



# Plum Mountain News

Dear members and friends,

Mid-summer in Seattle is a glorious time, at least when the thermometer registers below 90°. It is a bit warm in robes during evening zazen; by the second sit, I feel like I've been in a sauna too long. On the other hand, our basement zendo stays relatively cool and rarely gets above the mid seventies. Seattle does have the bluest sky on clear days, which can help us see past the clouds in our own minds.

At our Summer Sesshin, the last week of June, we had twenty-one people registered, three of whom attended full-time via Zoom. For our Summer Odayaka, we had sixteen people in attendance, two of whom attended full-time on Zoom. At Summer Sesshin, Rev. Gendo Testa completed his Dai-Tenzo (Chief Cook) service with simple, quick and delicious meals. He was again ably assisted by Jeremy Shojiki Neff; they made a great team in the kitchen. Our Odayaka Dai-Tenzo was George Kyoki Gibbs, and I know we all look forward to more meals prepared by him. At both sesshins Elijah Seigan Zupancic was our Shika (Host/Manager) and sorted our samu (work-meditation) tasks as equitably as possible. At Odayaka Sesshin, he also held down the post of Jikijitsu (Time Keeper), and occasionally stepped in as assistant Tenzo and assistant Densu (Chant Leader). Our Densu at both sesshins was Eddie Daichi Salazar, and in this post, which has been a hard one for him, he has really learned to find and keep the beat. My Inji (Abbot Assistant) at both sesshins was Sally Zenka Sensei. She also served as the garden samu master. I'm very grateful to Zenka for her many years of overseeing garden samu projects and hope that she will continue in this role as long as possible. The chief Jisha (Tea Server) at Summer Sesshin was Felix Wazan Pekar



Summer Sesshin 2022

and at Odayaka Ali Horri. The Jikijitsu at Summer Sesshin was Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares, and he kept us on track sit after sit. I want to also offer special thanks to Zen resident and master gardener, Randal Daigetsu Tanabe, who keeps our temple so beautiful with gorgeous flower arrangements, and tirelessly works outside to keep our garden looking fabulous all year long.

Besides sesshins, our temple has been busy, with monthly sangha hikes organized by Wazan, and two neighborhood samu projects organized by our Program Committee chair and Board President, Eddie Daichi Salazar. On July 30, Chobo-Ji hosted Anne Pechovnik, who drove up from Portland with Rinzan Osho, to lead a Soul Collage Workshop. I always attend these with others from inside our community and some from our neighborhood. These workshops remind me of what I know of dream analysis, and everyone ends up learning new things about their inner workings.

In this issue you will find a transcription of my final Teisho from Summer Sesshin on Case 19 of the *Mumonkan*. This Teisho also serves as the final offering in my upcoming book to be published by our newly formed Plum Mountain Press (PMP), titled: *Intimate Infinite: Selected Writings of Genjo Marinello*. I offer deep gassho to all those who have contributed to the PMP startup costs. Also in this issue is a report from our Board President that reviews our recent neighborhood samu efforts which I hope we will regularly repeat. Moreover, you will find announcements for our upcoming Post Workshop, Zen Intro Series, Fall Intensive, Autumn Sesshin, and Fall Book group.

I hope you enjoy these and other offerings I found herein. May the close of summer lead to sufficient clarity and strength to meet the challenges we all face in this troubled world. Take care.

With gassho,

Genjo



## Board President Report

Dr. Eddie Daichi Salazar

As befits the vibrant community that we are, there is a lot happening. Regarding our beautiful campus, the garden has been bringing delight to all. Many thanks to our many gardeners, especially during sesshin. Our roof project is now complete and has come in well under budget. The exterior painting and repairs have also been fully completed but came in over budget due to the extensive additional work given to the contractors. There is now investigation into future electrical needs. Many thanks to the Building and Grounds Committee overseeing all of this.

Programmatically, we successfully hosted another Soul Collage in July. Many thanks to Anne Pechovnik who guided us.

