

sangha

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA CRUZ AND MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTERS

JULY 2010

ASPIRATION

I've been contemplating the topic of practice aspirations recently, as we are going to send out a survey asking the larger Santa Cruz Zen Center sangha what they're interested in, what kind of practice they would like to do here. There's so much potential here at Zen Center. We could do so many beneficial things, the possibilities for practice are endless – but what do people want? Another way of asking this is, "What is your practice aspiration?" I think all practitioners, whether we're conscious of it or not, have some resolve for our practice. It's what keeps us going, and it can take many different forms. So what is your deepest aspiration? We didn't put that question on the survey, since it might be a little too intimidating, but the questions on the survey do imply this larger question. I hope those who only occasionally come to Zen Center, as well as those who come regularly, can consider how Zen Center might support them to manifest their deepest practice intentions, and I hope Zen Center can be a place that serves such a function. Indeed, this could be the most important function of any spiritual community.

In exploring the theme of aspiration, it appears to be kind of a tricky area. It seems almost taboo sometimes to talk about this in Zen because of our emphasis on non-seeking, on having no gaining ideas. What can aspiration be, if not such self-centered motivations for personal improvement? Dogen Zenji, in one of his informal talks, says, "Practitioners today have to arouse deep aspiration for the Way at least once." I find it interesting that he says "at least once." Sincere practice and realization may be fully actualized, set in motion, by, for just one moment, letting go of everything completely, surrendering totally, offering one's life to all beings and to the Way, trusting that whatever happens from now on with such an attitude will be okay. "Arousing such an aspiration," Dogen says, "means thinking little of your own life, having deep compassion for all living beings and entrusting your bodily life to the Buddha's teaching. If you have already aroused such aspiration, protect it. Do not lose it, even for a moment. It is impossible to realize Buddha-Dharma without such an aspiration."

The Chinese character that Dogen uses for aspiration is made up of the radical for "earth" or "ground" over "heart" or "mind." So it's like a grounded heart, a heart that's just completely resting in the earth, supported by the earth; like when the Buddha, on the night

of his awakening, reached down and touched the earth. A heart grounded in the way things are is the meaning of true aspiration, intention, determination or resolve.

One time a student of Dogen asked him, "Although many years have passed since first beginning practice, I have not yet had any realization. Since various teachers of old have said that the Way does not depend upon intelligence or knowledge, is there something else in our tradition which I should keep in mind?" Dogen says, "You're right about not relying on intelligence, talent, or quick-wittedness in learning the Way." I think this is good news. This immediately opens up the way of practice to everyone. It doesn't depend on our mental capacities or anything like that. What then does authentic practice depend on? Dogen says, "I believe this. It depends only on whether one's aspiration is firmly determined or not... For example, a person who desires to steal a precious treasure or to win over a beautiful woman or man, will constantly seek an opportunity, in whatever situation or occasion, since one's mind is always occupied with this desire. If one's desire is that enthusiastic, one will not fail to fulfill it. In the same way, if the aspiration to realize the Way is earnest enough, when you practice just sitting, etc., though your aim may be high, you will hit the mark." The teacher I practiced with in Japan, Tange Harada Roshi, would often say, "Those who set out to accomplish it, will definitely accomplish it; those who don't set out to accomplish it, definitely won't accomplish it."

Dogen goes on to say, "To arouse such an aspiration, contemplate deeply in your heart the impermanence of the world. This is not a matter of trying to figure this out; impermanence is truly the reality right in front of our eyes... A person we saw yesterday is no longer here today." Arousing aspiration for practice comes from contemplating how everything is impermanent; particularly how our own life is impermanent, quickly passing.

What is it to realize the Way? To bring it down to earth, where the heart meets the earth, anyone can start walking the path with the aspiration to really be here now. To actually embody one's life in a moment-to-moment way. It's so easy to get caught up in things, in the busyness of the day and unimportant matters, so the resolve for thorough presence can be quite profound. For example, in coming and going to the zendo, can I really just walk to the zendo and walk from the zendo, without thinking about the next event? And during zazen, even if it seems too much to remember throughout the

"Aspiration for practice comes from contemplating how everything is impermanent."

