

Prairie Wind

行但行
坐但坐

*Published by the Order of the Prairie Wind for Nebraska Zen Center /
Heartland Temple and Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple*

Volume 21, Issue 3

Fall 2011

Nebraska Zen Center
3625 Lafayette Avenue
Omaha, NE 68131-1363

www.prairiewindzen.org
heartland@prairiewindzen.org
(402) 551-9035

Address Service Requested

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Omaha, Nebraska
PERMIT NO. 1370

Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple is a Soto Zen Buddhist temple established for Zen practice. The center follows the tradition established in Japan by Zen Master Eihei Dogen in the 13th century and transmitted in this century by two Masters, Rev. Shunryu Suzuki, founder of San Francisco Zen Center and author of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* and Rev. Dainin Katagiri, who assisted Rev. Suzuki in San Francisco and later founded Minnesota Zen Meditation Center in Minneapolis. Rev. Katagiri was instrumental in establishing Nebraska Zen Center in 1975.

Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW, is NZC's Head Priest. He trained with Rev. Katagiri and was ordained by him. Rev. Chowaney also trained at Tassajara Zen Monastery in California and in Japan at Zuio-ji and Shogo-ji monasteries. He received formal Dharma Transmission from Rev. Katagiri and has been authorized to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan. Rev. Chowaney is the founder of the Order of the Prairie Wind.

Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple is NZC's sister temple. ZCP also follows the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition established by Zen Master Dogen..

Rev. Kyoki Roberts, OPW, is ZCP's Head Priest and a founding member of the Order of the Prairie Wind. She is the senior ordained student of Rev. Nonin Chowaney and has trained at Hokyoji Monastery in Minnesota, San Francisco Zen Center and Green Gulch Farm in California, and Zuioji and Shogoji monasteries in Japan. Rev. Roberts received Dharma Transmission from Rev. Chowaney and was authorized to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan. She was appointed to serve as ZCP's Head Priest in 2001

Prairie Wind (© 2011 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

Cover: *When Walking, Just Walk; When Sitting, Just Sit* (Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney)

We **always** need material for *Prairie Wind*. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, etc. The deadline for publication in our **Winter** issue is **November 1st**.

Websites for **Nebraska Zen Center** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh** are at: www.prairiewindzen.org.

Nebraska Zen Center's e-mail address is: heartland@prairiewindzen.org.
Zen Center of Pittsburgh's e-mail address is: kyoki@prairiewindzen.org

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

by *Nonin Chowaney*

For the past couple of years, I've participated in an on-line Zen Buddhist forum, on which anyone can ask a question of participating teachers. In this article, I'll present some of those questions and the answers I gave to them. Here's the first one:

Question: What do Buddhists mean by "emptiness"? Does "All things are empty" mean that all things are composite? That all things are changing and temporary?

Answer: Simply, what "emptiness" means is that there is nothing fixed and permanent within anything that remains unchanged from moment to moment. All things, including human beings, are made up of other things that are constantly changing from moment to moment, so yes, all things are composites and are temporary, or impermanent.

Question: What I have difficulty with is that shunyata [emptiness] seems to be posited as a positive "thing." I can get my head around anatta [no self]. I don't mean I have had more than a glimpse of what it means, but I can get it. The concept of emptiness seems to me to be suggesting that when we remove all that is impermanent, there is a Something . . . ?

Answer: This reifies emptiness, or attempts to make concrete something abstract. The Heart Sutra expresses the interplay between form and emptiness

thusly:

"Shariputra, form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form. Form itself is emptiness, emptiness itself form."

Emptiness is not an entity. It is a concept expressed by a word we use to describe the true nature of all things: there is nothing fixed and permanent within anything; all things are made up of other things, which are, in turn, made up of other things. Because emptiness is not an entity, it cannot stand alone. It can only be viewed as the true nature of form, which is empty of anything fixed and permanent.

Question: My latest issue is that occasionally I will experience anger. Not the anger I used to experience. No, what I experience now is what I can only call primal rage. It is by far the most vile, raging hatred I have ever experienced So my question is: Why anger?

Answer: You ask, why anger? I wouldn't be so concerned about "why" but "how" to handle it when it arises. In Soto Zen Buddhist zazen practice, we are taught to allow things to arise without suppressing them and allow them to go without clinging to them. Anger arises as thought first, and if we can just let it arise, know it, and let it

continued on page 4

Questions and Answers

from page 3

go, it will not escalate into speech or action. If we cultivate it through the thought processes, we can keep it hanging around for quite some time, as you know, and chances are that it will escalate into rage, which can then escalate into angry speech or angry action eventually.