Following our annual meeting pledge, we have committed to reach into our local community for our samu work practice. In July, we spent a Saturday doing trash pick-



up in the Beacon Hill neighborhood, and in August we spent a Saturday prepping meals

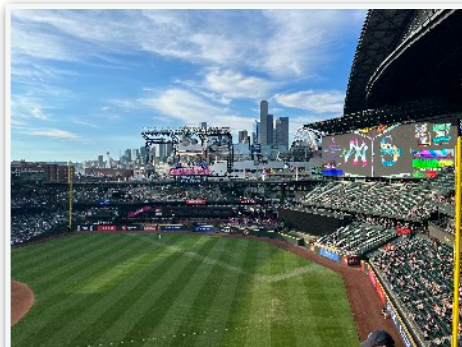


in the Lifelong Chicken Soup Brigade kitchen for the Somali community. We will be exploring other community samu opportunities. Let us know if you have suggestions.

Looking forward, we'll again offer a sangha book group starting in October (announcement in this issue), and will offer our six-week intro series in the fall, also beginning in October. We continue with our



monthly sangha hikes, which over many months now have proven to be highly successful in building community. In early



August, sangha members went to a Mariners game, also providing community building time. All this on top of our extensive zazen and sesshin schedule! A good time to be celebrating our shared Zen practice and sangha.

## Brazil Report

Dear Sangha,

Hello from Northeastern Brazil! I'm missing you, and the strong fellowship and sense of community that feels so natural to me with you all in Seattle. I'm sending love and hoping each person reading this is well. Below is a little update on what's been going on in my adventure.

The last half year since departing Seattle for Brazil has actually been a fairly bumpy ride! It's been quite a challenging year in terms of health, which has included dengue fever, COVID, a ruptured eardrum, and some mysterious tropical illness, amongst other things. I've also had challenges on the research front, as the study I came down here to do stalled for many months before ultimately being cancelled because of the really sad, unexpected passing of a team member. And, I've spent the majority of this time moving from place to place in less than ideal conditions because of some housing difficulties 😞.



I'm happy to report, however, that in recent weeks, things have really been looking up. Seicho arrived about a month and a half ago, and it's hard to really state how much joy that has brought. We're both incredibly happy to be together in the same place again, whatever the conditions may be! We've also secured an apartment we like for our last few months here, and in research life, I've started helping out with another study going on in the lab, bringing my experience with EEG (brain waves/electrical activity of the brain) to the project. Plus, I'm excited to be laying down some of the groundwork for some exciting future research here, where we hope to study how meditation practice can support people going through psychedelic-assisted therapies.

With much loving Nen from the Southern Hemisphere,

Kou



friends we met while on sesshin

## The Mumonkan

### Ordinary Mind is Tao

#### Case 19 - Teisho Summer Sesshin

#### Koan:

Joshu once asked Nansen, "What is Tao?" Nansen answered, "Ordinary mind is Tao." "Then should we direct ourselves toward it or not?" asked Joshu. "If you try to direct yourself toward it, you go away from it," answered Nansen. Joshu continued, "If we do not try, how can we know that it is Tao?" Nansen replied, "Tao does not belong to knowing or to not-knowing. Knowing is illusion; not-knowing is blankness. If you really realize the Tao of no-doubt, it is like the great void, so vast and boundless. How, then, can there be right and wrong in the Tao?" At these words, Joshu was suddenly awakened.

#### Mumon's Commentary:

Questioned by Joshu, Nansen immediately shows that the tile is disintegrating, the ice is dissolving, and no communication whatsoever is possible. Even though Joshu

may be awakened, he can truly get it only after studying for thirty more years.

#### Mumon's Poem:

*Hundreds of flowers in spring,  
the moon in autumn,  
A cool breeze in summer,  
and snow in winter;  
If there is no self-deluded cloud  
in your mind  
For you it is a good season.*

In my view "Joshu's Mu" and "Ordinary Mind is Tao" are the two most important cases in the Mumonkan. Even after more than forty years of investigating these two cases, I learn something new each time. These two cases are eternally edifying, and I hope they also feel this way to you.

Before this recorded encounter with Nansen, I believe that Joshu had already had several breakthroughs, and what's related in this case is perhaps Joshu's biggest awakening, the one that really launched him towards what we call "maturity." As you all know my first book is titled *Reflections on Awakening and Maturity*; I work there to distinguish awakening from maturity. When we have a kensho or a sudden awakening, we glimpse the vast void, the boundless emptiness, or as I like to say, the intimate infinite. These glimpses are restorative and sometimes life changing. They expand our horizon, and they fill our heart with joy and love. Moreover, every kensho cracks the egg of our attachment to our separate sense of self.

