



# Plum Mountain News

Dear members and friends,

It has been 14 months of lockdown of the zendo, when only residents living at Chobo-Ji could attend in person. On May 19, 2021, we opened our doors to those sangha members who are fully vaccinated and have no cold or flu-like symptoms. All sangha members who attend are requested to send a photo of their COVID-19 vaccination card to [zen@choboji.org](mailto:zen@choboji.org). Masks and temperature checks will be optional, but for the time being we will maintain social distancing (at least one zabuton between people). We will use staggered third and fourth rows as necessary. We hope to open to the whole sangha, vaccinated or not, by Autumn Sesshin, assuming there is a sufficiently low (2% or lower) infection rate in King County. We will also continue Zoom streaming of regular zazen and sesshins.

By our June zazenkaï, barring any setbacks, and with a few additional precautions going forward, we plan to resume offering tea and meals. Our upcoming Summer Sesshin will remain reduced to three days, June 18-20 – Odayaka style, but hopefully we will be able to serve tea and meals at the appropriate intervals. We also plan to offer an in-person and Zoom Summer Odayaka, August 20 – 22.

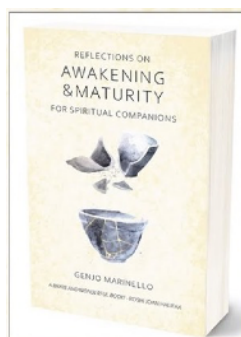
As I write this, three weeks have passed since I donated a kidney to my sister at the Mayo Clinic in Arizona. My sister has had a rough time trying to get her body to accept my kidney, but overall, it is functioning for her and we hope things will stabilize over the next three weeks so that she can return home. Right now, she is out of the hospital but must return to the Mayo Clinic every couple of days to monitor her condition and adjust her medications. My health is fine, my energy has returned to about

## *Zendo Opens to Fully Vaccinated*



90% or better, but I must remain cautious myself for the next three weeks. The function of my kidney will be tested at the end of next week.

Just before leaving for Arizona, my first book, *Reflections on Awakening and Maturity*, was released by the publisher, [Spiritual Directors International Press](http://SpiritualDirectorsInternationalPress.com). I know many of those reading this have already purchased a copy, but if you haven't and are planning to, please go to the publisher's web page and purchase a copy at a substantial discount by using the following code: `genjo1250`. If you have read and enjoyed the book, I would really appreciate it if you would write a short review on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) and/or [GoodReads](https://www.goodreads.com). I have great thanks to those who have already done this.



Also, longtime sangha member Peter Shinke Ilgenfritz has just published his new book, *Testing the Wind*. Having learned to sail on a tiny boat in Lake Union, Peter has taken this experience as

the metaphorical basis for a story about journeying through life transitions, lesson by lesson, one discovery at a time. Some of Peter's Chobo-Ji friends share fond memories of the period when he worked on early drafts of the book at our local Victrola Cafe following morning zazen. He currently serves as interim pastor of the Congregational Church of Boothbay Harbor, Maine. The book, published by Epicenter Press in Kenmore, is available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com), and I'm sure that Shinke would also greatly appreciate some good reviews; I've already written one.

Zen resident Sam Koû Tullman is leaving our residential practice, but will be living nearby to continue his participation in our Sangha. I will miss his presence on campus, as he has been a big help in covering posts during our COVID-19 lockdown. A relatively new sangha member, Felix Pekar, will be moving in soon. Felix currently lives nearby and has been regularly attending zazen on Zoom, but because of COVID-19 restrictions only recently sat in our zendo for the first time. Felix is a social worker who loves the outdoors and Zen practice. All the residents here are looking forward to working and training together with Felix.

At the May Chobo-Ji Board Meeting, Board members unanimously decided to officially join [Zen Peacemakers International](http://ZenPeacemakersInternational.org) (ZPI) as both a regional and training affiliate organization. Some Sangha members are already individual members of ZPI and I hope others will consider becoming members. As many people know, I have long been associated with this organization founded by the late Roshi Bernie Glassman. I have attended five Bearing Witness retreats – three in Auschwitz, one in the Black Hills and one in Rwanda. All these retreats have been significant in shaping my view of the human condition; my experience of each retreat is recounted in my book. We qualify as a training affiliate because we offer meditation instruction, Saturday morning Council, and

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pathways to bring our practice out of the zendo and into world for the care of all beings, animate and inanimate.