Anger arises for everyone, even those who have been practicing for many years. We need to learn how to let it come and let it go as soon as possible.

Question: Does time and experience make a difference to Zazen practice? What happens after Beginner's Mind ?

Answer: In Soto Zen, we say that "five minutes of sitting is five minutes of buddha." I always add, "but forty years of sitting is forty years of buddha," so there is a difference quantitatively, if not qualitatively. There was certainly quite a difference between me and Katagiri-roshi when I first came to his temple. He had been practicing for 30 years, and I had practiced for 40 minutes.

Nothing happens after Beginner's Mind that we try to cultivate. We try to cultivate beginner's mind -- the mind that approaches each moment of practice as fresh and new, the mind that is open and free -- throughout our practice lives. Whenever we drop what we're thinking about and return to this mo-

ment, we are cultivating beginner's mind.

Question: Could someone say a word about *Bodaishin* in Soto Zen Bud-



Nonin's 70th Birthday

dhism, its place, its importance ?

Answer: *Bodaishin* means "awakened mind." Awakened mind is the mind that abides nowhere. Cultivating awakened mind is the heart of our practice.

Question: In the Pali canon *panna*

Questions and Answers

from page 4

(wisdom) is used to mean the insight that arises when the truth of the Three Signs -- *dukkha* (suffering), *anatta* (no soul or self), and *anicca* (impermanence) -- is seen. In the Vajrayana, *prajna* (wisdom - Sanskrit) is seen as activity. How does Zen view *prajna*?

Answer: I can't tell you how "Zen" views anything because Zen is not a monolithic entity. How Zen Buddhist practitioners understand *prajna* depends on their individual understanding, and also, different Zen schools may have nuanced ways of teaching *prajna* and how it is cultivated and manifested.

Given that, let me give you both traditional views and my understanding. The most current and used translation of *prajna* is wisdom. Wisdom, however, is not intellectual understanding. It arises from a deeper place. Sometimes it is referred to as "illumination." When it is referred to in this way, it means that our true nature and our relationship to the rest of the universe is "illuminated."

Usually in Buddhist iconography, the bodhisattva Manjushri, the embodiment of wisdom, is depicted as a bodhisattva sitting on the back of a lion or tiger and holding a sword aloft. The symbolism here is that the sword of wisdom cuts through delusion. This iconographic representation is current in most Soto Zen and other Zen practice places.

However, basic Soto Zen Buddhist teaching is that practice and realization are not two. They are one and the same. In my tradition of Soto Zen, which goes through Katagiri-roshi to his master in Japan and also to Ikko Narasaki-roshi, late abbot of Zuoji monastery, where I trained in Japan, Manjushri bodhisattva is depicted iconographically a bit differently. Eko Hashimoto-roshi, an early-to-mid-20th century Soto Zen Master and one of Katagiri-roshi's teachers explained this iconographic representation in the following way. It is called *Shoso Manjushri*. *Shoso* means "practicing sangha monk."

"Shoso Manjushri image is enshrined in the sodo [zendo]. These days it is common to see the Manjushri image sitting on a lion and holding a sword, but this is not traditionally accurate. If Southeast Asian priests saw this image, they might not honor it. The traditional way or nyoho is for the Manjushri image to have the appearance of a priest, and it should be sitting on a chair. This is called the Shoso Manjushri Bodhisattva.

According to the authentic Buddhist way, the chair itself is the lion seat or diamond seat. [This was true in China. In Japan these days, practitioners sit on cushions, so the cushions are regarded as the lion or diamond seat - ed.]. Holding a sword

continued on page 5

continued on page 14

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

FALL PRACTICE PERIOD will begin with a **Two day sesshin** on **September 17th and 18th**. Practice Period provides structure for intensifying one's practice and sangha connections in three areas for a specific period of time. Those three areas are: **(1) daily practice at home** (sitting and devotional services), **(2) regular involvement at the temple** (e.g., specific morning or evening sittings, Sunday morning practice, or work practice), and **(3) attendance at special events** (e.g., sesshins, study groups, or precept ceremonies). Practice Period Students will also keep a **daily practice journal** and will **meet with Nonin** as a group two or three times during the period, which will end with **Rohatsu Sesshin** (Dec. 1 – 7).