However, in my view it takes several kenshos and decades of work to really mature as a human being. It's not rocket science, but we all know how hard it is to mature. Just consider how long we're dependent on our parents, compared to all other offspring in the animal kingdom, and of course that just gets us started. In fact, maturity is not something we ever arrive at. It's a process of mastery that continues throughout our lifetime. If we ever think we have arrived, we're fooling ourselves. This is the real essence of beginner's mind: wherever we are we're just beginning.

Meiho Sensei came to dokusan with me yesterday and was full of gratitude, saying, "You know, compared to the many previous sesshins, it feels like we were just

pretending. Now we've gotten real!" Indeed, I must agree. This sesshin feels more real to me. And part of this feeling comes from its being a blend of in-person and Zoom attendance. I know it sounds odd, but the ability to have people from the San Juans, Arizona and Alaska join us for sesshin, plus Zenka who is doing a combination of in-person and Zoom attendance, is part of a new reality. It feels like our whole Sangha is deepening its roots. We're maturing, collectively. And this process is a never-ending process.

So, when Joshu asks Nansen, "What is Tao?" I believe he is asking, "What is the way of maturity?" How do we be in this world, that's so complex and conflicted and divided and warring and . . . How do we be in this world, with – we could say with loving kindness, but that's too simple. And Nansen answers, just be ordinary. And Joshu goes "...? I've already done years of training and I've had these breakthroughs and I see how vast and wondrous the world is, and it just comes down to being ordinary?"

Genki Takabayashi said the syllables in Japanese were "Hei – Jo – Shin." Everyday – Awakened (in this case "Jo" is awakened) – Heart-Mind activity. For example, how we enter the zendo. How we take our seat. How we pick up a teacup, how we put down a teacup. Where we place our chopsticks. How we sweep the floors, clean the windows, and work in the garden.

People from all over the neighborhood come to walk through our garden. Why? Because it's well cared for. Because of our care, and the wonderful work of our architect, Deborah Walker, and MRJ contractors led by Brian Gibson, people love to come into this space. Larry Palmer, who sometimes comes to sit zazen with us, and his crew just put refurbishing touches on the exterior of the building with great love. Brian often comes back to enjoy the garden and see how we are doing. And if he sees something wrong, says, "Oh, we'll have to fix that."

All of us through everyday Heart-Mind activity have created this splash of serenity, in this North Beacon Hill neighborhood, and it goes out like waves from here. Moreover, we're all going to take some of this serenity back out into our everyday lives, and the waves will

*Continued on next page ...*



propagate further. When I was sitting yesterday, about half of my day was a jumble of what needs to be done next week, or fantasizing about my desires to ride my bike and play rather than sit here on the cushion. But, about half my day was in samadhi, communion, with the space, with all of you, and with the whole dang region.

Not too long ago, Carolyn and I, just for the hell of it, did these genetic tests to look at our ancestry. And of course, we saw that our ancestry extended back to Europe, and from there to the Middle East and then into Africa, just as it does for all of us who are of European descent. In addition, Carolyn, as it turns out, has some genetic code markers that represent a bit of Native American heritage. I don't have any such markers and I'm jealous!

My sense of first peoples everywhere is that there's a deep communion with the earth. And I don't think this is a projection of mine. From my reading, indigenous peoples rarely if ever think of themselves as overlords of the earth. Instead, they most often see themselves as participants in Nature – in other words, simply as two-legged earthlings, sharing the world with winged earthlings, four-legged earthlings, creepy-crawly earthlings, and standing-people tree-earthlings. And there's this ordinariness of being fellow earthlings. Sitting in samadhi, I feel like an earthling sharing this alive planet with all other earthlings.

Joshu asks, "Should we direct ourselves toward it or not?" Nansen responds, "If you try to direct yourself toward it, you're going away from it." In other words, Nansen is saying we are all already earthlings. It's not something we have to attain. "But if we don't try, how will we know that we have found the way," asks Joshu. Nansen replies, "The Way does not belong to the realm of knowing or not-knowing." When you think you know something, it's an illusion. However, if you give up on knowing, you're settling for ignorance. Nansen continues (I paraphrase),

"If you really want to realize the Way beyond all doubt, just be an earthling, with a caring heart, and lay down all of your right and wrong thinking." At this, Joshu has a big breakthrough.