Steve Shinkai Garber and I, along with a few other Chobo-Ji Sangha members I have spoken to, hope to help ZPI leadership organize a five-day Bearing Witness retreat in the deep South to explore and deepen our understanding of systemic racism and search for glimmers of insight in the midst of no knowing. We would like this opportunity to manifest next year or in 2023, centered around the [National Memorial for Peace and Justice](#) in Montgomery, Alabama. Please explore the [ZPI web site](#) and join Chobo-Ji's ZPI affiliate room: <https://hive.zenpeacemakers.org/topics/27257/feed>. In order to sustain our ZPI membership we need at least four of our Sangha members to join our room where we will post messages about our association with ZPI and our offerings here at Chobo-Ji.

In this issue of PMN you will find a transcription of my Teisho on *Shakyamuni Holds Up a Flower*, which I gave on the second day of our Odayaka Spring Sesshin. Also, you will find our annual financial report, a board report from Rev. Sendo, a poem by Sonja de Wit, *Living on the Fly* by Zenka Sensei, and *Namu Dai Bosa* by Rev. Seifu. I hope everyone stays safe while we turn this important recovery corner from the devastating COVID-19 pandemic.

With gassho,

Genjo

## Annual Meeting

April 11, 2021

Report by Rev. Sendo Anne Howells

Chobo-Ji's 2021 Annual Meeting, in April, was our second consecutive such event on Zoom. We ardently hope that next year local participants will be able to meet in person and once again share a potluck as well as discussion. Nonetheless, this year's Zoom participants brought energy and creativity to our virtual meeting, showing up as they have been doing all year to sit together in daily zazen and to share what has been arising for them during our Saturday Council discussions.

The centerpiece of the Annual Meeting was a virtual visioning exercise put together by board members Jonathan Kaicho Swift and George Kyoki Gibbs. All were invited to use colorful sticky notes to paste comments on a virtual mural board, responding to two questions. The first asked for feelings and comments about what people felt was true for them, the sangha, and the zendo after our year-plus of pandemic experience. A wide range of responses included "reflection," "adapting to the changing world," "amplification of social injustice," "loss," "isolation," "unsettled," "a paradox between physical distance while also being able to be more connected with folks out of town." The second asked for ideas about what we'd like to do as a community, going forward; many thoughtful suggestions appeared. At its May meeting, the board discussed the 100+ ideas voiced on the sticky notes. As a next step, we've sorted the suggestions about future suggestions and are planning to send a survey to members, via *Temple Happenings*, to gauge levels of interest and support.

## 2021 Financial Report

by Carolyn Josen Stevens Sensei

We all know that 2020 was a difficult year on so many levels. Therefore, I am grateful and relieved to report that Chobo-Ji's finances were healthy and stable. Thank you everyone for your faithful and ongoing support! And thanks also to Zoom for enabling us to continue our practice together in the virtual realm!

Both income and expenses were down from recent years because we weren't able to hold in-person retreats. Dues held steady, and we actually added 6 more members during the year, fifty-eight in 2020 versus fifty-two in 2019. Most of our new members have never set foot in the physical zendo! Our largest revenue source is rent paid by residents, and the building was fully occupied all year. We were also in the fortunate position to provide emergency housing to a friend of a member for several months, and the rent he paid offset the lost revenue from the closed AirBNB. Total income for the year was \$137,565 compared with \$153,001 in 2019.

2020 expenses were \$84,085 compared with \$113,997 in 2019, again due to no food and facility rental expense for sesshin.

Net income was \$53,480 compared with \$39,004 in 2019. The biggest cash outflow of 2020 was \$46,986 to complete the plumbing and fan upgrades throughout the building. This amount was capitalized on the balance sheet. The overall cost of the plumbing project, begun in late 2019 and completed in 2020 was just over \$73,000. That's huge, but now everything is shipshape, and we don't have to worry that burst pipes in the rafters will send a deluge through the floors below. Deep gratitude to our member Sam Berger who shepherded this project from start to finish. An extra bonus for the residents is that water pressure throughout the building is greatly improved.

With interest rates at an historic low, we asked our mortgage lender for an interest rate reset. They agreed, and for a reasonable fee, we now have a commercial loan interest rate below 4%. When we bought the first Zen house on Capitol Hill in 1997, our interest rate was 8%. At the time that seemed reasonable, so times have certainly changed. During 2020, we paid down our mortgage principal by \$20K, so our loan balance at year-end was \$412,460.