Work on our **temple addition** has begun, and the East side zendo addition has progressed nicely. Only interior work remains. Many thanks to sangha members **Kanho Doug Dittman** and **Sokei J.P. Loeffler**, for shingling the roof, and **Mike Zagozda** for electrical wiring. Work on the West side addition began a short time ago and is progressing nicely. Everything will be closed up for winter, during which we'll do interior work.

Three sangha members completed **Lay Initiation** last March, **J.P. Loeffler**, **Chris Rathburn**, and **Ron Semerena**. J.P.'s dharma name is **Sokei** (Sangha Jewel). Chris's is **Kozen** (Constant Zen). Ron's is **Kyudo** (**Penetrate Deeply the Way**). **Congratulations to all!**

Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer was **priest-ordained** at Heartland Temple on July 10th. Her full dharma name is **Jozan Shuji** (Quiet Mountain; Practicing Compassion) Congratulations to her! **Shuji** will be doing a three-month **monastic training period** at **Shasta Abbey** in northern California this Fall. She'll be leaving for the Abbey on September 1st. Our best to her!

Many thanks to those who've been doing temple jobs this past Spring and Summer. The temple has looked well cared for. **Special thanks** go to **Pam Griffin**, who's put in a lot of time on the gardens, weeding, re-arranging, planting, and re-planting. **Thanks so much, Pam**. The gardens haven't looked this nice in many years!



NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER WINTER EVENTS

SESSHIN

There will be two sesshins at NZC this Fall, a Two-day sesshin on September 17th and 18th, and a One-day Sitting on October 15th. Fees; \$40 per day for members; \$50 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. call **402-551-9035** or e-mail us at heartland@prairiewindzen.org to register.

DHARMA STUDY CLASS

Nonin will lead a **Dharma Study Class** at the temple this Fall. It will meet on four successive **Saturday mornings** from **10 a.m. till noon**, on **October 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th**. We'll be studying Madhyamaka teachings, the philosophy of the Middle Way, and we'll will focus on **Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakarika**, a core Buddhist text examining emptiness and other Middle Way teachings.

OTHER FALL EVENTS

Sep 4	World Peace Ceremony	Group Discussion
	Group Discussion	12 Precepts Ceremony
14	Precepts Ceremony	Nov 6 World Peace Ceremony
Oct 2	World Peace Ceremony	Group Discussion
	Group Discussion	9 Precepts Ceremony

WEEKLY ZENDO SCHEDULE — NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER

Morning

Tuesday — Sunday

6:00 - 7:00	— Sitting Meditation (Walking as Needed)
7:00 - 7:30	— Service
7:30 - 7:45	— Cleaning

Sunday Only

8:30	— Zazen Instruction
9:00 - 9:25	— Sitting Meditation
9:25 - 9:35	— Walking Meditation
9:35 - 10:00	— Sitting Meditation
10:00 - 10:10	— Service
10:10 - 11:00	— Dharma Talk

Evening

Tuesday — Wednesday

7:00 - 8:30	— Sitting Meditation (Walking as needed)
-------------	---

Thursday

6:00 - 8:30	— Classes as scheduled
-------------	------------------------

Friday

7:00 - 8:30	— Sitting Meditation (Walking as need-)
-------------	--

We are closed on Monday.

If you are new to the temple, you must have zazen instruction before joining us. Please arrive by 8:30 on Sunday morning for instruction.

ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH SANGHA NOTES

If you want to receive monthly schedule updates and last-minute changes to events, join our e-mail list. Go to <http://www.prairiewindzen.org/zcp/list.htm> and register. Or, e-mail ZCP at kyoki@prairiewindzen.org.

Many thanks to **Rev. Myozan Keegan**, who led our June Intensive for the first two weeks. Later, we were joined by **Steven Coraor**, who then became a resident at Deep Spring. Steven is a student of Kyoki's and also serves as a director of **An Olive Branch**, our mediation and facilitation service for spiritual communities and other nonprofits. If you know a nonprofit that could use some help, contact Kyoki at info@an-olive-branch.org.

In July, **Jisen** and **Kyoki** traveled to **Heartland Temple** in Omaha to celebrate **Shuji Mintzmyer's** priest ordination. Congratulations to Shuji and also to Kyoki, for she now has a new dharma sister!



