Plum Mountain News


Autumn Sesshin 2026

Dear members and friends,

On the Halloween Saturday when I write this, the morning began with a thick pre-dawn fog, silent and mysterious. By the time of our post-zazen sharing in council, the fog had dissolved into a pale blue sky. It had been a powerful sit, experienced by close to forty practitioners, our largest Saturday zazen group yet.

On the previous Saturday, October 24, we were immersed in Zen tradition for the very moving Dharma Heir Transmission ceremony during which Seifu Singh-Molares Osho passed through multiple Dharma Gates and moved forward to his first Teisho and his assumption of the role of Chobo-Ji's Vice Abbot. A crowd including Oshos, Unsuis, Senseis, and Sangha members from near and far, old and new, packed the zendo. You can read more about this solemn and celebratory occasion later in this issue.

In September our Autumn Sesshin provided participants, eighteen in-person and several more on Zoom, the opportunity to dive deep. We did this with the support of strong post-holders. Rev. Soko McKay as Shika (Host/Manager) kept everything running smoothly. With Rev.Wazan Pekar as Dai Tenzo (Chief Cook) our meals were nutritious and delicious. Charles Porter as Jikijitsu (Timekeeper) kept us on time and Rev. Shigyo Marrero as Densu (Chant Leader) kept us on beat. Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares as Inji (Abbot's Assistant) kept Dokusan procedures seamless and unobtrusive. The challenges of refreshing us with liquids and snacks were met by Jishas (Tea-Servers) Al Shogen Billings and Vivian Anderson. Our master gardeners, Daigetsu Tanabe and Zenka Metcalf guided us in enhancing the tidiness and beauty of our already gorgeous September garden.

Sesshin participants drew daily inspiration from Genjo Roshi's illuminating Teishos opening dense passages of the Rinzairoku to our understanding and, on Middle Day, pivoting from a Sozen Nagasawa student's enlightenment experience (recounted in *In This Body, In This Lifetime*) to his own experiences as a star-gazing teenager and, later getting up into sky-space piloting small airplanes. Complementing this came Seifu Singh-Molares Osho's powerfully personal fifth day Dharma Talk about the little and big voices within us, inner guides to the internal, based in his own youthful and later experiences. And Autumn Sesshin culminated with yet more inspiration, this time arising from the Jukai Ceremony during which Keith Krumm led us in giving ourselves to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and reading the Precepts and Four Bodhisattva Vows. You'll find a detailed account of this ceremony later in this issue.

Since sesshin, our busy fall calendar has encompassed our recurring schedule including sangha hikes, monthly 100 Sandwiches mornings making sandwiches for the hungry, and our fall book group, which has been exploring Joan Halifax's *Standing At the Edge*. This month, Rev. Wazan hosted three successive Dark Dinners, revelatory experiences drawing guests into taste, scent, texture, sound, and inward experience, all enhanced and transformed by the absence of light. These dinners were also fundraisers for our ongoing Capital Campaign, now moving into its final stages. Our Social Action Committee organized two sessions in which we sat in the lounge writing 400 postcards to voters in Texas – an effort in which we joined others sending many millions of cards to voters in swing states. Our engagement in advocacy around social issues also took a group of us to the annual fundraising dinner of Faith Action Network (FAN). Back in the zendo, we heard a stimulating Sunday evening Follower of the Way talk by Jonathan Kaicho Swift, and were led in an Friday evening sing-a-long by ukulele player Ken Klettke.

As you continue this issue, you'll find an update to Capital Campaign which concludes January 1, 2027, Genjo's Teisho on Case 4 of the *Hekiganroku*, poems by three Sangha members, Seifu's first Teisho as a Dharma Heir and Vice-Abbot, Genjo's remarks at the

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Dharma Heir ceremony, an essay on Dahui's Letters by Rev. Shigyo, and announcements for Rohatsu, Toya, and Winter Odayaka.

With gassho,

Anne Sendo Howells

Hekiganroku ~ Case 4
Tokusan visits Isan
and Genjo's Commentary

Engo's Introduction: The blue sky, the bright sun; there is no distinguishing east and west. Time and causation, medicine must be given to the sick. Tell me, is it best to let go or to hold fast? See the following.

Main Subject: Tokusan came to Isan's temple. Carrying his pilgrim's bundle under his arm, he crossed the lecture hall from east to west and from west to east; then, staring around, he said, "Mu, mu," and went out. [Setcho says, "It's seen through."] Tokusan reached the gate, but then said to himself, "I should not be in a hurry." So he dressed formally and entered a second time to have an interview. Isan was sitting in his place. Tokusan, holding up his kneeling cloth, said, "Osho!" Isan made as if to take up his hossu. Then Tokusan gave a "*katsu*" shout, swung his sleeves, and went out. [Setcho says, "It's seen through."] Tokusan, with his back turned on the lecture hall, put on his straw sandals and went off. In the evening, Isan asked the chief monk, "The new arrival, where is he?" The chief monk said, "When he went out, he turned his back on the lecture hall, put on his sandals, and went away." Isan said, "Someday that fellow will go to an isolated mountaintop, establish a hermitage, and scold the Buddhas and abuse the patriarchs." [Setcho says, "Frost on top of snow!"]

Setcho's Verse:

The first seeing through,
The second seeing through,
Frost on top of snow,
Great risk of slipping.

Like General Hiki, he entered the enemy camp
And narrowly escaped.
He made a dash for it,
But he was not let alone.
Alas, he is seated among the weeds
On the isolated mountaintop.

This is the same Tokusan (Chinese Chan Master: Deshan Xuanjian, 德山宣鑒, died 865 CE), who was once known as Diamond Shū, a scholar of the *Diamond Sutra*. During a long Dharma dialog with Ryutan (Chinese Chan Master: Longtan Chongxin, 760-840 CE) about this sutra, Ryutan noticed it was getting late and suggested Tokusan rest. Ryutan then handed him a lantern, but when Tokusan took it, Ryutan blew it out and Tokusan experienced a profound awakening in the darkness.