As always, I'm happy to answer any questions you have about the Zendo's finances. Many thanks to Daigan Bob Timmer who helps me with the monthly accounting tasks. All year, we double masked and socially distanced while engaged at our respective work stations. And once again, deep gassho to all of you for all your gifts, financial and otherwise, to our dharma life together.

## Wolf

by Sonja de Wit

I met a wolf  
kind of a friend of a friend  
(you know how it is).  
He padded up to my tent one night,  
a magical wolf but very real.  
He came through the starlight  
and the spaces between the trees.

I can protect you, he said,  
his eyes pale as moonlit stone.  
You can call me. Call if you need me.

I asked him: How can you not be afraid?  
(That's what I wanted to know.)  
How can you not get scared?

Here's what he said:

I do feel fear. It's not being brave  
if you feel no fear.

When I am afraid my thoughts go still.

I hear everything, I smell everything.

Every muscle is ready, every pore.

I can see out the back of my head.

Even my smallest bones are alert.

I turn to whatever is there.

He handed me a ring made of moonlight.

This is your portal to my world, he said.

You can call me.

You must not be afraid of fear.

## Namu Dai Bosa

by Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares

*N*amu Dai Bosa, the densu intoned in his deep gravelly voice. We are at New York Zendo Shobo-Ji, on East 67<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, sometime in the early eighties, as I make my first visit for a weekend Zazenkaï.

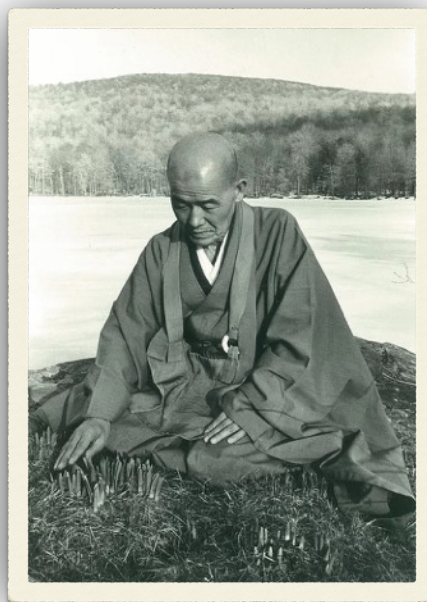
*I*ntrigued by the chant, I ask the head monk about it at tea after the Zazenkaï. "It's a chant devised by our teacher's teacher, Soen Nakagawa Roshi, and it means something like, 'Hail, Great Bodhisattva'."

*W*e chant it all the time, he adds with a big, mysterious laugh.

*I*ntrigued, I make my way to the small library at the Zendo and start riffling through its various books, and loose essays, until I find a teisho, very conveniently entitled "The Meaning of Namu Dai Bosa," by Soen Roshi, where he explains:

*T*here are many kinds of sutras, but all of them are condensed into this Namu Dai Bosa. And this is condensed into Mu; and this into just Zazen. Not only the many sutras are condensed into Namu Dai Bosa—also the many shastras. Everything is condensed into this Namu Dai Bosa. Not only the four-dimension world in which we human beings live—but also the five, six and endless dimension worlds are all condensed into this Namu Dai Bosa. This Untouchable, Unthinkable universal world is each one of us; not only each one of us, but each one of our cells. Do you know how many cells there are in your body? Someone? How many? I have never counted them myself, but a scholar has said there

*are seventeen billion cells in the human body. And, of course, in addition to these cells there are the electrons and other smaller elements—small, small, endlessly small... Each such thing—no matter how small—is a sentient being. This is the meaning of Dai. As a character, Dai is usually considered the opposite of smallness. But since the true meaning of Dai is absolute, in even the smallest thing there is this Dai. Bosa you know, it means "enlightened one." Each of your cells is an enlightened one. Believe this! You are all such wonderful persons. This is Buddha. No need to say "Buddha." This is true—a true fact. This is not Zen; not Buddhism; not religious talk. It is just a plain fact. Right here, now—this is Namu Dai Bosa. There is no need to think about endless dimension universal worlds. Just Namu Dai Bosa. Just Mu. Just breathing. Just counting. Nothing else. Just...*



*S*ounds easy, right? So why so many struggles in our path, then?