Kyoki in the zendo at Deep Spring Temple

On August 12th we held our 2nd annual **Sweet Sounds of Compassion** music benefit for Deep Spring Temple. Three bands played under a full moon and the Sangha provided desserts. Over 80 people attended, from 8 months old to over 80 years old, and everyone had a great time! Special thanks to the organizing committee, led by **Jigetsu Kaethejean Bleicher** and **Kakuon Rick Lohmeyer**.

The next week, Kyoki attended the **American Zen Teachers Association annual meeting**, held this year at San Francisco Zen Center.

Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple, 124 Willow Ridge Road,
Sewickley, PA 15143 tel: (412) 741-1262 e-mail: kyoki@prairiewindzen.org
website: www.prairiewindzen.org

ZCP FALL EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

3,17,24 — Diamond Sutra Class, 8:30 am
4 — World Peace Ceremony
9-11 — Two-day Sesshin
15 — Precept Renewal Ceremony

20 — Lay Initiation

23-26 — ZCP closed

30 — ZCP closed

DECEMBER

1-7 — Rohatsu Sesshin

8-9 — ZCP closed

23-26 — ZCP closed

31 — New Year's Eve Celebration 6:00 pm
until midnight

OCTOBER

1,15,22,29 — Buddhist Study Class, 8:30 am
2 — World Peace ceremony
7-9 — Two-day Sesshin
13 — Precept Renewal Ceremony

*Please register for this event

NOVEMBER

5 — Last Buddhist Study Class, 8:30 am
6 — World Peace Ceremony
10 — Precept Renewal Ceremony
11-13 — Two-day Sesshin

ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Closed Mondays

Tuesday — 7-7:40 a.m. DST

6-7:15 p.m. DST

Wednesday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST

6:00-7:15 p.m. DST & FMH

Thursday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST

6:00-7:15 p.m. DST

Friday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST

6:00-7:15 p.m. DST

Saturday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST

Sunday — 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. DST

DST — Deep Spring Temple, Bell Acres

FMH — Friends Meeting House, Oakland

WHITE LOTUS SANGHA NOTES

by Zenryu Vicki Grunwald

Last year, I led an Intro to Zen Buddhist Meditation workshop in one of the prisons. One of the men, I'll call him "Jim," told me that he came to the workshop despite pressure from his friends, for he was a Christian who hung around people who thought that all other religions were "wrong." Several friends concerned with his soul tried to talk him out of coming to our service, and he revealed that he was fighting these feelings himself.

I told Jim that we have no intention of pressuring him to leave Christianity, for we respect other religions and want peace with them. After learning about postures and sitting zazen, Jim was still conflicted, but conceded that he could really use "something like this." I reassured him that he was welcome even if he had another primary religion.

The next time I heard about Jim was from a White Lotus sangha member. Apparently, Jim's friends had gotten through to him. Out of fear and confusion, he turned to the Bible for advice on how to approach Buddhism. I'm told he randomly opened the Bible and read the scripture where his eyes first fell. The scripture talked about sin or evil or something like that. Jim immediately concluded that he had been seduced by evil, and that evil was Buddhism. Several months later, Jim received a

WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

The White Lotus Sangha, a group affiliated with NZC, meets on Friday evenings in four Nebraska prisons, **Nebraska State Penitentiary** and **Lincoln Correctional Center** in Lincoln, **Tecumseh State Correctional Institute** in Tecumseh, and **Omaha Correctional Center** in Omaha. For further information, see **the Religious Coordinator** at either of the above institutions, e-mail **heartland@prairiewindzen.org**, call **(402) 551-9035**, or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363**.

terminal cancer diagnosis. He requested that I be told out of respect for me and Nebraska Zen Center. Respect for me? I was confused. I thought we were evil in his mind. The White Lotus member informed me that he had continued to talk with Jim about Zen Buddhism. He came to respect our views and practices, although not in front of his right-wing friends. Knowing that our health and well being list is similar to a prayer list, Jim requested that I add his name. I was told that he appreciated our chanting for him.

In a few short weeks from the diagnosis, cancer claimed Ken's life. I'm told that he handled his illness and subsequent death with grace and equanimity. He requested that NZC do something upon his death. I lit the ancestor's altar at NZC, did a chant, and said goodbye to an unlikely friend, a right-wing Christian who wanted peace with Buddhists. May he be at peace.

Zenryu Vicki Grunwald serves the White Lotus Sangha as a Lay Clergy Person.

LAY INITIATION



Ron Semerena, J.P. Loeffler, and Chris Rathburn at start of ceremony



Kyudo Ron, Kozen Chris, and Sokei J. P. with rakusus



Kyudo Ron receives lineage papers from Nonin; Sozen George Patenode observing.