Tokusan was famous as Diamond Shū because he always carried a copy of the *Diamond Sutra* with his thoughts on it in his backpack. After his big awakening, he chose to burn it, even though the *Heart Sutra* and the *Diamond Sutra* are the most cherished texts in our Zen Buddhist tradition. However, following his sudden and profound awakening, he no longer needed it. At the same time, he might have been a bit full of himself like many people are after a *kensho* (sudden awakening). Anyway, after this genuine breakthrough in the pitch black of night, he went on a pilgrimage to see other Zen masters, and one of them was Isan (Chinese Chan Master: Guishan Lingyou, 溈山靈祐,771-853 CE).

Isan was a Dharma brother of Obaku (Chinese Chan Master: Huangbo Xiyun), and a Dharma uncle to the founder of our school of Zen, Rinzai (Chinese Chan Master: Linji Yixuan). Isan and Obaku were both Dharma Heirs of Hyakujo (Chinese Chan Master Baizhang Huaihai, 720-814 CE). Therefore, those of us who have been sitting together for a while, probably recognize that Isan was a significant senior teacher to Tokusan at the time of this encounter.

Tokusan visited Isan's temple carrying his pilgrim's bundle under his arm. He wandered back and forth through the lecture hall, and then, as he stepped further inside, he undoubtedly shouted, "MU! MU!" (or "WU!" in Chinese), the syllable that signifies Emptiness.

In our tradition, Mu stands for the black-before-black, the immense void, and the intimate infinite – a feeling Tokusan experienced when Ryutan blew out the lantern. So, when Tokusan shouts Mu in the lecture hall, he's trying to show how connected he feels to the intimate infinite. Master Setcho (who put together the koans in the *Hekiganroku*) says that even then, "It's seen through." Part of this koan is figuring out what Setcho sees.

As Tokusan was getting ready to leave, he approached the temple gate, pondering, "I've traveled so far; I should probably check out what Isan is all about." Therefore, he returned to engage in a conversation with Isan. Isan was sitting in his usual spot, perhaps just like I am now. It would be a bit like coming into the Dokusan (Dharma interview) room to challenge me to a Dharma battle.

It's a tradition for a monk visiting or entering a monastery to bow before the main altar or the Abbot, if he's there. You'd do *sanpai*, which means three bows to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. And you'd bring out your *zagu* (bowing mat) like I did before I started this talk. Tokusan started to open his *zagu* and shouts, "Osho!" It's like shouting in English, "Abbot!" or "Old Priest!" or, in my case, just, "Genjo!" Tokusan was inviting Isan to respond immediately and clearly.

In Zen there are a lot of stories about a calling one and an answering one, and in this kind of situation, it's important to reflect quickly. Tokusan's challenge was asking, "How do you show yourself, and what kind of teaching do you give?" Isan, sitting in his formal position, had a *hossu* (a ceremonial fly-whisk) in his hands. That's the staff with long horse hair I wave over people during Jukai (Buddhist precept ceremony). It symbolizes sweeping away delusions, like sweeping away annoying flies.

Anyway, Isan gave a rather traditional response and immediately held up his *hossu*, as if to say, "I'm ready for anyone and any delusions." It's a little like Zen Master Gutei when he answered every question by holding up one finger. In this case, no matter what question or challenge was made, raising the *hossu* is at least a good starting point if done powerfully and with a lot of presence. Someone watching this might have thought, "Ah, this guy knows how to talk without speaking!" In this case, if you were satisfied with Isan's response you would bow and then depart. Or if you were not satisfied or had something more to say, you would offer the next volley in the exchange.

Tokusan was not impressed with Isan's response of holding up the *hossu*. He cut at

Isan's response by giving a shout, swinging his sleeves, and went out. This kind of Zen shout (*katsu*) if done well, has the effect of cracking the universe open. A *katsu* is an entirely fitting response in this situation. This kind of shout clears away cobwebs, cuts delusions, and vibrantly presents this moment of eternity. But again, Setcho said, "It's seen through." What did Setcho see?

As I have said, Setcho compiled the *Hekiganroku*, and then Zen Master Engo later made his introductions to Setcho's compilation. It is interesting to note that after five generations, Setcho became a direct Dharma successor of Tokusan. Tokusan was Setcho's great, great, great, great Dharma grandfather.

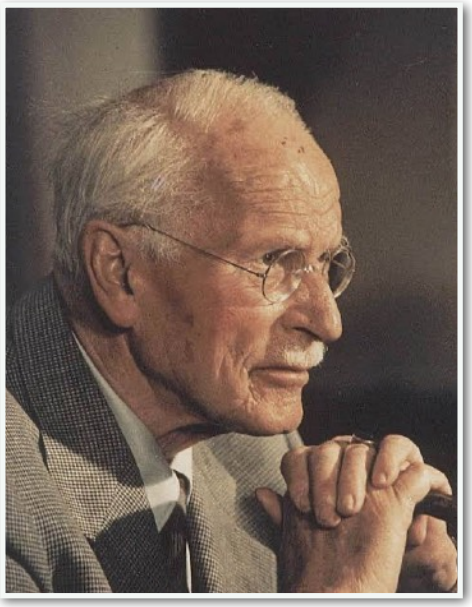
Tokusan, having turned his back on the lecture hall, slipped on his straw sandals and left the temple. As a Zen priest on a pilgrimage, you'd carry a small backpack and wear these straw sandals which you'd hand-stitched together with twine. When I briefly trained in Japan, I had a pair of straw sandals that I wore during *takuhatsu*, the practice of alms-gathering or ritualized begging. That evening, Isan asked the head monk, "Where is the new arrival?" Since Tokusan had made the journey, it was only natural for Isan to think he had come to train at his temple. The head monk replied, "Oh, he put on his sandals and left." I imagine Isan smiled or perhaps chuckled, saying, "Someday, that fellow will head to a remote mountaintop, build a hermitage, and scold the Buddhas and mistreat the patriarchs." In fact, he'd already scolded the ancestors, shouting "Mu!" and then, "Katsu!" without even staying to train at Isan's temple.

If I were in Isan's shoes, I would think, "Wow, this guy would be fun to work with! It's a shame he left." It is interesting to note that Isan did not confront Tokusan as he turned to leave. Engo, in his introduction, says, "Tell me, is it best to let go or hold fast?" In this case, Isan let go and Tokusan departed. What do you think would have happened if Isan had further challenged Tokusan as he turned to leave, and what kind of challenge would have been appropriate? That's something we can all ponder. There's no right or wrong answer.