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SANGHA EVENTS AND NEWS

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day, can I really be present for this short time? Can I see the great opportunity in this impermanent, quickly passing life, to really give this life completely to all beings, starting with those in the room, in this one period of zazen? Can I let go of my self-concern, releasing my fixed ideas and beliefs about how things are, for just this period? Such presence and openness not only lightens our own load, but naturally has an effect on those we meet throughout the day, in all kinds of ways known and unknown. It's often not so easy to let go in such a way, which is why we need the strong resolve to do so.

Now, to remember the shadow side of aspiration, as soon as we start going in that determined direction it's very easy to get uptight about it: "Yes! I'm going to really practice now! And if I don't, I will be quite upset with myself." This very wonderful aspiration, to give my life to all beings, can become a very self-engrossed project; I'm trying to give my life to all beings, but how can I get these beings out of the way while I'm doing it? You're disturbing my concentration on giving myself to you! We can think this way sometimes, right? Suzuki Roshi is quite strong about reminding us not to let our aspiration get narrow-minded: "Usually when you practice zazen, you become very idealistic, and you set up an ideal or goal which you strive to attain and fulfill. But as I have often said, this is absurd. When you're idealistic, you have some gaining idea within yourself; by the time you attain your ideal or goal, your gaining idea will create another ideal. So as long as your practice is based on a gaining idea, and you practice zazen in an idealistic way, you will have no time actually to attain your ideal."

Is there a way to have a really wholehearted aspiration, a direction, even a goal in practice, yet without getting caught up in the result? We can aspire to a goal, but we don't spend our time dwelling on what it will be like if we reach the goal. Then we can just practice, start walking down the path and don't stop. Dogen also says, "If you wish to practice the Way of Buddhas and ancestors, have no expectation of result. Expect nothing, seek nothing, gain nothing." He says we must arouse aspiration, but don't seek anything with an expectation of a certain outcome. "Although you must stop seeking and give up expectations of awakening, if you stop practicing and continue engaging in your former deeds, you will still be seeking and will fall back into the old nest."

I think this is often what happens when we hear about no gaining idea. We flip over to the other extreme of making sure we are not trying to get anything by giving up our strong practice aspiration, but that's just another kind of seeking, seeking whatever we were doing instead of practice, and falling back into our old comfortable habits. So there's a middle way here. As usual, this is a quite subtle practice, the middle way of not falling into one extreme of seeking a goal with some expectation, being obsessed about the result, and not falling into the other extreme of avoiding any aspiration because we might get into a gaining idea, and instead just hoping that practice and realization will somehow work out on its own.

It's easy to find a kind of practice "niche." We've basically figured out what the practice looks like, and it's going along pretty smoothly and it works to some extent, kind of like a plateau where it's somewhat comfortable and somewhat rewarding, and we can just go along like that forever. But it may be worth considering, investigating more thoroughly, is there a deeper aspiration in our heart? And if it doesn't seem to appear, Dogen Zenji gives a method

for how to arouse such an aspiration: just open to impermanence, right in front of our eyes all the time, our own lives quickly passing. When we remember how little of our lives we have left, we naturally ask ourselves how we really want to live.

- from a talk by Kokyo Henkel

SANTA CRUZ ZEN CENTER

GENZO-E SESSHIN ON "THIS MIND IS BUDDHA"

July 8-11, 5am-9pm (Ends 4pm Sunday). Genzo-e is a concentrated study retreat on a chapter of Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo. In this retreat we will examine "This Mind is Buddha" (Sokushin Zebutsu), which includes Dogen's presentation of common misunderstandings of this essential zen teaching, as well as an authentic liberating view of mind. Each day will include morning and afternoon teachings and discussion with Kokyo, as well as zazen, and formal oryoki meals. It is possible to participate in any one day, as well as the whole sesshin. \$35/day for sustaining members and \$40 for all others. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

WEEKEND SITTINGS

Saturday & Sunday August 7-8, Saturday September 18, 8:30am-5pm. There will be a lecture in the morning and tea with discussion in the afternoon. Bring a bag lunch. \$12/day for sustaining members and \$15 for all others. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

INTRODUCTION TO ZEN

Saturday July 24, August 28, September 25, 10am-noon. A monthly introduction to the body and mind of zen meditation and the forms of practice at SCZC. The morning includes sitting and walking meditation, followed by discussion. Everyone is welcome, free of charge.