Thoughts from Rabbi Buddha

From *Zen Judaism: For You A Little Enlightenment*, by David Bader. Harmony Books.

Be here now. Be someplace else later. Is that so complicated?

Drink tea and nourish life; with the first sip, joy; with the second sip, satisfaction; with the third sip, peace; with the fourth, a Danish.

Wherever you go, there you are. Your luggage is another story.

Accept misfortune as a blessing. Do not wish for perfect health, or a life without problems. What would you talk about?

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single “Oy.”

There is no escaping karma. In a previous life, you never called, you never wrote, you never visited. And whose fault was that?

The Tao does not speak. The Tao does not blame. The Tao does not take sides. The Tao has no expectations. The Tao demands nothing of others. The Tao is not Jewish.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Forget this and attaining Enlightenment will be the least of your problems.

Let your mind be as a floating cloud. Let your stillness be as a wooded glen. And sit up straight. You’ll never meet the Buddha with such rounded shoulders.

Deep inside you are ten thousand flowers. Each flower blossoms ten thousand times. Each blossom has ten thousand petals. You might want to see a specialist.

Be aware of your body. Be aware of your perceptions. Keep in mind that not every physical sensation is a symptom of a terminal illness.

The Torah says, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” The Buddha says, “There is no self.” So, maybe we’re off the hook?

Though only your skin, sinews, and bones remain, though your blood and flesh dry up and wither away, yet shall you meditate and not stir until you have attained full Enlightenment. . . . But first a little nosh.

SANGHA MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER / ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH

Membership

While no one needs to formally join either temple to share in our practices, we invite you to become a member of either Nebraska Zen Center or Zen Center of Pittsburgh. Members are people who feel that Zen Buddhism is an important part of their lives and who wish to express that feeling by joining a community of practitioners.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please speak with the appropriate person at either temple after Sunday services.

Financial Support

Buddhist communities have always relied on the generosity of their supporters. For income, we depend on those who believe in the good of what we do and wish to nourish it.

No one is refused temple membership due to an inability to pay. We do, however, encourage members to commit to our financial support through monthly pledges. We also encourage members to exhibit this support through participation in work projects.

The amount of your pledge is your personal decision. We ask you to support the temple at a level appropriate to your means. For those who participate regularly, we suggest a monthly pledge that reflects one hour of your earnings per week, or four hours per month. Because we are non-profit religious corporations, all donations are tax deductible.

LINCOLN ZEN GROUP

A group affiliated with NZC meets weekly on **Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm** at **Branched Oak Farm, 17015 NW 70th St, Raymond, NE 68428-4041**. For further information, e-mail or call **Kanho Doug Dittman** at doug@windstream.net (402-783-2124). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

Questions and Answers

from page 5

symbolizes Buddha's wisdom. This diamond seat which emanates Buddha's wisdom is not for Manjushri alone, but for all of the seats of all practitioners who sit in the practice place. We regard all of the practitioners who come to the sodo [zendo] as Bodhisattvas. They sit in the zazen postures. As a representative of these Bodhisattvas, Shoso Manjushri Bodhisattva is enshrined in the center of the zendo."

So ultimately, the practice of zazen is regarded as the practice and manifestation of wisdom (*prajna*).

At Zuioji monastery in Japan and at Katagiri-roshi's temple in Minnesota, the Shoso Manjushri sculpture was enshrined in the Zendo. When I established our temple in Omaha, I asked Gyokuko Carlson, a Soto Zen Master with great artistic skill to make us a Shoso Manjushri. I also asked her to try to make it non-gender specific, for both men and women practice in our temple. She made it out of clay, fired it, and on one of my trips to the West Coast I brought it back on a plane and guarded it scrupulously. It's been living on our zendo altar for almost twenty years now, and because of Gyokuko's skill, sometimes I look at it and see a man; sometimes, I see a woman. It is truly non-gender specific. I also had it mind to have here make so it could be either a priest or a lay person, but because the clothes we wear in the zendo are different, I finally told her to make the image wearing an okesa (priest robe), but she did

it so subtly, you have to look closely to see it.

This has been a lengthy response, but I've tried not only to present how *prajna* is regarded by most Zen Buddhist practitioners but also by the nuanced way *prajna* and Manjushri Bodhisattva is regarded in my lineage of Soto Zen Buddhism.