Setcho in his verse said, "Well, I saw through this once, and then again it was seen through. It's like frost on top of snow. Great risk of slipping." Who's at great risk of slipping? I hinted at what Setcho saw when I talked about Tokusan and his great breakthrough with Ryutan and then burning the *Diamond Sutra.* This act wasn't entirely wrong, but it was a bit over the top.

It is wonderful that Tokusan was so confident of his awakening experience. On the other hand, I think Tokusan was still somewhat full of himself, and almost arrogant. It's tough to avoid arrogance after such a wonderful opening. It certainly materialized to some extent with every teacher I've worked with, and it happened to me.

Carl Jung, the great psychologist, warned about two places where we easily get lost or derailed on the path to maturity. One is



called inflation and the other is called deflation. When we think of ourselves in a negative way, we start going down the rabbit hole of deflation. We think we are unworthy or not good enough, and this can spiral into fear, shame, and even self-loathing. On the other side, President Trump exhibits a lot of inflation and arrogance, where he feels above everyone and that he knows it all; therefore, society's rules really don't apply to him. This depth of inflation, of course, can be very narcissistic, even for someone who has a great deal of talent. There are a lot of people who have a great deal of talent who unfortunately also fall into this trap of inflation. However, when it comes to a great deal of talent, I am not making this comment about our current president.

Inflation and deflation are like warning flags that suggest we might have strayed from the path of maturity we all aspire to. It seems Tokusan's meeting with Isan reveals some inflation. Yet Tokusan goes on to have two important Dharma heirs and eventually becomes one of the most deeply mature Zen masters ever. To see this, check out "Tokusan Carried His Bowls," *Mumonkan*, Case 13. In this instance, Tokusan is at his most simple, mature, and humble. Just because we veer off the path of mastery and maturity doesn't mean we can't get back on. We all have the ability to fall and get back up. Perhaps true mastery isn't about how many times we fall, but how quickly we get back on our feet.

How is enlightenment different from maturity? I dedicated a whole book to exploring this, *Reflections on Awakening and Maturity*. It's a common misconception that enlightenment and maturity are the same thing. Instead, enlightenment is the open space where maturity can flourish. Enlightenment is easy in comparison to maturity, which is a continuous journey of growth, facing our delusions, and combusting or transforming them. No matter where we are, we are all just beginning. Awakening can happen gradually or suddenly, often it is like a fruit slowly ripening and then suddenly falling to the ground. It can be quite profound, but does not produce maturity. From a Zen perspective, a profound awakening is the beginning of the path, not the end of the path.

We all suffer from time to time by thinking we're right and everybody else is wrong, and indeed this is a kind of inflation. And we may have also suffered at one time or another from thinking we're wrong and everything we do is wrong, of course this is a symptom of deflation. Either side of this equation is falling off the path of maturation. So, where's the path?

When our ego takes a backseat and our inner wisdom guides us, we're on the right path. Awakening is like a temporary ego death, which can be quite helpful for a while. In our tradition, we say we come to the zendo to "die on the cushion." What kind of death are we talking about? A great death where our ego fades away for a time. After such an experience, we are no longer afraid of our physical death because we understand that consciousness isn't tied to an individual identity.

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It's easy for our egos to get so loud that they take over how we see things, from the moment we wake up to the time we go to bed. Often, we get caught up in thinking about what's right and wrong. It feels like we're either right or wrong, and when we're right, everyone else is wrong, and when we're wrong, everyone else is right. But when we let our egos take a back seat, we can find some peace from seeing things in black and white. Zazen can really help with this, though it's not a magic fix.

Who is running the show if egos aren't running the show? Zen Master Rinzai said, "The true person (our deep nature) is beyond all attachment to rank, post, role, or position." He also said this deep nature is always present but goes in and out of our face all the time, which means sometimes we see it and sometimes we don't. We certainly don't see it or feel it when our egos are especially loud. At such times, we are unaware of our inner subtle, profound, natural, neutral, humble and abiding sage that abides within all of us.

When the wise, calm, and deeply rooted person is in charge, we meet every circumstance in the most graceful, kind way possible. And at such times, we're ready to die, we're ready to live, we're ready to hold or let go as the moment warrants. We don't have a set formula for what to do, but our inner sage guides us through every situation. When we're free from the pressures of inflation or deflation and our egos aren't in charge, we discover that we can always respond with a loving heart-mind.

Setcho's verse tells us that Tokusan was like General Hiki. "He entered the enemy camp and narrowly escaped." There must be some historical story about a General Hiki who entered an enemy camp and narrowly escaped. Tokusan indeed made a dash for it. He escaped, but he was not let alone; maturity tracked him down.

After a time, Tokusan did enter a hermitage and sat many years in his own tangled web of delusions, arrogance, and inflated self-image. On that remote mountaintop he combusted sufficiently to become a great Zen master.



Jukai Ceremony

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

On the final day of Autumn Sesshin, Sept. 257, 2026 Keith Krumm did Jukai. Here are some excerpts from Keith's Jukai letter:

One of the good things about being 73 years old is the opportunity to get some perspective on life. As I look back, I can see many of the steppingstones, turning points, and people who helped shape my path. …

When I was 12 years old, I remember telling my dad; "I have this strange sensation; "it's like I AM". I told him it was a little scary. Fortunately, he said; "Me too. I know that feeling". Today I would say the experience was more like "JUST THIS!" These were my first glimpses. I carry the memory of that young boy's feeling even today.

In high school, I was an acolyte at an episcopal church. I loved the rituals and ceremonies… "smells and bells" as my wife says. But it was not quite right for me.

The college years brought many more steppingstones; wilderness experiences, the movie and book "Sidartha", Art Garfunkel's "Waters of March" (which still brings me to tears), "The Dharma Bums" with Kerouac being high in the Cascade Mountains; "God, I love you. I am in love with you God", and Kahlil Jibran, "you shall see Him….rising and waving His hands in the trees" and so many more.