We may ask, "Is it as simple as that? What about our demons?" Aren't there demonic forces? In Buddhist mythology, Mara sent all kinds of temptations and demons to unsettle Shakyamuni, who was sitting under the bodhi tree. He did not move. Mara asked, "How come I can't move you? I've always been able to move everyone I've met either with temptations or demons, and I've sent my best of both. And you just sit there!" Shakyamuni pointed to the earth, and touched the earth, saying, "The earth is my witness." The Buddha was saying that having realized fully that he was an earthling, seamless with the whole earth, what could possibly tempt, or bully him?

During our complicated development as children and young adults, it's impossible not to pick up a few wounds that begin to manifest as

hungry ghosts. Either because of inadequate or cruel parenting, or because of disastrous circumstances of one kind or another, parts of ourselves become wounded or denied, and these parts become hungry ghosts. When the hungry ghosts are not fed, they become demons that are like a pack of devouring wolves.

Recovering our ability to commune in samadhi is sometimes referred to as true passing. Our Densu (chant leader) is working on a koan called "True Passing," which is perfect for the Densu post, really for any post, but especially Densu. One must be in deep samadhi for this post to sing and soar. All posts teach us about how to be in communion with the Sangha and the earth. Learning how to be in samadhi is re-learning how to be an earthling. With deep samadhi, we gain the spaciousness and compassion to feed our own hungry ghosts, gently but not excessively. In time, a pack

of wolves becomes a pile of puppies, all wagging their tails and even turning over on their backs to be petted. If we really realize the Way beyond all doubt, we are in communion with the intimate infinite and we transcend right and wrong thinking. Hearing Nansen's words, Joshu had a major kensho.

Mumon's commentary: "Questioned by Joshu, Nansen immediately shows that the tile is disintegrating." The artificial barriers between self and other, and between awakening and maturity begin to melt. At this point, it is time to stop talking about it, and just live into it. When we stop talking about it, we can see this building and our garden as reflections of our own heart-minds. I hope you can see it, and more importantly, feel it. In the dinner prepared by our Tenzo last night, we all could taste it. Delicious! Rev. Gendo has been Tenzo for some time now, and we all can taste his development.

Even though Joshu had a major kensho, he was still on an endless path of mastery. In the remaining years of our life, as further artificial barriers and delusions drop away, we all progress closer to Mumon's poem:

Hundreds of flowers in spring,  
the moon in autumn.  
A cool breeze in summer,  
and snow in winter.  
If there is no self-deluded cloud  
in your mind  
For you it is a good season.

Take care, be awake and realize that every day and moment of eternity is wondrous in this symphony of now.

## Closing Incense Poem

Summer Sesshin 2022

*Adolescent crows sing the ballad  
of our hungry ghosts.*

*Summer heat dissolves attachment  
to our sense of self.*

*Who feels the gentle breeze?*

*In the shallows of Lake Washington,  
blue heron walks leaving no wake.*



## Temple Posts

beginning Sept. 11, 2022

Rev. Gendo Testa  
Eddie Daichi Salazar  
**Shika** (Host - Manager)

George Kyoki Gibbs  
Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares  
**Tenzo** (Cooks)

Rev. Sendo Howells  
Eddie Daichi Salazar  
**Jikijitsu** (Timekeepers)

Felix Wazan Pekar  
Elijah Seigan Zupancic  
**Densu** (Chant Leaders)

Ali Horri  
Charles Porter  
Alex Gheorghiu  
**Jisha** (Tea Servers and zendo care)

Sally Zenka Sensei  
**Inji** (Abbot Assistant)

Carolyn Josen Stevens Sensei  
**Fusu** (Accountant)

Eddie Daichi Salazar  
George Kyoki Gibbs  
Felix Wazan Pekar  
**Intro Instruction**



## Fall Intensive

An intensive covers roughly the same time frame as the traditional temple kessei period, beginning with the first zazenkai for that season (Sept. 11) and ending with Rohatsu Sesshin. It's a time for concentrated study and practice. *Please let [Genjo](#) know if you plan to participate ASAP.* Chobo-Ji participants receive dokusan once weekly on Wednesday evenings. *All unsui are strongly encouraged to participate fully.*

The purpose of the intensive is to give students the maximum opportunity to release entanglements by giving one's self to the Dharma.