Question: Can someone say a word about samu...does it feature in Soto?

Answer: I don't know what *samu* (*Jap.*) means literally, but we translate it as "work practice," and it is an integral part of the monastic schedule in Soto Zen Buddhism. Here at our small city temple in Omaha, Nebraska, USA, it's an integral part of our practice; all regularly attending practitioners take on a temple job. Also, a one-hour work period is part of our daily sesshin schedule.

Work practice is conducted according to certain rules. There is no unnecessary talking; we only speak when it's necessary to carry on the work. We concentrate on the work at hand. We handle tools properly and return them to their rightful place when done, etc., etc.

Follow up Question: Is work practice always a formal temple activity or it also carried out by individuals in other settings? In other words, do people work in other settings with the same kind of objectives?



Kozen Chris Rathburn, Kyudo Ron Semerena, Nonin, and Sokei J.P. Loeffler after Lay Initiation

Questions and Answers

from previous page

Answer: Work practice itself is a formal temple or monastic activity; it's an integral part of our practice, and as I've mentioned, we have specific guidelines for it. However, I always work according to those guidelines when I'm working around the temple, either on temple business or on my own. I rarely work away from the temple, but when I help a friend on a home repair project, I work the same way as I do at the temple. I pay attention to the issue at hand. I don't chat while I'm working; I save that for breaks. I do one thing at a time (*I do not* "multitask."). If the phone rings, I stop what I'm doing, answer it, and devote my full attention to the conversation. I handle tools respectfully and carefully and put them back in their rightful place when I'm through with them. I keep my work area neat and clean. I could go on, but this is probably enough.

Question: What is the True Meaning of Zen?

Answer: Taking a shit with my ass draped across a log.

Question: As we are going to die anyway why should we abstain from desires?

Answer: We can't abstain from all desires, when the desire for food or water comes up, we should eat and drink, or we will die quicker than necessary! Our teaching is that we should carefully try not to be pulled around by the nose by our desires, or cravings. Greed (craving), hatred, and delusion are the three poisons. They are the cause of suffering. If we con-

CALLIGRAPHY FOR SALE ON OUR WEBSITE



Mu (nothing)

Nonin's calligraphy can be purchased through our website, at www.prairiewindzen.org. Click on **Nebraska Zen Center** and go to Nonin's calligraphy pages.

There are **over fifty items for sale**, one and two-character pieces, longer phrases, and specialty items. All are **signed and stamped originals** and are written on high-quality paper, either Canson watercolor paper, Rives BFK, or archival matboard.

Nonin also accepts **commissions** to write temple names, individual dharma names, and specific characters or Zen phrases. **For further information**, contact him directly at the following e-mail address: heartland@prairiewindzen.org.

We sell and ship the calligraphy unframed. **Each piece can be mounted and framed by a good framer using traditional methods.**

All profits from website calligraphy sales go directly to Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple.

Questions and Answers

from page 15

tinually chase after things, we'll suffer when we don't get them and also suffer when we do get them and they end, as all things eventually do. Also, we'll never be able to exist with equanimity in "just this," things as they are.

Question: Do any equalities exist in a teacher student relationship?

Answer: The teacher is the teacher and the student is the student. Sometimes, the student learns from the teacher; sometimes, the teacher learns from the student. Ultimately, it's buddha to buddha, but yet, the teacher is the teacher and the student is the student.

Question: How does someone approach/find a teacher? What is the etiquette involved, what is expected of a student? I am a father, husband, and employee, with all of the requisite responsibilities associated with this, and I hope this would not conflict.

Answer: The questions you ask will be given different answers depending on the practice place and the particular teacher there. My advice is this: Look around for practice places in your area. <http://www.buddhanet.net> is a good place to start, as are the American Zen Teachers Association at <http://www.americanzenteachers.org> and the Soto Zen Buddhist Association at <http://www.szba.org>. If you are clear about what form of Buddhism you want to pursue, check out whatever places you find through their individual websites. Ask friends, other practitioners,

and whatever other knowledgeable people you know about the places and the teachers there. Also, visit the places you're interested in, check out the practice there by attending scheduled meditation and other events. Most place have specific ways to integrate beginners. Ask about them.

If you find a place that appeals to you and you think that you might be interested in the teacher there, ask to meet privately with him or her. Don't worry about the proper etiquette. People will know that you're new and will tell you how you should meet the teacher if you ask them. Ask the teacher what is expected of a student practicing with him or her. Tell the teacher that you are a father and husband and that you have a full-time job. Ask the teacher how you should be practicing in the light of your situation and responsibilities.