After college I met someone who introduced me to the Church of Religious Science and Ernest Holmes. I was going with the flow, and this was getting closer. I loved the idea that equanimity is always possible and positive affirmation can shape your mind. It also connected me with my Episcopal history. Over the altar where they held services it said, "I Am that I Am". That quote took me back and resonated. This was a good path. However, the teaching wasn't quite right, neither were the rituals or structure.

I had always been intrigued with meditation practice but never had a teacher….except books. Then in 2016 I found Sam Harris and "Waking Up." I took his full course of meditation study. This consisted of 50 consecutive days before I could use the guided meditations without a warning. After a year or so I began make the connection with the "I AM" …the "JUST THIS!", the relative and the absolute.

As I continued with Sam, he platformed a woman named Jan Bayes. Her talks on his app were great, perfect for me. I discovered she is the abbot of Great Vow Zen Monastery in Oregon. Over the next two years I tried to make a go of being in the sangha. I attended a couple of retreats, spent time with Chozen, attended via Zoom, and connected with another teacher, Jomon. At Great Vow I was moved by the four Bodhisatva Vows. I loved chanting the vows. This led me to taking their precepts class. I love their temple, their rituals, and just sitting. My strongest insight moment was during yaza (non-scheduled extra zazen) when I was suddenly hit by the realization that I am not a part of the Earth, I am the Earth. My favorite part of sesshin is yaza.



Chozen also introduced me to Jizo. After our 26-year-old son died in a drowning accident we attended Chozen's Jizo ceremony for children. It's hard to describe how meaningful this ceremony was toward our healing.

All that said, I found the distance difficult. I asked Chozen; "Where do I go in Seattle?" She wrote down "Genjo".

Soon after, I came to Chobo-Ji. I knew this place was special just entering the garden. Then I met Daichi and started attending regularly. My favorite quote from Daichi is "I swim in Zen".

My introduction to Chobo-Ji and Rinzai Zen practice was nearly three years ago and I am so grateful for this place and this path. I am so grateful for the sangha, and of course all Three Jewels, Four Noble Truths, Eight Fold Path, and the precepts. This is returning home for me. I would like to say, "I swim in Zen.". I am working on it.

Moving more deeply into the practice, initially I thought the precepts were not difficult. My parents raised us in a way aligned with the precepts through their Episcopal tradition. When I took Sendo's precept class I realized just how deep the precepts go, especially as seen through the lens of the Eight Fold Path.

One example I recall was how Right Speech intersects with "I vow not to kill." It's one thing to kill an animal, but Right Speech relates to killing a mood, or an idea, or just harmful criticism. My conclusion, I have a lot of work to do. Also, I attended my first sesshin at Chobo-Ji from a spare room I set up in the tradition of the Chobo-Ji zendo… altar, scrolls, incense. My "zendo" echoes Chobo-Ji.

Now the path has brought me to realize I want to take the next step and make a personal and public commitment to the precepts and the Three Jewels. I believe the Bodhisattva Vows are achievable for all people. It might take a while, but I believe it is our human destiny to achieve this maturity. It requires commitment and dedication, one person at a time. There may be different paths people take, but it's my turn to commit, take the vows through Jukai and continue to help move things in the right direction for me and everyone.

Given Keith's long interest in astronomy and his insight that we are the earth being conscious of itself, I gave him the Dharma Name: SeiJo "Sei" = Blue (青) – "Jo" = Star (星). These same two kanji can also mean "verdant planet."



Kōsen Glasgow's Autumn Sesshin Poems

Day 1

Half-moon calls evening
the dahlia blazes
worry is the reigns
of my hungry ghosts

Day 3

Windswept & root blown
even the madrona finds way
to peel a bow to the Ocean

Day 7

Look!
We are all receiving
our little bit of rain
HA! SO– AH–

Genjo's Closing Incense Poem

Autumn Sesshin 2026

Early autumn moon shines
throughout translucent clouds.

Who on this pale blue dot hears the
Silence that speaks?

Shiho-Shiki

Dharma Heir Ceremony for Seifu Osho
October 24, 2026

Seventy people were present for the ceremony including Oshos from Pennsylvania (Joriki), Connecticut (Gendo), Oregon (Rinzan), and of course, Washington (Sendo). There were also five Chobo-Ji Senseis, Shodo, Zenka, Ishin, Daichi and Josen. We also had visitors from California (Steve Shinkai Garber) and Central Washington (Daniel Chofu Beck). Present were special guests, John Daijo Lowrance, Shihan Bruce Bookman, Rev. Tendo Kirkpatrick and Rev. Genchoku Johnson (who played the Shakuhachi).

Rev. Soko opened the ceremony by hitting the Han and Taiko drum and then making



opening remarks. He also served as one of four gates with Rinzan, Sendo and Gendo. Seifu had to satisfactorily meet and pass

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each gate before standing before Genjo Roshi and answering a series of challenges.

Once all these challenges were met Genjo Roshi pounded the floor with a staff and passed it to Seifu, acknowledging him as a Dharma Heir of the Rinzai Zen Tradition.



Following this action, Seifu left briefly to put on appropriate robes and then went to the main altar and gave the following Dharma Transmission poem:

Seifu's Incense Poem

The Timeless Dance

We enter, and the stream drowns.
Delight frolics,
the waves splash the sun,
and the night swallows the moon.

The breeze trembles my heart,
and still, the way rests easy and continues.
And we rejoice again.

The four gates then stood beside him as he made prostrations to a sampling of male and female Dharma Ancestors, including all those in the direct Rinzai lineage to the historical Buddha. When these prostrations were completed, Genjo Roshi made the following congratulatory remarks:

Seifu has been practicing Zen for almost as long as I have (I did my first sesshin in 1977, he did his first in 1984). We both trained at the Dai Bosatsu Zen Monastery (DBZ) in New York with Eido Shimano. In fact, he trained there well before I did. We both left for the same reasons. We grew tired of Eido Shimano's awful, despicable actions that were hurting the Sangha he was supposed to be helping. But one thing we both learned from him that is tough to forget is that we all have a range from our inner sage to what Eido called our bumpkin nature, and to what I sometimes call our inner beast. Watch out!

