Or we buy cut flowers at the florist, very little thought about how they got there or what they are.

Death has a way of shocking us when it's up close. Being around our own mortality, or that of another, tends to wake us up and shake up our priorities. How can you *not* see a little more clearly when you've been close to death? We have a saying in Zen that we are here to die on our cushions. Indeed, sitting on the zafu would not be a bad place to die.

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If I have a stroke or a heart attack sitting on the cushion, I'm fine with that. Flying an airplane, swimming in the ocean, or curled up in bed, would also be good ways to go for me, but I'm not interested in transitioning just yet. Nevertheless, I work for this day to be a good day to die; I try not to be immune to the possibility. When we're not subtly hiding from our mortality, we're bound to be more aware of how vulnerable, real and alive we are. There is a vitality to us; in truth, we are very dynamic creatures, but this vitality is often hidden behind our defenses that shelter us from our own impermanence. However, in the course of sesshin, we become raw, fatigued, strained and pained, which is usually enough to expose our underlying vitality.

Tonight is the last night of Autumn Sesshin and your body may just tell you, no! No *yaza* (unstructured night sitting) And if that's what your body tells you, listen. But, if you've got some energy, let's do *yaza* together. Last night at 11:30 pm, there were three of us in this room. Tonight is the best time to do *yaza* because we are the most raw and exposed, all our little ones (inner children and hungry ghosts) are exposed, and the inner sage beyond our years is also more likely to be accessible. In fact we are as close as we are going to be to the whole family of the collective unconscious this evening. Therefore, if your body allows you to do *yaza*, please join me tonight after scheduled sitting.

Unless you're right up against something as shocking as your own mortality, or someone close to you is dying, perhaps sesshin is the next best thing. This is why I come to sesshin. Of course doing sesshin offers no protection from death or dying, in fact it has the habit of making us face our mutual impermanence. This has the effect of waking us up and shaking up our priorities as we realize what is important and what isn't. Sesshin helps us to see how much time we're wasting on unfulfilling habits, and how much time we spend not doing things that really need doing. Sesshin also gives us clarity about what's right for us under current circumstances and where we are healthfully focused. All of us now see our priorities better. As we leave sesshin we will be clearer about what needs doing. Undoubtedly, we find that after sesshin we are living a more dynamic and vital life, which is one reason most of us feel called to do more sesshins. Each of us has both the

energy and faith to proceed in life more clearly. Please do.

We can visit master after master and never realize so-called enlightenment; yet, enlightenment is already here and is not something to be attained. Before we have at least glimpsed our own depth, we get this inkling that we're missing something. We feel superficial and we want to access the depth we hope or even know is there, but are not experiencing. We come to sesshin to plumb some depths, to explore, investigate, listen and see. You could listen to a lot of *teishos*, but really just listen to the birds singing, listen to the water in the fountain, really see the red of the rose. Sesshin is a place to get raw enough to see and to learn to put down the knife, axe and hammer that we are so skilled at using. Try and put down these tools of the discriminating mind; you can put them right there behind your *zafu*! For just a little while, strive to put down the tools of judgment, analysis, figuring, and problem solving. Instead, just sit, breathe and listen. Don't be distracted by how much fun it is to play with your knife, axe and hammer. Please try your best not to pick up these tools by remembering that sesshin is short, life is short. Put them down! Keep them sheathed!

Let's redouble our efforts not to get lost in our discriminating mind. When we see a little smoke, we know there's fire. We are very sharp. Look at all that we've done with all our analytical prowess —how tall the buildings are, flying to the moon and out past Pluto, space telescopes, gigantic particle accelerators, interstate highways, libraries, laboratories. Look at how wonderfully we can play, construct and destroy with our knife, axe and hammer! We're so great at it! But wouldn't it be wonderful if we would stop more often to smell flowers, swim, hike and climb. I know that some of us do go hiking regularly. Others like to row in canoes or kayaks. Why? We are called to these activities so that we can be in nature and soak up nature, but I seriously doubt we are collectively doing enough of it.

When our eyes are open, we see what our intellect has produced. Our woodcutters (scientists, engineers, politicians and other disciplines), all with their knives, axes and hammers, and look we've done! Great cities, forests burning, not seeing the camel, not seeing global warming, not seeing the

oil spills, not seeing so that we can build more, have more and be more. It seems we have so much fun building, protecting and accumulating. We use our knife, axe and hammer to build, accumulate and protect. Yay! (Laughter) And then we find that even if we build the tallest building or the biggest temple, something's still missing. What is that? What's still missing? Oh, somebody close to us dies! We realize we can't take what we have accumulated with us. At such times, we might have a breakthrough and really see that the flower is red or the water is wet. We might see that the silence speaks, or that in order to be happy we don't have to be directed by our ego or hungry ghosts. We learn to hear and listen to our own inner sage. This "still small voice" speaks to us all the time but we're so busy with our knife, axe and hammer that we're not listening. Now towards the end of sesshin, we should all be able to hear the inner sage whispering, "Leave the knife, axe and hammer behind your *zafu*. Take a rest. Time is short. Look at your life again. See the flower." Our inner sage or Buddha voice is constantly, quietly and persistently advising us in this way.