*Z*en practice can be immensely rewarding, and, in direct proportion, tremendously challenging. All of us who engage with it arrive with many different perspectives, spanning multiple religious traditions and spiritual orientations, tribal and political affiliations, and family ties, among others. And we join with many different goals in mind, from seeking enlightenment, to resolving traumas, and fulfilling desires and longings of all sorts.

*A*nd we are at least partly motivated by our commitment to helping others in their own spiritual unfolding. Because, of course, the spiritual awakening of one is the spiritual awakening of all.

*S*o we eventually take our Bodhisattva vows, each in on our own way, and as we begin trying to live into them, immediately encounter growing difficulties. As we learn to hold space for others to come to greater understanding, we must also often absorb their discomfort, their pain and their suffering, along with our own. That is also true of biases, reactivity, and other challenging tendencies, whether theirs or ours.

*A*s engaged Buddhists, we are called to be models of greater understanding. Where other people can let their emotions and feelings fly, we need to stretch, absorb, and be stalwart embodiments of constancy and groundedness.

*W*e are but human, however, and may sometimes ask: "How can I continue to live into being a good example?" "How can I persist?" and "What about me?"

*O*ne answer is that we look to our peers for comfort. Our sangha, for instance, allows us to share our difficulties and our travails with one another, bringing us solace and inspiration.

*O*ur Zen teachers and mentors are another wonderful outlet, another road to perspective and understanding. They check and encourage us to keep doing the right thing, and to continue undeterred, especially when the waters are rough.

*B*ut we must also take care of ourselves. We need to continue learning to live within the limits of our patience, our understanding, our insights and our tolerance. These are all growing edges for us and constantly expanding and evolving, if we let them. And we have to make conscious efforts to be gentle with ourselves, particularly when our practice makes us feel despondent, disillusioned or disheartened.

*O*n occasion, this can also mean letting go and walking away. Surrendering, in the best, most spiritual, sense of the term. We cannot help tackle everyone's problems. We may not be well suited to companion

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certain folks. And there may be instances where our attempts to do so would lead to more harm than good, both for those we companion, and ourselves. In those instances, we refer, as forthrightly and kindly as we can. This is also a Bodhisattva practice.

Finally, as students of this Great Matter we also understand the ultimate inevitability of walking away in a much deeper sense. As Soen Roshi explained:

*But some time, some day, we all leave this wonderful world. Some day. But looking at your faces, I see no, "Some day I'll leave this wonderful world; I must die." There is a senryu, a short, witty verse: "When I look at your face, all faces, show 'now I will live forever.'" I thought this was a sarcastic comment. But D.T. Suzuki told me, "This is a wonderful senryu – it is not sarcastic at all. We live forever! No need for "some day I will die." Do you understand? That's what Dr. Suzuki said to me. But truly (Knock! Knock!) our life is forever!*

*So, when some day we will say goodbye, let us not cry. Some crying is okay, but don't make others cry. My wonderful teacher, Gempo Roshi, was smiling. Many Zen masters know one week before. They know the day. My last day, I promise Eido Roshi, with smiling, okay? When it is our last breath, it is our last breath. "Is that so, doctor?" That is our last Mu. When we're born, there is our mother's birth-sound. And when we leave, this Mu."*

Namu Dai Bosa

## Living on the Fly

by Sally Zenka Metcalf Sensei

Recently, some articles on luck came my way. They're about people who feel lucky and those who don't. Scientists administered tests such as the \$50 bill surreptitiously dropped on the sidewalk by a researcher. Lucky people found it, the unlucky never even saw it. Evidently, when we assume good things will come our way, we move through life watching for them. Those who feel unlucky miss their good, just because they're not looking.

This reminded me of the practice of contemplative watching – so helpful at times when life feels blown apart, and some

serious reinvention of self and world may be called for. Like right now.

In 2003, my life was blown apart by the death of my dear man John. While I grieved, his family welcomed me to linger in his home beside Eagle Harbor. When the time to move on crested my horizon, I asked, what next? To find my way, I went to the Point in front of John's house. It's a bit of green land thrusting out into the harbor just around the corner from the head of the bay. There, wetlands and streams provide nesting for myriad waterfowl, and dens for otter, coon, and coyote. It's an extraordinary spot for contemplation in the midst of life.

But before we talk about contemplation, you'll want to know about the birds.

Common Terns are sleek little creatures admired for their scarlet beaks and feet, and made-for-speed bodies, not to mention their crisp markings: pure white, coal-black, and silver gray. There's nothing common about these terns, especially not the bold way they fish the harbor.