I feel that Seifu and I have managed to keep our inner beast, or that primal inner furnace, contained in a way that won't hurt the sangha or the world around us. Plus, I think we've both figured out how to harness the power and life energy of that furnace for everyone's good. We're still working on it, always keeping in mind that there's always room for improvement.

Since his time at DBZ, Seifu has had some amazing roles at Microsoft, raised wonderful children, and built strong, lasting relationships, where over our years together we've both grown so much. Lately, he's been leading Spiritual Directors International (SDI), which started right here in Seattle and now connects people from all sorts of faiths. SDI is now a big, global group with members all over the world. And of course, Seifu has dedicated years to training at Chobo-Ji, finishing our extensive koan curriculum that's part of our Rinzai Zen tradition.

It's a great honor to have him as a friend and fellow follower of the way. As we journey together, I hope he can support me as he steps into this role as a new Dharma Heir. Right now, **I'm naming him Vice Abbot of Chobo-Ji.** With the support of the entire sangha, I believe we can continue to nurture this practice for generations to come.

This morning at zazen, we had three full rows of people chanting the Heart Sutra and sitting in silence together. It's truly amazing to see people come together in these times of conflict, polarization, and confusion to bow, chant, walk, and most importantly, sit together in silence for an hour and a half on a Saturday morning. By opening our hearts and minds to something beyond our basic instincts, we are working to open to something broad and wide, intimate and infinite. I can't think of a time that needs it more than now. Of course, every era of human history has faced its challenges. And through the ages, there have been those who have anchored the human condition in something greater than ourselves. We need more people who can anchor themselves for the benefit of all beings. This practice is dedicated to providing the skillful means to do so.

We're all aware of the upcoming mid-term election which is a pivotal moment for our nation and the world. It's essential that more people embrace radical acceptance of everyone, regardless of their age, ethnicity, wealth, gender, sexual orientation,



immigration status or background. Additionally, we need to foster radical acceptance of the entire world, including all living and non-living beings, recognizing the interconnectedness of everything. I'm hopeful that Seifu, I, and this sangha can continue to support this vision in our daily lives.

About three years ago, my spouse, Josen, began a precipitous decline in health that would have resulted in her bodily departure had we not discovered in August that she was suffering from a brain tumor that turned out to be both non-malignant and operable. The operation, on August 17, was successful, and now she is no longer actively dying. How about that! And she continues to get stronger each day. Her decline, especially over the last year, is one of the factors that prompted today's ceremony so that I would have more time to be with her. Now that her bodily departure is no longer imminent, I now have the extra help that I need to be with her during our recovery together. These times have been hard on us both; she has had to be with me and my grief, and I have had to be with her during her growing weakness and dependency, but we managed. Now we have the time to learn how to be with each other in new ways, and maybe we will even find the time, with Seifu's assistance, to take some vacations together!

I know Seifu will look after the temple while I'm away, and I know the sangha and I can trust his strength, commitment, and capable leadership. For that, I know we're all grateful.

The ceremony concluded with Seifu Osho giving his first formal teisho, and then a wonderful luncheon organized by Dee Seishun Endelman Sensei with great offerings from Randal Daigetsu Tanabe, Rev. Wazan Pekar, Will Kuen Rak, and Seishun.



Mumonkan ~ Case 6
Sakyamuni Holds up a Flower
Seifu Singh-Molares, Osho
Dharma Heir Transmission Teisho

Koan: Long ago, when the world honored one was at Mount Grdhrakuta to give a talk, he held up a flower before the assembly. 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 of scriptures. I now hand it to Maha Kasho.

Mumon's Commentary: Yellow-faced Gotama 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 the time, if everyone in the assembly 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,
The secret has been revealed.
Kasho breaks into a smile;
The whole assembly is at a loss.

On the back of the ceremony program that you have all received, I put "Not one, not two."

Which can be interpreted in multiple ways, but one is that, ultimately, there is no one here saying these words, nor is there anyone here really listening to them. So there is no Genjo, there is no you, there is no me, ultimately. Nothing is me, you, us, or past, present, future. Everything manifests continuously.

In the Xinxin Ming (Verses on the Faith Mind), which is a foundational text for Zen, there is one phrase that is directly relevant to this koan, which says: "To come directly into harmony with this reality, just simply say, when doubt arises, 'not two.' In this 'not two,' nothing is separate, nothing excluded."

Everything manifests continuously. Form is formlessness, and formlessness exactly form. This is the essence of our practice in Zen. So then, what exactly are we doing here today?

For those of you who have listened to some Dharma talks I have given over the last few months, I've been playing with the concept of pushing the river, and with the salmon flowing upstream and resolving into flow, which resolves into a larger kind of life koan, which relates to this Case 6: How can we push the river and not push it at the same time?

It's now been a lifetime of me pushing this Zen river, and also flowing with it, in it, through it, from the beginning of my Zen journey, which was an encounter in 1980 at the Rochester Zen Center with the monk, now Roshi, Bodhin. Bodhin struck the Han, and I thought I heard him crack the wood of that Han, which is probably not what was happening, but certainly cracked me open, cracked my heart open.

From that to Eido Roshi, the complex, difficult, brilliant and criminal Eido, encouraging me in New York City: "You can do this!," when I thought I couldn't.

The terrible, terrible agony of DBZ (Dai Bosatsu Zendo), and the sublime beauty of DBZ at the same time, as a young man. Then sitting alone in front of walls for thirty years, all over the world: every hotel, every conference room, and every bathroom when I needed it.

Then upstairs in Genjo's office, during one of the darkest periods of my life, after I left this big company in personal tatters, and struggled with many sorrows, difficulties and addictions, and spent a few years with Genjo where occasionally – I think maybe two or three times – he would reference this zendo. He even once took me down here and said, "Maybe you want to drop in sometime," and I went, "Yeah, maybe…" And the years passed, and then I did come down. And now, here we are, after seemingly countless sesshins, with everything that entails: the difficulties, the

Continued on next page …



pain, the discomfort, the stripping of layers right to our core, and the constant refrain of "Can you measure up? Can you measure up? Measure up!" And also laughing and floating, and relief, toughness and tenderness both at once, "strange and tender," as someone once said to me. Strange and tender coming over my left shoulder.