*To participate one must commit to:*

- 1) ZAZEN: Five hours of zazen per week, most, if not all, zazenkai, and full-time attendance at weeklong sesshins. This is the most important ingredient of the intensive.
- 2) Do a minimum of five hours of samu (working meditation - gardening or cleaning) per week. These hours can be in your own home, garden or community.
- 3) Read one book of your choosing from Chobo-Ji's [Zen Bibliography page](#) (or consult with Genjo about an alternative selection) and write a review of what you have read.
- 4) Keep a journal about your practice, at least one paragraph per week, and email a minimum of one paragraph per week each Friday to Genjo Osho on how the intensive is working on you.
- 5) Attend Dokusan Wednesdays in person or via Zoom at 8:30PM, or if this is impossible arrange a Zoom call with Genjo Osho. Zoom calls can be short, 5 minutes maximum per week, or up to 15 minutes every two weeks, or 30 minutes once a month.
- 6) Be of service to this sangha or the wider community through some direct manifestation of our Great Vow.

## Autumn Sesshin

Sept. 23 - 30

We welcome both in-person (fully vaccinated or previously confirmed COVID) and Zoom participation in our seven day Autumn Sesshin. Full-time participation is expected unless special permission has been granted by the Abbot.

Zoom participation requires [Zoom Registration](#). Zoom participation will also be available for those who wish to attend morning (5:30 - 6:30 a.m.) and/or evening (7:30 - 8:30) zazen Saturday through Thursday: use the same registration link.

The cost of the sesshin is \$300 (less dues for September). If attending by Zoom please make a donation that fits your budget and level of participation. You can use Pay/Pal or leave a check in the bowl at the entrance to the zendo. (Using [Pay/Pal](#), please make your donation to [zen@choboji.org](mailto:zen@choboji.org), and note that your payment is for Autumn Sesshin.)

We begin at 5:30 p.m. Friday, September 23, with informal supper, introductions, and orientation. From Saturday to the following Thursday, sesshin runs from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. The final Friday begins at 5:00 a.m. and concludes around 11:00 a.m. We provide sleeping accommodations for those traveling from out of town (an additional \$10 - \$20 per night); please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, work clothes, and a towel.

Please help us get an accurate count by sending an [application](#) by September 10, and let us know if you would like to attend in person.

We offer limited partial scholarships for sesshin. For more information, please email [registration@choboji.org](mailto:registration@choboji.org).

Participants in the zendo are required to test themselves sometime during the 24-hour period before sesshin begins, and again 48 hours after the start. Participants flying to Seattle, please test yourselves on arrival. We will serve shared meals, but those who wish to may supply their own food and eat separately from the group. Anyone experiencing flu or cold-like symptoms should not attend in person.



## Zen Intro Series

Six week exploration  
starting Oct. 4, 7:30- 8:45 PM

## Fall Book Group

Thursdays, Oct. 6 - Nov. 17  
7:30- 8:45 PM

## Announcing PMP



Please come and join us for an 6-week exploration of Rinzai Zen practice. Tuesdays - 7:30 to 8:45 pm, beginning Oct. 4 and concluding Nov. 8 This series repeats each Autumn and Spring and supplants our usual weekly zazen introduction. **Only those who have been fully vaccinated or have had a previously confirmed case of COVID-19 may attend. Masks are mandatory.**

A \$40 donation is suggested for the series, but any amount you care to give is accepted. No one will be turned away because of lack of funds.

Each class can be taken as a stand-alone. No prior experience with meditation practice is required and old-timers are also welcome to attend and share their thoughts and questions.

As a bonus with the full fee, you may attend either the Oct. or Nov. Zazenkai (half-day sit) at no additional cost.