In April, a huge flock of a thousand migrating terns tumbles into Eagle Harbor. They muscle onto the scene like a street gang taking territory. After a week, the main flock moves south to other Puget Sound inlets, leaving behind a couple of dozen birds to nest and raise their young. In September, the gang returns, picks everybody up, and migrates far south to overwinter.

One of my favorite forms of contemplation is watching. On the Point, I took in the view of the harbor from my weathered cedar chair. This particular day, the terns avidly fished as I watched with every cell of my being, not just with eyes, but ears, skin, bones, and the very soles of my feet. Leaning into watching, elbows on thighs, eyes wide open all the way to the back of my skull. Watching as if

something awaited in that place – a chance – a glimpse of my way, opening.

Breathing into watching, I asked – repeatedly, encouragingly, expectantly – show me the way!

Before me flew the terns, far above the harbor, craving a meal, hunting for a flash of silver somewhere below. Then they dived! With every audacious plunge, my breath flash-froze.

Alert! When contemplating intensely, the busy mind will run away with us. It's frightened of the unwavering focus. We kindly bring ourselves back, and back again, to capture the gift of the moment, the crack in whatever wall stands in our way.

Over and over, my questing vision caught a tern on the wing: the sharp eye, the striking dive, the surefire catch and scarlet-beaked gulp of a shining minnow—all done on the fly. With every unhesitating plummet, my heart got bigger, amplified by avian hutzpah.

Then my trusted small voice within said, Sal, THIS is your way. Take flight through life, eyes and mind wide open, sure of your good. When you find it, dive into the blessing and carry it throughout your world.

## The Mumonkan

Shakyamuni Holds Up a Flower  
Case 6 - Teisho Spring Sesshin

### Koan:

Long ago when the World-Honored One was at Mount Grdhrakuta to give a talk, he held up a flower before the assemblage. At this all remained silent. The Venerable Kasho alone broke into a smile. The World-Honored One said, "I have the all-pervading True Dharma, incomparable Nirvana, exquisite teaching of formless form. It does not rely on letters and is transmitted outside scriptures. I now hand it to Maha Kasho."

### Mumon's Commentary:

Yellow-faced Gautama is certainly outrageous. He turns the noble into the lowly, sells dog-flesh advertised as sheep's head. I thought there was something

interesting in it. However, at that time if everyone in the assemblage had smiled, to whom would the True Dharma have been handed? Or again, if Kasho had not smiled, would the True Dharma have been transmitted? If you say that the True Dharma can be transmitted, the yellow-faced old man with his loud voice deceived simple villagers. If you say that it cannot be transmitted, then why was Kasho alone approved?

### Mumon's Poem:

*A flower is held up,  
And the secret has been revealed.  
Kasho breaks into a smile,  
The whole assemblage is at a loss.*

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This is a story that is probably a fable. It is unlikely that these events happened as portrayed here. Regardless, this case should be taken at face value in order to be appreciated and understood as a koan. A koan is a Zen parable that helps open our awareness, encourages our minds to be flexible, and invites deep insight, which can hopefully be used in our daily lives to be more mindful and compassionate in our actions.

This case is all about dharma transmission. Let me start by stating plainly, Maha Kasho received nothing at all from the Buddha but praise. What we call awakening cannot be given, or transmitted, to another. When we do awaken in one way or another to something beyond our own narrow idea of self, we all find the same heart-mind, exactly the same heart-mind as all the sages of the past, present and future. That's what all the stories tell us and what my personal experience tells me. From the Buddhist perspective, we already have whatever is "transmitted;" however, we may not yet realize that we have the same heart-mind as the historical Buddha or any deep sage in any religion, on any continent, in any time, or on any planet. You can say, Genjo, that's your belief, and it can be framed that way, but it feels so much deeper than a belief. This common heart-mind that we already have feels more real than my own temporary, limited life. But I won't say I know, I can just say that's how it feels.

The World-Honored One, yellow-faced Gautama, Siddhartha Gautama of the Shakya clan, was looking to acknowledge or find someone that he could trust to carry

on his teachings. He was looking for someone who had awakened fully to the same heart-mind that we all share. Therefore, he set out a test. Normally, when coming to an assembly, people expect a discourse, like this teisho about a case from the Mumonkan, or perhaps a talk about the philosophy, forms of practice, vows, precepts or Four Noble Truths of Buddhism. When you come to an assembly, you expect some sort of discourse or instruction. But in this story – and remember we had no video cameras back then – the World Honored One just held up a flower.