And yet, today, I really feel like I'm just getting started, like I'm just beginning, which is true of every moment. Although this particular configuration, with all of you here, won't be repeated. So many cross-sections of so many strands of the universe here today!

Back to pushing the river, while not pushing it. I previously described this as navigating the difficulties of life with grace and equanimity, while remaining grounded, and letting the flow of our lives carry us through challenges and difficulties, which are unavoidable. The only choice that we have is how we navigate them. We can't avoid them.

So, the salmon goes back upstream to lay its eggs, and it pushes the river all the way up there so that it can achieve the flow state where it can lay its eggs. But the salmon swims alone, and we don't. And as I've thought more about this metaphor, I've now resolved into it being more like rowing.

I went to a school in Boston in the eighties, one well known for its rowing. I was at the Divinity School there, and a group of us, men and women, would go rowing early in the mornings. At our best, we achieved the flow of tough physical discipline and the careful balance between it and "push and flow, push and flow" to achieve as perfect a harmony as we could.

Catch and release, catch and release, that shared rhythm where everyone moves as one unit, like this sangha. And the Maha Sangha when we are all at our best. The lead rower who sets the pace for everyone else is called the stroke. The coxswain, sitting in the stern facing the crew, does not row, but rather looks at all of the rowers, and guides, exhorts and corrects.

So the stroke, closest to the stern, and the coxswain set the pace and the timing, and the rest of the crew attempt to match the stroke as exactly as possible. Which is what we do in this zendo, following our own combined stroke and coxswain, Genjo.
And for this rowing to work best, there has to be complete harmony of catching and driving, finishing and recovering. The catch, every blade dropping in at precisely the same moment, in sync. All the rowers, all of us sangha members, pulling at the water on both sides of the boat at once, and finishing at exactly the same moment. Blades sweeping together. And then the boat surges forward with the tremendous combined force of all of its rowers.

These are the things that we practice and that we take into our lives. Ideally with the blade lifting cleanly out of the water, both inside the zendo, and out of it.

But there is one more thing, as in all of the process I've described, there is a pause, called the "recovery." The blades go in and out, and then the recovery is usually the longest part of the cycle, the feather turning flat so that we can travel forward with as little drag as possible. And this shared controlled pause before the next thrust is what we might call a contemplative communion with the entire universe.

It's that still place where there are not one, not two, not nine, rowing but rather a true person of no rank moving in and out of all of our faces simultaneously. Without getting into too many details, for those of you who are not familiar with Rinzai Zen, the true person of no rank is not a "person" strictly speaking, it's the entire universe. It's the essence of what we might call suchness, or an energy that moves primordially through the entire universe.

So this strife and peace, movement and then the quiet recovery, which we can call the thunderous silence of the universe, is that quiet pause between one stroke and the next. Stillness at the heart of the vortex. The space between pushing and flowing, which is neither push nor flow. That's our lineage.

The quiet spaces that Genjo and I occupy when we sit at the front of this row every morning next to each other, wordlessly communing with one another, with everyone else here, and with the entire universe.

Stillness at the heart of the vortex. Between breathing in and out. Like the quiet pauses, and the smiles, and the furrowed brows that I see right now in this transmission ceremony. These are the in-between spaces that we hold.

Zen lives everywhere, but perhaps especially in that controlled pause. One that we carry over and incorporate into our daily lives. One that allows us all to flow, and carries us forward every day and every moment: the good and beautiful ones, the bad ones, the difficult ones, the challenging ones, and even the so-called "terminal" ones, as we take our last breaths in this particular incarnation and resolve back into the "in-between."

Just like Genjo and I sitting next to each other in the morning, with this sangha and





the entire universe. And just like the silence of the Buddha as he holds up a flower, and the smile of Maha Kasho, both at once.

(SeiFu holds up a flower)

Rohatsu Sesshin

Nov. 29 - Dec. 7

We welcome both in-person and Zoom participation in our eight-day Rohatsu Sesshin. If you would like to come please fill out an application preferably by Nov. 15. Full-time participation is expected (tentative schedule). If you are not able to attend in person or for all eight days you may attend via Zoom for any portion that meets your schedule, but some participation each day is required. Zoom participation requires Zoom Registration. *You may also register on Zoom, at no cost, for those who wish to attend morning (5:00 – 6:30 a.m) and/or evening (7:30 – 8:30 p.m.) zazen Monday through Sunday.*

The cost of the sesshin is $400, minus a month's dues for dues-paying members. Add a contribution of $10 – $20 per day if you are staying on campus; please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, sitting clothes, work clothes, and a towel.

If attending by Zoom please make a donation that fits your budget and level of participation. You can use PayPal or Venmo or leave a check in the bowl at the entrance to the zendo. (Using PayPal please make your donation to zen@choboji.org and note that your payment is for Rohatsu Sesshin.) We begin at 5:30 pm Sunday, Nov. 29, and conclude around 11:00 am, Dec. 7.

Participants taking any form of public transportation to Seattle, are asked to please test yourselves before travel. We may ask that some or all of us to take COVID tests during sesshin. Anyone experiencing flu or cold-like symptoms should not attend.

Toya

Year End Party and Talent Show

Toya is a traditional Zen temple party, usually held on the Winter Solstice. On the shortest day of the year, it is okay to break all the temple rules and turn the traditional temple hierarchy on its head. Here at Chobo-Ji, Toya has become our post-Rohatsu potluck and party where we may sing songs, hear poetry, and watch funny skits. Everyone is invited including sangha family members. This year Toya will be held on **Sunday, December 12, from 6:30 to 9 pm.**

100 Sandwiches

9:30 -11:00 am
Nov. 14, Dec. 19, Jan. 16, Feb. 6, March 3

One Saturday each month we gather in the zendo kitchen to make 100 sandwiches, which we deliver to the 12th Avenue South and South Jackson neighborhood – so in need of food for hungry people. We hope you'll check the dates above and come help us assemble sandwiches after Saturday morning coffee. If you have questions, contact Sally Zenka (metcalf.sally@gmail.com).

A Final Plea for Our Shared Temple

Dear Chobo-Ji Sangha and Friends,

This spring and summer, our sangha has stepped forward beautifully for Chobo-Ji's Capital Fundraising Campaign. Through your generosity, we have raised approximately $80,000 toward our $100,000 capital campaign. These funds have supported critical repairs to our century-old temple, including the roof, water intrusions, and a new boiler, among others.