**Oct. 4** will concentrate on *zazen* (seated meditation) instruction.

**Oct. 11** will explore the seven practice modalities of Zen practice at Chobo-Ji.

**Oct. 18** will explore the *Four Noble Truths*.

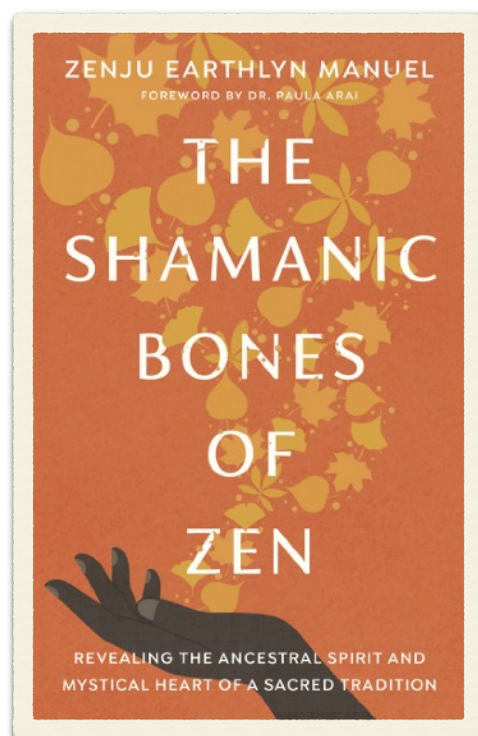
**Oct. 25** will explore the *Eight Fold Path*.

**Nov. 1** will explore the use of *koans* in Rinzai Zen training.

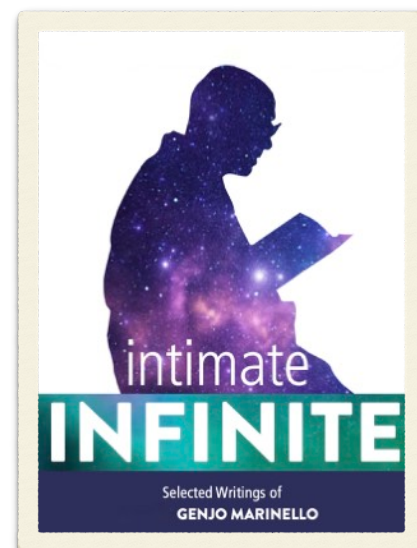
**Nov. 8** will explore the *Four Great Vows*.

The book: *The Shamanic Bones of Zen*, by Zenju Earthlyn Manuel (Shambala, 2022). The author undertakes a rich exploration of the connections between contemporary Zen practice and shamanic, or indigenous, spirituality. Drawing on her personal journey with the Black church; with African, Caribbean and Native American ceremonial practices; and with Nichiren and Zen Buddhism, she builds a compelling case for discovering and cultivating the shamanic, or magical, elements in Buddhism – many of which have been marginalized by colonialist and modernist forces.

We'll gather in the lounge over seven weeks, covering the seven chapters. Join us for any evening, but please read the chapter. Zoomers are also welcome: here's the [link](#). Book group is free, though we're always grateful for your kind donations in the bowl at the entrance to the zendo. Questions? Contact Eddie Daichi Salazar at [salazare@seattleu.edu](mailto:salazare@seattleu.edu)



Given the generous contributions of both money and time, Chobo-Ji is ready to start a small publishing house to serve the Chobo-Ji Sangha and general audience interested in American Rinzai Zen. Over time, we hope to publish several offerings of Chobo-Ji Sangha members. Our first offering will be released sometime this fall:



## Summer Odayaka





## Summer Sangha Hikes

organized by Felix Wazan Pekar



## 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 Tuesdays 7:30-8:45PM,

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.)

**Post Workshop (come and learn about all of our temple posts) .....**

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

**Board Meeting .....**

**Sangha Hike .....**

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

**Start of six week Zen Intro Series, Tuesdays .....**

**Start of Fall Book Group (seven Thursdays) .....**

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

**Sangha Hike .....**

**Precepts Class, Part One .....**

**Precepts Class, Part two .....**

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

**Board Meeting .....**

**Sangha Hike .....**

**Faith Action Network Annual Dinner .....**

**Rohatsu Sesshin (eight-day Zen intensive) .....**

**Sept. 10, 10 am - noon**

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

**Sept. 11, noon - 1:30 pm**

**Sept. 17, 10:30 am to 5 pm**

**Sept. 23 - 30**

**Oct. 4, 7:30 - 8:45 pm**

**Oct. 6, 7:30 - 8:45 pm**

**Oct. 9 5 am - 11:15am**

**Oct. 15, 10:30 am to 5 pm**

**Nov. 1, 7 - 8:30 pm**

**Nov. 8, 7 - 8:30 pm**

**Nov. 13, 5 am - 11:15 am**

**Nov. 13, noon - 1:30 pm**

**Nov. 19, 10:30 am to 5 pm**

**Nov. 20, 5:30 - 8:30 pm**

**Dec. 3 - 11.**



*Dai Bai Zan Cho Ba Zen Ji*

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1733 S. Horton St., unit 7  
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