SANGHA DAY AND POTLUCK DINNER

Saturday August 14, 9:15am-4pm work period, 4-6pm dinner. This is a time to come together and help take care of the temple and grounds: cleaning the zendo, making candles, gardening, etc. Please bring a lunch and something for a social potluck dinner. Everyone is welcome to attend just the work period, just the dinner, or both.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LOTUS SUTRA

Presented by Katherine Thanas, 4 Sunday evenings, August 22, 29, Sept 5, 12, 6:35-8pm. When the important Rinzaï teacher Hakuin Zenji encountered the Lotus Sutra as a monk of fifteen he found it irrelevant. Twenty-five years later when he took a second look he deeply realized it was indeed the "king of sutras". We will read selected chapters of the sutra in this introductory class to see why this text might be relevant to us today, and investigate its role in the unfolding history of Buddhism in India, China, and Japan. We will also study commentaries by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, Dogen Zenji, and other important teachers elucidating the text. \$40/class series for sustaining members, \$52 for all others. (There will also be a tea and discussion group led by senior practitioners during zazen time before class, 5:30-6:30pm).

SANGHA EVENTS AND NEWS



*Obon Sejiki Ceremony
(Food Offerings to Hungry Ghosts & Deceased Ancestors) in June*

FALL PRACTICE PERIOD

September 29-December 8

Practice period is a focused period of time, ten weeks this fall, for a deeper commitment to zazen, individual and group meetings to explore practice, and Dharma study. This fall practice period will include a class series by Kokyo on Dogen Zenji's Genjo Koan, a 5-day informal Bodhidharma Memorial Sesshin (coming and going permitted), a 5-day Denko-e Sesshin study retreat on Keizan Zenji's Transmission of Light, and end with a 7-day Rohatsu Sesshin to celebrate Buddha's Awakening.

SCZC relies on fees and donations to continue its mission. If you can pay more, please consider doing so. If you cannot pay the fee listed, please pay what you can. Talk with the Ino or Treasurer if you have questions about fees. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

FROM THE GLOBAL SANGHA LEADER

We all support Zen Center whether we donate money, volunteer our time, or sit a sesshin. At the same time, Zen Center supports the expression of our deepest nature. Your participation here is Zen Center's most valuable asset. In addition, making a monthly or quarterly pledge allows the Board to budget and plan for projects and repairs at the Center. Sustaining Members receive discounts on classes and retreats, and are able to borrow books from our library. Most importantly, all Contributing Members may vote in Board elections or run for a Board position. This is an opportunity to help

make key decisions at our practice place. Please contact any Board member about becoming a Contributing Member.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Board of Trustees has been gathering people together for visioning and creative thinking about SCZC for the last year or so. Now we are moving seriously into strategic planning, really thinking into Zen Center's mission and what we might do to ensure that Zen Center can continue to fulfill its mission into a long and bountiful future. After all, our responsibility is to receive the gift Kobun Chino Roshi gave to the Santa Cruz community and pass it forward to the next generation, stronger and more prepared than it was when we received it. The Board takes this responsibility seriously and considers it in how we care for and steward the resources of the sangha.

Strategic planning requires a lot of input from everyone. The Board and Practice Committee will be soliciting your feedback, starting with the survey in this newsletter, and we ask that you take the time to give us your thoughts. We rely on your ideas to fuel the plan for Zen Center's near- and mid-term future. Over the next few months, we will also be contacting you by telephone, talking with you at Zen Center, and inviting you to offer your thoughts, ideas, and wishes in various ways. All input will be considered and integrated as much as possible into the plan we lay out for Zen Center. We hope you will give your time and consideration to providing your best ideas so that we can all work together to strengthen and enliven our beloved Warm Jewel Temple.

*With palms together, bowing,
Beata Chapman*

ORDINARY RECOVERY GROUP

Friday evenings, 6:45pm-7:45pm, in the zendo. A weekly meeting discussing Buddhist practice with addictions, emotions, and relationships. A short meditation, a Dharma reading, compassionate discussion and support.