The first part of this koan is, "What is meant by holding up a flower?" You can't get there, unless you have dropped the barriers between so-called "self" and "other" sufficiently to feel the flower as yourself. In other words, to penetrate this koan, any koan, you must learn to at least temporarily drop your idea of self. When



the constraining sense of self dissolves, and in a moment of realization, you and the flower are one, or the whole universe is nothing but flower, then the heart of this koan is revealed. There are many koans that ask one to bring the essence of such-and-such. For example, what is the essence of the temple bell, the essence of the universe breathing, or the essence of the great maple tree outside Chobo-Ji's main entrance? There's a lot of rain in Seattle: therefore, you may be asked to bring the essence of rain, bring the essence of Mount Rainier, or the essence of Mount Rainier in the midst of a summer storm. In the course of Rinzai Zen koan study, you will be asked to bring the essence of host and guest, and, of

course, in investigating this koan you will be asked to bring the essence of a flower.

In order to penetrate koans, you have to let go of the artificial, conceptual barriers that separate self from other, this from that, form from formlessness, life from death. That's what's happening here on the cushion. Over time, with enough sitting the artificial conceptual barriers that separate us from the rest of the universe naturally dissolve. And when we drop these barriers, or they dissolve temporarily, and there's a focus – even a momentary focus – on the oak tree, or on the rain, or on a flower, the flower becomes the whole universe. The oak tree becomes the whole universe. The rain becomes the whole universe. Gutei's finger becomes the whole universe. Ummon's dung-wiping stick becomes the whole universe. The other day for samu (work meditation), I was mowing the lawn. I slipped on something. I hoped that it was mud, but instead discovered that it was you know what. I thought to myself, "Are you and this shoe and the dung on the bottom of it the whole universe?" And I answered myself, "nah – not yet!" However, in earlier years I would have been much more upset about that incident than I was the other day. You take what you can get. At that moment I was grateful that I didn't have to make a big stink about it even though it smelled a lot.

Anyway, the first part of this koan is, be the flower that the historical Buddha is holding. What does it feel like to be a flower, and how would you manifest your communion with flower so that any sage and any seven-year-old would recognize your nonverbal gesture as the essence of flower? Many people would think, "Well, I can't do that, I'm a human being." In fact, you may think, "I'm a confused, messed-up human being. I'm very stuck in my sense of self. I'll never be able to be the flower, and I barely know what you're talking about. This idea of being the flower feels very foreign, strange." But I would like to dissuade you, and tell you it's not as difficult as you imagine. If that's so, why didn't more people smile when Buddha held up the flower?

Every point, circumstance, location, being, moment, is the center of the universe. If you know how to look at a grain of sand, a grain of rice, a flower, the sound of the rain, a mountain, or some dog poop –

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gently and genuinely enough, you can find that from that item, moment, or experience, it's like a thread that leads to the whole universe and beyond. Look at it; commune with it. When your own artificial barriers drop, then no matter what point, moment, emotion or object that bears your attention, it becomes, at least for a timeless instant, the whole universe and all its workings.

I think even physicists would agree with this point. The multidimensional mesh or fabric of space-time has no divisions and can't be rent. It can be folded up to look like a temple bell, an oak tree, a flower, or you or me. But it's just one fabric, folded up a certain way, like origami, to look like you or me or this or that. With enough zazen you can "see" the fabric itself; in other words, you feel the intimate infinite presence that is everything seen and unseen. When you feel the intimate infinite then the moment your attention rests on any object you realize that this or that is just the tip of the whole universe. It may sound like an extraordinary experience, but really it is so simple. I did ayahuasca a couple of times, and the whole universe was a cartoon kaleidoscope, just that, nothing but that. I was very glad when I came down. Experiencing the fabric is not that hard to come by. Of course, most of the time we are caught in our narrow egoistic perspective, but bumping into beyond the beyond is not as difficult as you may think, because it is already out, manifesting as everything.

In this koan, only one person in the assembly was able to see what the Buddha was pointing at. Frankly finding the whole universe in a flower is much easier than finding it in the dung I stepped in. The Buddha gave a rather easy test. I bet many of us could go on and on about how a flower is a beautiful representation of the workings of the universe. In a flower it is easy to perceive impermanence, the cycles of life and death, youth and old age, and the scent of something incomparably profound. The flower reveals the phases of growth and expansion, beauty and decay, birth and death. No words are needed. What a wonderful teisho, the universe is like this. Do you feel it, can you be it?