We can go see many masters, but we've got to remember we already have one inside! Let's listen a little bit more. On the sixth day of sesshin, I realize how much I haven't listened and I take some satisfaction and warmth from how much I do.

With *gassho*,

Genjo

## Closing Incense Poem

Autumn Sesshin 2015

*Facing Heart Mind*

*The subtle red light*

*of a Super Moon illuminates the path.*

*Who can see the forest in a pine grove?*

*Not the woodcutter, butcher or Roshi,*

*Only those with no eyes, no ears, no  
nose and no tongue.*



## Jukai Ceremony

On the morning of Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, the final day of Autumn Sesshin, Kelli Hobi formally accepted the Buddhist precepts and received



a Dharma Name. Kelli had her first encounter with Zen some years ago when she met Genki Roshi in Montana. She sat with him and also Rev. Genchoku Johnson before coming to Seattle. After Genki's bodily departure, she came to train with us at Chobo-Ji. Kelli wrote in her Jukai petition:

*Rank, titles and names mean so little to me... So part of me is very indifferent about Jukai, and part of me is intrigued because of my relationship with Genki Roshi.*

*I almost did Jukai with Genki one year before he died. Genki seemed to think it was very important for me, he had a way of looking into me and always seemed to guide*



*me towards my best interest, but the timing wasn't right. Now the timing feels right. I have more understanding about Rinzai Zen, the lineage and form. I have found that it speaks to every cell of my being just as Genki did.*

*When I sit at Chobo-Ji sesshins, I feel as if my heart grows wings and can fly. I felt that way with Genki too, and as well in the mountains. I would be honored to undergo Jukai and take the Precepts and four Bodhisattva Vows. I would like to deepen my devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha at Chobo-Ji. It feels like coming home to me.*

When I asked Kelli to say something more about her investigation of the Ten Precepts she wrote:

*As I read the precepts, I realize I've already been working hard to try and live up to them with all my actions and thoughts.*

*I think it is important to be aware of them and aware of where my strengths and weaknesses are. I think by living the precepts with an open heart it can help to make others want to make positive changes in their lives.*

*I think the precept about judging is the most challenging for me. I judge others, but I can be very hard on judging and being critical of myself, which can really keep me from opening to others. I feel the first precept to be reverential and mindful with all life is the easiest, not that always live up to it, but I naturally feel a deep love for the earth, animals and people that we share this life with. Developing an open, loving, heart is what I think practice is all about.*

Kelli's new Dharma Name is Sho-Kei: Pine - View. Shokei is at home alone in the forest, she brings to all of us a forest view.



## Seiho Explores the Ten Precepts

A Compass For Navigating Relationships With Self and Others

In the first Noble Truth spoken by Shakyamuni Buddha, he said, "Life is dukkha." Though most translate dukkha as suffering, its literal meaning is closer to "a life out of harmony or balance." This tendency for us to get out of harmony with ourselves can easily translate to getting out of harmony with others. The Ten Precepts are encouragements that influence and maintain harmony in the relationships we have with ourselves and others. It's for that reason that I regard them as invaluable and critical to our daily practice. In my Zen experience, they are probably the most under-utilized roadmaps for healthy relationships. I hope that this article it will fan the flame about how important they are, and perhaps spark others to use them in a consistent way to help hold the container of practice.

In touching on each precept, I invite you to hold in your mind a teaching Genjo Osho gave earlier this year that I've come to regard as integral to my own practice. During a teisho he asked and answered himself, "What is Buddha? – Loving Presence." Each precept is a direct manifestation of Loving Presence, and if we hold that as the primary motivating force, I have a sense that we will continue to manifest life in amazing ways that will help us fully develop.

With that said, let's jump in.

**1) I will be reverential and mindful with all life; I will not kill or be ruled by violence.**

When I hear the word "reverential," what comes to mind are ideas such as kindness and love. I connect the word "mindful" to it through the practice of being alert, aware, present and clear, in a given moment, to life within the radius of my awareness. Life is precious and rare; we all share Lifeboat Earth together and it is important to

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appreciate this truth.