NEWS

Two sangha members received Lay Buddhist Initiation (jukai) on April 21. Brian Corser and Sally Aguirre received the Bodhisattva Precepts from Katherine in a joyful ceremony attended by family and friends. Brian received the Dharma name Hei Gyo Shu Shin, Balanced Practice, Protecting Heart; Sallie was given the Dharma name Myo Gen Tetsu Shin, Luminous Eye, Penetrating Faith. Both have been practicing at SCZC for a number of years. Brian has served as work leader while Sallie currently serves on the Board of Trustees. They are both married, with families, Sallie's youngest child being born last November.



SANGHA EVENTS AND NEWS

MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTER

ORDINARY RECOVERY GROUP

Saturday mornings 9-10am at the Cherry Center in Carmel. This group explores the teachings of Buddhism and the twelve steps of recovery through meditation, talk and discussion. This group is open to anyone interested in looking at the suffering mind. For more information please call Robert at (831) 920-8303.

BROWN BAG ZEN

Friday 12:15-1:15 we meet at St. James Church, corner of High Street and Hellam St. in Monterey. We sit 20 minutes, have tea and cookies and a ten minute talk and discussion. This is open to anyone interested in zen meditation in an informal setting. For information call Kathy Whilden (831) 375-7826.

BROWN BAG ZEN SITTING

Saturday morning August 28 from 8:30am to noon we will be having a half day sitting. This will involve periods of sitting meditation, walking meditation, Dharma talk and tea. We will meet at St. James Church, corner of High St. and Hellam in Monterey. Information: Kathy Whilden (831) 375-7826.

HALF-DAY SITTING

We will be having our regular half day sitting on Saturday July 17, 8:30 to noon at 98 Via Campana in Monterey. Information: Kathy Whilden (831) 375-7826.

BREAKFAST ON THE FARM

Earthbound Farms benefit for Monterey Bay Zen Center. Join friends of Monterey Bay Zen Center at Earthbound Farms Farm Stand, 7250 Carmel Valley Road, Carmel, for an organic, vegetarian breakfast and poetry reading on Saturday, July 24, 2010, from 9-11 am. Prepare yourself for a wonderful meal from the chefs at the farm stand and then relax with some poetry reading from local area poets.

Donations are \$25 per person and \$10 for children, under 6 free. For those interested in advance tickets please call Mark Orrisch at (831) 659-7138.

CARMEL VALLEY SITTINGS

The meditation group, "Cruising the Inner Net" continues to meet the first and third Wednesdays of the month. The group is led by Patricia Wolff and meets in Carmel Valley from 7-8:30pm. For more information, call Patricia at (831) 659-3042.

REALIZING GENJO KOAN

Lecture and workshop with Rev. Shohaku Okumura, August 20 & 21 at the Carl Cherry Center for the Arts. Realizing Genjo Koan will investigate Dogen Zenji's seminal fascicle based upon

Shohaku Okumura's new book of the same name. The founder of Japanese Soto Zen, Eihei Dogen, combined a profound religious realization with keen philosophical understanding that continues to define Zen practice in Japan and in the West.

Shohaku Okumura, founder and guiding teacher of the Sanshin Zen Community, was ordained by the late Kosho Uchiyama Roshi, one of the foremost Zen masters of the twentieth century. Today, he is recognized for his unique perspective on the life and teachings of Dogen Zenji derived from his experience as both practitioner and translator, and as a teacher in both Japanese and Western practice communities. He gives frequent lectures on the Shobogenzo and other foundational texts.

Lecture: Friday, August 20, 7:30pm, \$10

Workshop: Saturday, August 21, 10-4 pm, \$60 (includes vegetarian lunch)

Reservations and Information: 831-624-7491

NEWS

Long-time practitioner Robert Reese was ordained as a novice priest on Saturday afternoon, May 22 at the Carl Cherry Center in Carmel. The ceremony was attended by sangha members, family and many friends from the wider Carmel community where he has lived and worked for years as Executive Director of the Cherry Center. He received the Bodhisattva precepts from Katherine Thanas and was given the Dharma name Gotsu Zan Jun Do, Steadfast Mountain, Purehearted Way. Following the ceremony, friends celebrated with a reception in the Center's beautiful garden. Robert and his wife Anita have a 15 year-old daughter, Pilar. He organized and leads a weekly group, Ordinary Recovery, at the Cherry Center.