As we near the close of this campaign at the end of this year, we make a final plea: please consider a gift or additional gift that will help us cross the finish line.

In Buddhism, the practice of Dana (generosity) is the first of the Paramitas, the perfections that guide us. Dana is not merely charity; it is a profound spiritual practice. Supporting the sangha and the temple that shelters our practice is one of the classic forms of Dana, sustaining the conditions for awakening for ourselves and others.

There is also a deeper rhythm: the Universe tends to reward generosity with generosity in return. What we pour forth from an open heart often returns in unexpected ways.

Every gift is tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Year-end is an especially good time to give. Please help plant seeds for the next generation of practitioners. The steady accumulation of modest offerings sustains our field of practice.

With deep bows of gratitude,

Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares, Board President
Rev Sendo Anne Howells, Board Treasurer
Muji Michelle LeSourd, Board Secretary

Commentaries on Dahui's Letters

Rev. Shigyo Alexander Marrero

For the Autumn intensive I have been investigating and writing commentaries on Thomas Yuho Kirchner's translation of *Dahui's Letters*. Dahui Zonggao (Daie Soko) was the 12th century Chinese Linji (Rinzai) master who was largely responsible for setting the standard of embodied practice which now underlies much of the koan tradition.

Even now in the West, as we enter the third generation of transmission we are just beginning to answer "what is it that we are doing here?"; encountering Dahui, for me, has been a way of returning to the rafters of our shared Rinzai-family home.

When I place myself in the room with Dahui and his students, each letter becomes like a ten-thousand-faced mirror. This dynamic turning has had the effect of revealing quite deeply my own internal working. Dahui's passages dismantle any reliance whatsoever on understanding, allowing a profound, direct intimacy to arise from deep within our hearts.

In Vice-Minister Zeng's first letter to Dahui, he calls out saying "I've wasted my whole life with responsibilities, and now I have the time and space to really practice, but I can't figure out what I'm doing wrong. Please, guide me!" Zeng considers Dahui as a wise teacher and good friend.

The first thing that strikes me in Zeng's letter is his sincerity. When I arrive for zazen and reach for the door to the zendo, sometimes I get emotional touching the handle. How is it possible that my entire life has arisen this single perfect moment that I am able to miraculously reach out and open this door?

Zen is ripe with many teachings of how we come to understand all things in our life, all interactions, every moment bursting forth, as who we are and what this is. All things, all people, and all moments are Dharma gates – all are Good Friends through which we can remember that we are home.

Those who have deep insight into this have a deep responsibility to be plain and to own their ordinary humanity. To be a good friend means to help people come home to their humanity by continuously coming home to their own humanity.

My first taste of Rinzai monastic life was at Daihonzan Chozen-Ji, deep in the Kalihi Valley of Oahu, Hawaii. The training was quite orthodox and severe. I had at that point already lived in monastic life for several years under a very demanding Aikido teacher, and showed up at Chozen-Ji with a lot of carefully constructed walls protecting who I thought I was, what I thought I wanted, and why I thought I was there. It only took them a day or two to



really see through me, and the training became significantly more severe once they did. The role of this kind of teaching is to break us open and reveal the parts of ourselves we have shoved behind. This is exactly what it did for me. I eventually came to the understanding that the things I needed to face could not be boxed into who I was forcing myself to be. I realized that the real desperation at the root of my decision to train at Chozen-Ji was not "becoming a Zen monk" but rather "coming home to my heart."

When I left, the Shika (host/manager) said to me "Sincerity is when who you want to be and who you are, are the same thing." I realized that I neither knew who I was or who I wanted to be. When I arrived at Daibosatsu Kongo-Ji in New York a little over a year later, I had been so thoroughly chewed by this question "Who am I and what do I want?" that I was actually desperate. I was terrified of Rinzai training, and I remember clearly the feeling in my body of arriving for sesshin: my hands were shaking and I could barely answer any questions. Yet, something deep inside of me knew that I had to do it. In my first Dokusan with the Abbot, she called very sharply out to me "Why are you here?" in the middle of my prostration. This was a remarkable amount of sight and trust. Something inside of me spoke up before I could think of an answer, and I immediately responded "I'm here because I'm terrified of this." After pausing for a moment, she said "While the whole world is running from their fears, here you are running into them. How beautiful." One year later she ordained me as her last monk before retiring.

Sometimes it takes a few Good Friends with careful hands for us to realize the thing we are really desperate for. When I read Zeng's desperation, I understand it lives in the cold water I wash my face with in the morning, and on the doorknob I turn when I open the door. This is what "becoming a homeless monk" means. I also understand Zeng's confusion: looking for what we think we want in all the places other than where it is begging us to look. Zeng goes on to say he is looking to attain "the very same place realized by the ancestors." He is looking for a stable place to walk!

Here is Dahui's response to Vice-Minister Zeng: "Having seen that your faults are empty illusions, you will know that the creation [of karma] is also illusion; that karmic retribution is illusion; that deluded thought is illusion; that delusion itself is illusion; that past, present, and future are all illusion. If today you see your error, this will be the illusory medicine that cures your illusory illness. When the illness is cured and the medicine no longer necessary, you will be the same person that you were before. The notion that there is a special [awakened] you, a special Dharma [to be awakened to], is the view of heretics and

demons. You should think deeply on this."

With each line, Dahui is pushing Zeng (and us) to realize that the first step in remembering the home in our hearts is understanding that all things called "faults", "karma", and "delusion" are illusions. Even "getting rid of illusions" or "seeing through illusions" are illusions. By using this word "illusions", he is pointing to the reality of the single undercurrent from which all things emerge—Muuuuuuuuuuu.

When we are able to recognize the immediacy of all things, how everything is bursting into existence and fading away in a single moment continuously, then we can feel what it is like to be at home in our own messy emotions, unbalanced by our confusion, and completely safe in the ebb and flow of our daily internal life. The single moment we attempt to put this reality into a container, believing it is this or that, is when we are again like someone with feet firmly on the ground begging for a place to walk.