**T**his brings up the second point: do not kill or act with violence. Violence, whether physical, mental or emotional, interferes with our sense of internal and external freedom. The consequences of physical violence are obvious. That said, mental and emotional violence are death by a thousand cuts. They include shaming, demeaning, devaluing, berating, invalidating and rejecting self and others. These acts can be powerfully influential. A key point for me is to be an encourager, not discourager, and to hold that in the forefront of my practice. During my first sit of the day, I reflect on as many people within and outside the sangha as I can, and simply say to each one, "I hold you with unconditional positive regard and goodwill." This action helps me set a tone for how I want to be as a person, based on Loving Presence and mutual respect.

**2) I will respect others' property; I will not steal.**

**"R**especting others' property" is an interesting phrase. I personally define property as that which others value and hold as their own. People have two kinds of property: one internal and the other external. The effort in my personal practice is not to be careless with either.

**T**his precept encourages us not to steal. Stealing isn't just taking someone's stuff without permission. Stealing can also be the attempt to steal our self-esteem or that of others through diminishment or invalidation. Theft can occur of one's dignity through ridicule, shame and blame. With a practice of Loving Presence, rather than steal, we give. Giving can come in the form of kindness, empathy, listening to bear witness, or sharing our experience, strength and hope without advice or opinion giving.

**3) I will be conscious and loving in my relationships; I will not be ruled by lust.**

**B**eing conscious and loving in relationships is powerful and exciting. It means to activate my intuitive nature and not rely solely on my rational mind. The rational mind tends to focus on "I" instead of "we," and is easily ego driven, causing me to swerve in directions where I can cause harm to myself and others.

**M**ost people associate lust with sex. In truth, lust actually points at self-obsession and getting one's own way without regard for how it impacts others. It's the epitome of being out of harmony with self and others. In a very clear way, this connects with the second Noble Truth. Our craving and lust cause disharmony. As Genjo Osho often puts it, "We want more than we have, more than our fair share because of our instincts for survival."

Sometimes I use a practice called the "thought train," to help me with this. I see myself standing on the platform of the light-



rail. A train comes by that represents a thought. I simply stay on the platform and watch the train pass by. According to scientific measurements, the human brain experiences somewhere from 50,000 to 70,000 thoughts a day. Trying to ride all the thoughts connected to our desires can be exhausting and debilitating. Through our Zen practice, we learn how to stop going for a ride on the "thought train."

**4) I will honor honesty and truth; I will not deceive.**

**B**ecause we strive to maintain harmony in our relationships with ourselves and others, the goal of honoring truth and doing so honestly can seem like an impossible challenge. Zen practice can change that narrative for us in deeply personal ways.

As with the other precepts, there are different ways to understand it. Many understand it to mean something akin to "cash register honesty." While that aspect is true, from the perspective of Loving Presence, the meaning is to live out our core values with authenticity and integrity. The question isn't, "am I telling the truth and being honest," it's "am I manifesting my core values, inside and outside the sangha?"

**I** gain clarity on this by asking myself throughout the day, "How am I doing in this moment, honoring my values?" If it turns out that I'm not doing well, i.e., I'm causing suffering by not showing up as Loving Presence, then I can make a conscious choice to embrace my values, and get back on track with myself and others.

**5) I will exercise proper care of my body and mind; I will not be gluttonous or abuse intoxicants.**

**I** believe that gluttonous behavior and the use of intoxicants distort my perception and damage my relationships with myself and others. Over time, I've learned that what I'm ingesting affects my physical, mental, emotional and spiritual states of being. When I'm not eating well or exercising, it negatively affects the quality of my relationships.

**I**'ve also learned that fear, anxiety, anger and other negative thought states can be powerful intoxicants that disrupt and undermine the stability of inner and outer relationships. A friend once asked me, "Why is the Red Sea dead?" I told him I had no idea. His response was notable. He said, "The Red Sea is dead because it has no inlets and outlets. It's cut off and isolated. The healthiest bodies of water have many inlets and outlets. Without that kind of interchange, anything placed in the Red Sea quickly dies."

**T**hrough our practice, I've learned that a healthy diet of food, learning, communication, and open-hearted listening is critical. We can help ourselves by keeping channels open and remembering the principle of interdependency. We are all in this together.

**6) I will remember that silence is precious; I will not gossip or engage in frivolous conversation.**



When I was living at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, there was a calligraphy that read, "Speak only if you can improve upon the silence." Taking the lesson from that calligraphy, I try my best to speak and listen without the spinmeister of ego. I ask myself, "Is what I'm saying encouraging or discouraging?" Gossip is usually about having power over, rather than sharing power with others. It's a kind of infection that steals and depletes the vibrant beauty of our shared practice. Gossip destroys positive regard, making it conditional and subject to our egos' temper-tantrums.

One of the cool things that I've learned to do through Zen is the practice of catching people doing things right, instead of wrong, and telling them about it. The act of learning to catch people at their best and speaking up creates warmth and openness in relationships, reminding us that we each have mutual value and can discover deep and abiding respect.