Photo by Renshin Bunce

LOTUS SUTRA CLASSES CONTINUE IN MAY AND JUNE WITH KATHERINE THANAS

Continuing classes on the Lotus Sutra will be offered by Rev. Katherine Thanas on Sunday mornings from 10am to noon at 98 Via Campana in Monterey May 23, 30, June 6, 13. We will continue working with chapters 15 and 16 of the sutra as well as various commentaries that extend our understanding of the historical and spiritual reach of this important text.

DAILY SCHEDULE



Monday-Friday:

5:45am Zazen
 6:25am Service (chanting)
 12:00pm Zazen
 5:45pm Zazen

Wednesday Evening:

6:35pm Lecture/discussion
 7:30pm Informal tea

Saturday Morning:

8:30am Zazen

Sunday Evening:

5:45pm Zazen
 6:25pm Service

LIBRARY OPEN

During tea after Wed. Lecture



Suzuki Roshi Memorial	Mon., July 5	6:25-7am
Genzo-e Sesshin	July 8-11	5am-9pm (ends 4pm Sun.)
Introduction to Zen	Sat., July 24	10am to noon
Chino Roshi Memorial	Mon., July 26	6:25-7am
Precept Renewal Cerem.	Mon., July 26	5:45-6:30pm
Two-Day Sitting	Aug. 7-8	8:30am-5pm
Sangha Day	Sat., Aug. 14	9:15am-4pm
Potluck Dinner	Sat., Aug. 14	4-6pm
Lotus Sutra classes	Sun., Aug. 22,29	6:35-8pm
Precept Renewal Cerem.	Tues., Aug. 24	5:45-6:30pm
Suzuki Roshi Memorial	Fri., Sep. 3	6:25-7am
Lotus Sutra classes	Sun., Sep. 5,12	6:35-8pm
One-Day Sitting	Sat., Sep. 18	8:30am-5pm
Precept Renewal Cerem.	Thurs., Sep. 23	5:45-6:30pm
Introduction to Zen	Sat., Sep. 25	10am to noon
Chino Roshi Memorial	Mon., Sep. 27	6:25-7am
Dogen & Keizan Memor.	Wed., Sep. 29	6:25-7am
Practice Period Opens	Wed., Sep. 29	6:35-7:20pm
Bodhidharma Sesshin	Sep., 30-Oct. 4	5am-9pm

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

We meet Tuesday evenings, Monday and Thursday mornings at the Cherry Center, 4th and Guadalupe in Carmel.

Tuesday evening schedule:

Zazen 6:30
 Walking Meditation 7:10
 Service 7:20
 Lecture/discussion 7:30-8:30

Monday, Thursday mornings:

Zazen 7am

(followed by service and soji)

Board Meeting	Sun., July 11	9:45 to noon, Carmel Valley
Half-Day Sitting	Sat., July 17	8:30 to noon, 98 Via Campana
Earthbound Farms Benefit	Sat., July 24	9am, Carmel Valley
Shohaku Okumura Talk	Fri., Aug. 20	7:30pm, Cherry Center
Shohaku Okumura Wkshp.	Sat., Aug. 21	10am-4pm, Cherry Ctr
Brown Bag Zen Sitting	Sat., Aug. 28	8:30 to noon, St. James Church
John Tarrant Lecture	Fri., Sep. 3	7:30pm Cherry Center
John Tarrant Workshop	Sat., Sep. 4	10am-4pm Cherry Center
Introduction to Zen	Sat., Sep. 18	10:30 to noon, Cherry Center

Zazen instruction is offered the first Tuesday of each month at 5:30pm. Everyone is welcome. For further information call 831-375-7826 or go to our website: www.montereybayzencenter.org.

Santa Cruz Zen Center
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Santa Cruz, CA 95060

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