There is a subtler reading contained in this passage that is quite pertinent to contemporary Zen life in the West. Sometimes in training we hear the term *buji*, which essentially means "nothing to do." This term is often used to describe going about what we do with no rush, no added haste, no additional effort beyond what is necessary. However there is a misconception that can arise that creates a type of practice we call "nothing-to-do zen" where we come to believe that because we are already enlightened we need not exert any undue effort.

A fundamental teaching of the Buddha was the six Paramitas, or the six Perfections. Contained in this list is what we know as Virya, which describes the assiduousness – the inexhaustible meticulous exertion – that is required to actualize true awakening. It is easy to misinterpret this too, thinking that practice requires outward fervor and severity.

Buji refers to the deep easiness that arises from arduous exertion: the unending availability of attention which allows us to actualize true compassion. The above passage from Dahui walks this blade-edge with a stunning skillfulness. He is neither saying "exert yourself" nor "do not exert yourself." He is saying "when you fully see through all these things – and this takes some work – you will realize that they were never there in the first place."

Sometimes students of the Way can get stuck in the absolute or quietism. Hakuin referred to this state as "the dark cave of demons," in which those who mistake blank, thoughtless samadhi in zazen as liberation, huddling in the corner of a dark cave happily content feigning peace. Hakuin calls this type of student "do-nothing demons." His later paintings of monkeys reaching for water is closely related to this teaching, and sometimes the title is translated as "the dark cave of monkeys." At the root of it, all of these teachings redirect us to the true intimacy of radical ordinariness.

Gen'yo Zexin asked Joshu, "If I come with nothing, what then?" "Drop it!" Joshu replied. "But I've come with nothing," answered Gen'yo, "How can I drop it?" "Then go on carrying it!" said Joshu. At this Gen'yo was deeply awakened.

A monk asked Ummon, "Is anything amiss when not a single thought arises?" Ummon replied, "Mount Sumeru!" An important note is that, in the original Chinese of Ummon's time, the phrase "Mount Sumeru!" was a single word. Realizing this gives an extraordinary texture to the case: what condition of the monk asking Ummon is he striking with "MOUNT-SUMERU!" Referring back to Hakuin, he described his own deep awakening as if he was encased in a great block of crystal clear ice that was shattered in a single instant. What is it like to be crystal clear, yet cold, rigid, unmoving – and then to be shattered from this condition into warmth, freedom, dynamic movement, able to go anywhere and do anything? Genjo's Autumn Sesshin teishos on Rinzairoku Jishu Chapter 19, sections 6 and 7, address this question beautifully.

When there is genuine breaking through to the root of free, creative wisdom, all things in all directions enter our heart, and this dynamic, free movement throughout the world is how we respond to what is being asked of us in each moment with the all encompassing wisdom of compassion.

Fugen is known as the Bodhisattva of active compassion, representing the functioning of liberated wisdom in the world. To enter the Dharma gate of Fugen means to feel the deep freedom of compassion clearly in our bodies, able to respond in each moment by seeing directly with the Buddha's eyes. In this state of liberated free-functioning compassion, all things break open and the true infinity of reality becomes our guiding teacher. In this condition there is no gap in our compassion. When there is anger we bow with love to anger, when there is happiness we bow with love to happiness. We do not place our bowing with love onto these things, instead our spontaneous responding to them comes from fully, truly allowing them to enter us. To put these teachings into practice means that entering all things into us changes us endlessly, bursting us forth into the world to act as is needed. To enter Fugen's pores means to actually go about acting freely in the world with the Buddha's heart, eyes, mouth, hand, feet, and smile. These are the rafters of our shared family home.

Winter Odayaka

Jan. 22 - 24, 2026

Odayaka means "peaceful," and these sesshins are a little less arduous with more dialogue than our weeklong sesshins. 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 around noon, following Council. Please fill out this application if attending in person. ***This Odayaka will be led by Vice Abbot, Seifu Singh-Molares, Osho.***

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 using PayPal or Venmo. Please indicate the purpose of your donation in the note/memo field.

Registration for Zoom only attendance is required for each day. The Zoom invitations and registration links are below.

Day 1 – Friday, Jan. 22, 7:00 am
Zoom only registration use this link.

Day 2 – Saturday, Jan. 23, 5:30 am
Zoom only registration use this link.

Day 3 – Sunday, Jan. 24, 5:00 am
Zoom only registration use this link.

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; Zazen and consult with Rev. Seifu: 1st and 3rd Sundays 9:00-10:30 AM
Dharma Council, most Saturdays at 8:30 AM – Dharma Dialogue, some Sundays at 7:30 PM
(See Google Calendar at https://choboji.org/schedule/ for more detail and Zoom links.)

100 Sandwiches prep ...	**Nov. 14, 9:30 - 11 am**
Zen Sangha Hike (location to be announced in Temple Happenings) ...	**Nov. 14, 10:30 am - 5:00 pm**
Tanden Breathing Workshop ...	**Nov. 21, 10 am - noon**
Sangha Gentle Yoga (Columbia City Yoga) ...	**Nov. 28, 1:30 - 2:45 pm**
Rohatsu Sesshin (eight-day Zen intensive) ...	**Nov. 29 - Dec. 7**
Toya (Day to break all rules party) ...	**Dec. 12, Potluck 6:30 pm, fun 7:30 pm**
100 Sandwiches prep ...	**Dec. 19, 9:30 - 11 am**
Food For and From the Spirit Workshop ...	**Dec. 19, 4 - 8:30 pm**
Zendo Closed for the holidays ...	Dec. 25 - Jan. 1
New Year's Day Chanting, bell ringing, potluck ...	**Jan. 1, 10 am to noon**
Understanding Zen Through the Nervous System (six weeks) ...	**Jan. 7, 7:30 - 8:45 pm (Thursdays)**
Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...	**Jan. 10, 5 am - 11:15 am**
Board Meeting ...	**Jan. 10, noon - 1:00 pm**
100 Sandwiches prep ...	**Jan. 16, 9:30 - 11 am**
Winter Odayaka (three-day Zen intensive) ...	**Jan. 22- 24**
100 Sandwiches prep ...	**Feb. 6, 9:30 - 11 am**
Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...	**Feb. 14, 5 am - 11:15 am**

Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji

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