Kasho broke into a smile; he was the only one. The World-Honored One probably thought, "Good, somebody gets it, I've been teaching a long time." Then he said to the assembly, "I have the all-pervading True Dharma and incomparable Nirvana and exquisite teaching of the

formless form that does not rely on letters and is transmitted outside of the scriptures, and I now hand it to Maha Kasho."

Another part of this koan: why was the Buddha so flowery about this transmission that didn't transmit anything? Mumon says, "Gautama is certainly outrageous. He turns the noble into the lowly, sells dog flesh advertised as sheep's head." A sheep's head in the day must have been much more valuable than dog flesh. In other words, Mumon is rightly saying that the Buddha is making way too much of this whole idea of transmission. Why is that?

Mumon goes on, "I thought there was something interesting to it, but, if everyone had smiled, then what would the Buddha have done?" I'm sure he would have been pleased. I'm also positive, he'd have thought up a harder test.

And if no one had smiled, what would have happened to the True Dharma? I'm sure the Buddha would have been disappointed. On the other hand, I'm sure he would have understood that the time was not yet ripe. Do you think something happens to the True Dharma if nobody gets it in the Buddha's lifetime? Where does True Dharma reside? Mumon continues, "If you say that the True Dharma can be transmitted, then you're deceiving yourself and others. If you say that it cannot be transmitted, then why did Buddha say something was transmitted?" Each question is another koan.

A flower is held up, and at once, the whole secret is revealed. It's all out. If you see the flower for what it really is, everything that can be taught and everything that can't be taught is already revealed.

By the way, those who are working on Hyakujo's fox koan – if you really see the fox, multiple generations of fox body, or deeply see the dead fox body, then the whole universe is already revealed. There are no secrets in Zen; therefore, once you get the hang of it, all koans are easy.

As I have said, every point already contains the whole universe. So, what happens if you look in a mirror when you are intimately aware of this fact? Hyakujo would say, "Alone, sitting atop a sublime peak." If with transparent lucid eyes you look at formless shunyata, or Muuuuu, then the whole universe is Muuuuu. If you

happen to be looking at the maple in the garden, the whole universe is the maple tree in the garden. After enough sesshins, we may realize that doing samu is the whole universe, or that lending a helping hand is the whole universe. Having a caring heart-mind is the whole universe, and on occasion, grief is the whole universe. Kasho broke into a smile. Yet, the whole rest of the assemblage was at a loss.

## Summer Sesshin

June 18<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup>

This is an abbreviated Summer Sesshin as we are still coming out of COVID-19 restrictions. You may choose to attend in person if you have been fully vaccinated. At this time, it looks like we will be offering traditional meals for those attending in person. On Friday and Saturday the beginning time will be either 5:30 (optional) or 7:00 a.m., and we'll close after the Closing Sutras at 8:30 p.m. On Sunday we'll begin at 5:00 a.m. and close at noon, following a closing Council. Please fill out this [application](#) if you are planning to attend in person.

**Registration for Zoom attendance is required for each day.** The Zoom invitations and registration links are below. Requested donations are \$50 for Friday, \$50 for Saturday, and \$30 for Sunday. Please note that if you are attending all three days, you may make a single payment of \$130. You can send your donations to [PayPal](#).

*Please indicate the purpose of your donation in the note/memo field.*

### Day 1 – Friday, June 18, 7:00 am

Register in advance for this meeting using [this link](#).

### Day 2 – Saturday, June 19, 5:30 am

Register in advance for this meeting using [this link](#).

### Day 3 – Sunday, June 20, 5:00 am

Register in advance for this meeting using [this link](#).



## Summer Odayaka

August 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>

Odayaka means “peaceful,” and these sesshins are a little less arduous with more dialogue than our weeklong sesshins. You may choose to attend in person if you have been fully vaccinated. At this time, it looks like we will be offering traditional meals for those attending in person. On Friday and Saturday the beginning time will be either 5:30 (optional) or 7:00 a.m., and we'll close after the Closing Sutras at 8:30 p.m. On Sunday we'll begin at 5:00 a.m. and close at noon, following a closing Council. Please fill out this [application](#) if you are planning to attend in person.