If you don't feel any connection to a particular place or the teacher there or don't have good feelings about either, try someplace else until you find a place that is right for you and a teacher that you feel you can trust to guide you.

Question: How do you transmit a state of mind?

Answer: It's not possible to transmit a state of mind from one person to another.

Question: What makes a Zen teacher?

continued on page 18

Questions and Answers

from page 17

Answer: Zen Buddhist teachers are created or authorized from two sides. First, authorization from an authorized teacher. This is accomplished after the student has studied with their teacher for quite a long period of time and the teacher feels that the student is ready to teach. Second, if the teacher has no students, then is the person a teacher? I don't think so. Students then, participate in making the teacher, for having students means that the person is a teacher. So, a teacher is made from both sides.

Question: Do you have any working method (your personal one, perhaps) of describing the true essence of the state of "just sitting" to another person? In words?

Answer: Yes, I do. Sit in an erect posture, either a lotus posture, burmese, seiza, on a seiza bench, or in a chair. Allow thoughts to come without suppressing them and allow them to go without clinging to them. Follow the breath. When consciousness arises that breath is not being followed, drop thinking about whatever thoughts have arisen, and return to breath. This is called, "bringing the mind back home." Then, start the process anew.

Question: What if any are the Zen view/s of the Pali Canon ?

Answer: "Zen" does not have views, because there is no "zen" out there somewhere that exists as an object. I've read most of the Pali Canon and

found some of it useful and some of it not. What I found most useful were the sutras and the part of the vinaya that presented how Shakyamuni Buddha lived day-by-day and how he dealt with life as it unfolded day-by-day.

Question: Did you experience any fear the first time you walked into a house of buddha to sit or to meet for the first time with your teacher? Do you still experience similar fears when dealing with specific situations and people in general? What do you suggest is the best way to get through fear?

Answer: No, I never felt fear, even at the very beginning. I was anxious, somewhat nervous at first, but that faded very quickly, once I knew how to enter the zendo and get seated. The people at Minnesota Zen Center were very welcoming. It didn't take me long to feel comfortable there. I was quite anxious the first time I went to dokusan with Katagiri-roshi, but he knew how to put people at ease, and I walked out feeling very relieved. I was anxious before sesshins for quite a while, but I've been doing them for so long now that whether I want to go or not, I just go and don't listen to the mind buzzing.

I learned the best way to get through fear many years ago from the old television program, "Emergency." It was about Emergency Medical Techs and their everyday exploits. One episode dealt with some young teenagers on

PRIEST ORDINATION



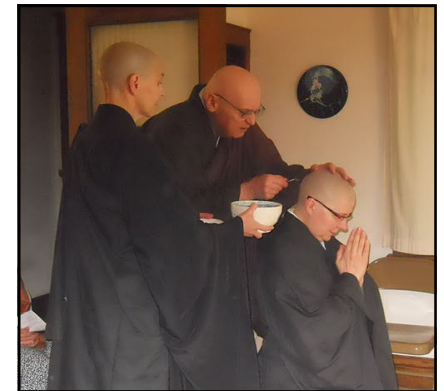
Offering incense — Shjui Mintzmyer and Sozen George Patenode



Presenting the Koromo (priest robe) — Jisen Coghlan, Shuji, Nonin, and Koki Roberts



Nonin explaining



Heading Shaving — Jisen, Nonin, and Shuji

Questions and Answers

from page 18

an outing with a group. They were climbing up a cliff, and one boy got stuck on a ledge. He couldn't go up or down. The EMT's were called and one rappelled down to where the boy was stuck. He fitted the boy into a harness that would allow him to be pulled to the top of the cliff with assistance from the EMT, who asked the boy if he was afraid. The boy said "yes." The EMT said that he was afraid, too, but that "we can't let being afraid keep us from doing what we have to do."

I've always remembered that and repeat it to myself whenever I've been afraid, like before surgery, when cross-country skiing down a particularly dangerous place, or walking through a dangerous neighborhood.

Question: I am having difficulties with my practice. When my life is going "good" I can sit but when things are "bad" my practice falls apart. Things aren't so good at the moment. Any advice?