**7) I will be humble; I will not exalt myself or judge others.**

When we hear the word "humble," it's usually associated with making ourselves small and unassuming. Instead, I believe that humility is the ability to know ourselves, both our assets and liabilities. Being humble is acting in harmony with that knowledge. By not exalting ourselves or judging others, the practice is that of placing principles before personalities. It has to do with equality. That said, I want to specifically address the idea of judging, because there seems to be a misguided and unrealistic approach to it.

Instead of saying, "I will not judge others," what I actually say is, "I will not be judgmental of others." To me there's a difference. Judging is necessary. Without it, we wouldn't be able to differentiate the curb from the street. We need to judge in order to survive. What is unnecessary is being judgmental. Being judgmental is judging and then adding a narrative or story to the judgment. The key practice for me is to see myself and others to the best of my ability, but remove the storylines that I attach to people. It's the storylines we develop that cause damage. Traveling without the stories gives us the ability to travel lighter and take fewer things personally.

**8) I will be grateful for my life; I will not**

**covet or be directed by envy or jealousy.**

I have a great sense of appreciation and gratitude for having a human life, and I invite people to think about everything that had to go right for us to be born. Not only did our parents have to meet, but their parents and all our ancestors before that. They all had to survive natural and human created disasters like famine and war. It's a miraculous set of circumstances that enables us to exist in this moment.

With a conscious sense of gratitude for our life, we can sidestep the envy and jealousy that are generated by the thought trains that I talked about earlier. We can let



them go and continue onward without getting on board. Jealousy and envy are usually about control, which is something that ego always wants since it equates control with safety. A sense of gratitude highlights our similarities, not our differences.

**9) I will keep my mind at peace; I will not be directed by anger.**

To calm your mind and not get sideswiped by anger, I invite you to consider these ideas. One, we tend to feel angry when we're cornered, out of control and vulnerable. Two, a lot of times anger is a result, like a period at the end of a

sentence. If we struggle with anger, we can learn to write new sentences that end in something other than anger. Three, we're not angry people; we're people who experience anger from time to time. Four, people don't make us angry, but they can influence it. Five, sometimes anger has to do with having an unmet expectation that we may or may not be aware of.

When I experience anger, I've discovered that the way up, out and through it is to re-discover Loving Presence. When we're in a place of Loving Presence, there's no space for anger. As Genjo Osho once said, "We have to learn to put our ego in the back seat instead of having it ride up front all the time." Otherwise ego directs us, and we end up crashing in some way.

**10) I will esteem the three treasures, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.**

In this last precept, we are encouraged to esteem Loving Presence, a conscious life, and a spiritual community that works and lives in a spirit of cooperation. We each get to bring our own creative nature to our shared process and practice. Through our rich Zen tradition, we develop the ability to help hold the container of the Ten Precepts in a way that is harmonious for all. I am committed to regular practice and to showing up, not perfectly, but in a way that's fundamentally respectful and realizable. Realizable relationships are the nature of Zen.

With bows,

*Seiho*

## Holiday Notes...

**Toya (Winter Solstice party to "break all rules") Saturday, Dec. 19th, 6-9pm**

**Zendo closed for holidays  
Evening of Dec. 24 - Jan. 1st**

**New Year's Day Celebration  
and Potluck, 10am - noon**

## Important Dates to Remember

Daily zazen: M-F, 5:30-6:30am; Sat. 7-8:30am; M & W, 7:30-8:30pm; Sun. 6:30-7:30pm

Dharma Talks, Sundays, 7:30pm: 11/1, 11/8, 11/22, 12/13, 12/20, 1/3, 1/17, 2/28, 3/6, 3/20

Zen Intro: Tuesdays, 7:30-8:45pm (except 12/1 & 12/29)

**Shobogenzo Reading Group ...**

**Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...**

**Board Meeting ...**

**Rohatsu Sesshin at Camp Indianola (Zendo CLOSED) ...**

**Toya Party ...**

**Zendo CLOSED for Holidays ...**

**New Year's Day Celebration and Pot Luck ...**

**Mahasangha Event - Compassionate Action ...**

**Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...**

**Winter Odayaka Sesshin (with Genko Ni-Osho) ...**

**Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...**

**Nonviolent communications with Kathleen MacFerren ...**

**Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 7:00pm - 8:30pm**

**Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, 5am - 11:15am,**

**Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, 11:30am - 1:30pm,**

**Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> - Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>, 6-9pm**

**Evening of Dec. 24 - Jan. 1st, 2015**

**Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 10am - noon**

**Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2pm - 4pm**

**Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>, 5am - 11:15am**

**Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> - Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>**

**Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>, 5am - 11:15am**

**Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>, 9am - 4pm (tentative hours)**

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*Dai Bai Zan Cho Ba Zen Ji*

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