**Registration for Zoom attendance is required for each day.** The Zoom invitations and registration links are below. Requested donations are \$50 for Friday, \$50 for Saturday, and \$30 for Sunday. Please note that if you are attending all three days, you may make a single payment of \$130. You can send your donations to [PayPal](#).

*Please indicate the purpose of your donation in the note/memo field.*

### Day 1 – Friday, August 20, 7:00 am

Register in advance for this meeting using [this link](#).

### Day 2 -Saturday, August 21, 5:30 am

Register in advance for this meeting using [this link](#).

### Day 3 – Sunday, August 22, 5:00 am

Register in advance for this meeting using [this link](#).

## Reflections on Awakening and Maturity

Foreword by Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares

The cover of this book is meant to invoke the Japanese art of *Kintsugi* (“golden joinery”), a process whereby broken items are carefully seamed back together with gold. The results are prized for their aesthetic value, as a celebration of “*wabisabi*,” or the inherent beauty in the flaws and imperfections of an object. But the concept extends more broadly into a generalized acceptance of impermanence,

## AWAKENING AND MATURITY

Cover design by Matthew Whitney



imbued with serene melancholy and spiritual longing.

What a perfect analogy for anyone on a spiritual path!

In this book, Genjo Marinello reveals his own journey through brokenness and repair, bravely and generously, allowing us all to read ourselves into him. After all, who among us hasn't struggled with trauma and loss? And despair when we can't seem to find our way through?

All of this is the province of spiritual companions, and Genjo expertly shows us how to move forward, not just through his insights as a long time spiritual director, but also through his roles as a psychotherapist, and, perhaps most significantly, as a Zen Master. Who better to help us discern our path than someone who has dedicated his life to doing his own deep work for the sake of others?

The book chronicles this lifelong and ongoing commitment, through thick and thin, as well as a courageous embrace of many difficulties, shortcomings and flaws. Genjo composites all of these into assets, establishing them as the building blocks for his own ongoing spiritual growth and evolution. And by extension, for ours.

In the process, he engages with numerous spiritual companions and models, some stretching back through history, who reveal insights and challenges both

easy and joyful, along with some quite hard and painful.

As Genjo often says, “every day is a new beginning,” and a new opportunity for us to become our better selves. But that doesn't mean it's going to be easy.

Indeed, one of the more arresting conclusions of the book is that even after we awaken spiritually, we are all still a mixed bag, with shining moments, less flattering ones, and some where we fall far short of the mark. Awakening, he argues, does not mean Maturity, as counterintuitive as this may seem.

So, we get on with the hard work of continuously reconstructing ourselves, with our wounds and scars acknowledged and visible to us and to our spiritual companions, who help support us, gently and tenderly, as we rebuild ourselves from our broken constituent pieces.

This book is itself a loving form of spiritual companionship, as Genjo shares his story and becomes a model for us all in how to turn pain, loss and trauma into the necessary fertilizer for spiritual growth and maturity.

DAI BAI ZAN CHO BO ZEN TEMPLE  
Online Saturdays, 10:00 to 11:15 am

Introduction to

# ZEN

[intro@choboji.org](mailto:intro@choboji.org) Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81210517303>

## Important Dates to Remember

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

Intro to Zazen Most Saturdays 10-11:15AM,

Dharma Council, Most Saturdays at 8:30 AM – Dharma Dialogue, Most Sundays at 7:30 PM

(See Google Calendar at <https://choboji.org/schedule/> for more detail and Zoom links.)

**Follower of the Way Dharma Talk (George Kyoki Gibbs) ...**

**Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...**

**Summer Sesshin (three-day Zen intensive) ...**

**Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...**

**Board Meeting ...**

**Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...**

**Summer Odayaka (three-day Zen intensive) ...**

**Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...**

**Board Meeting ...**

**Autumn Sesshin (seven-day Zen intensive) ...**

**June 6, 7:30pm - 8:30pm**

**June 13, 5am - 11:15am**

**June 18 - June 20**

**July 11, 5am - 11:15am**

**July 11, Noon - 1:30pm**

**August 8, 5am - 11:15am**

**August 20 - August 22**

**Sept. 19, 5am - 11:15am**

**Sept. 19, 11:30am - 1:00pm**

**Sept. 24 - Oct. 1**



*Dai Bai Zan Cho Ba Zen Ji*

Plum Mountain News  
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Seattle, WA 98144