Answer: In zazen, let whatever comes up for you mentally come up without suppressing anything and let it go without clinging to anything. No matter what comes up, let it come and let it go. They're just thoughts. Some are positive; some are negative; some are pleasant; some are unpleasant, etc., etc. With a little experience, we learn how to sit through anything. Zen master Dogen said: "No matter how negative a state of mind you get into, if you hold out over the long run, the clouds will disappear and the autumn winds

will cease. That is a fact."

Question: Is there such a thing as an ideal student, and how would you describe him or her?

One's Ship Comes In

*I swear
my way now will be
to continue without
plan or hope, to accept
the drift of things, to shift
from endless effort
to joy in, say,
that robin, plunging
into the mossy shallows
of my bird bath and
splashing madly till
the air shines with spray.
Joy it will be, say,
in Nancy, pretty in pink
and rumpled T-shirt,
rubbing sleep from her eyes, or
joy even in
just this breathing, free
of fright and clutch, knowing
how one's ship comes in
with each such breath.*

Joe Paddock

Answer: My ideal student is one who comes with an open mind and an open heart, a person who is willing to throw themselves wholeheartedly into Zen Buddhist practice as we do it here at the temple.

Questions and Answers

from previous page

Question: Recently, in the kindergarten where my 15-month old son has been going for the last year, a baby died of sudden infant death syndrome. This has left the lady who runs the kindergarten and all of the parents in shock.

I decided not to ask for the circumstances at first. Now that the kindergarten has reopened, the lady explained them to me. The reason for not wanting/needing to know was that it's too easy to get distracted by thinking, rationalizing and blaming through the typical "how did it happen," "what could've been done to avoid it," and so on style of reasoning. I actually notice myself engaging in it a little bit now that I do know it was SIDS.

Not knowing allowed me to stay present and open to my feelings. When I became quiet, I felt an overwhelmingly large, empty and dark hole of sadness. I don't know if staying quiet with the feeling helps me come to terms with it or not, but I can accept it instead of avoiding it with idle thoughts. I would like to hear some response from you about this kind of experience, how to stay open, and how to learn from it if possible.

Answer: Oh, what a shame. How sad. About all we can do in such a situation is live the sadness when it comes up. It always helps to cry and get it all out. However, my experience is that after the crying is over, the sadness will still come up, and all we can do is accept it, live it, and eventually let it go. This process can continue for quite some time. I can't imagine what the parents are going through.

I am reminded of the following story:

"A Zen Master's most senior disciple had died. At the memorial service, the master was giving the eulogy when he broke down and cried. He was unable to continue. Later, a young monk said to the teacher, 'You are a supposed to be a Zen Master, a person beyond life and death, why did you cry?' The master said, 'He was my oldest and dearest disciple. If I don't cry now, when am I supposed to?'"

Analyzing, thinking, and rationalizing are of no help in such situations. Sometimes all we can do is cry.

Question: If there is no "I," then where are your words (that are said in response to this question) coming from?

Answer: These words come from the mouth of a provisional being called "Nonin."

Question: I would deeply appreciate a better understanding of the term "sentient" within the context of Buddhism in general and Zen Buddhism in particular. It most often appears before the term "being(s)." I understand that this term is an English translation for something else, and thus the usual definition, "having the power of perception by the senses" doesn't quite get there. Or perhaps it does. I dunno -- hence the question!

Answer: Your definition of "sentient" is a good one. However, in contemporary Mahayana Buddhism, the term "sentient

Questions and Answers

From previous page

beings" has been and gradually is being replaced by either "living beings," "all beings," or simply "beings." Our temple's translation of the Four Bodhisattva Vows reads, "Beings are numberless, I vow to free them." Mahayana Buddhist practitioners have an expansive view of what a being is, especially Japanese and Tibetan practitioners. Zen Master Dogen stated that "all beings **are** Buddha nature. In other words all beings have the potential to awaken, and this means **all** beings, everything, without exception.

Follow-up Question: what does "being" mean? Better yet, can you help me understand the different categories that the phrase "sentient being" references? Humans and other animals, sure, but plants? cellular entities? inanimate objects from nature such as pebbles?

Answer: For me, all "beings" means all things: humans, animals, plants, birds, automobiles, cushions, stones, amoebas, books, paramecia, etc., etc -- all are "beings."

What "sentient beings" usually references in Buddhism varies according to the school and to the depth of individual practitioners. I don't like to leave anything out, for there is no fixed and permanent entity in anything to be left out. The names we call things are words, means of reference, they have no existence in and of themselves, nor do the beings they reference.

Question: I would like to know how to refine compassion and put it into practice.

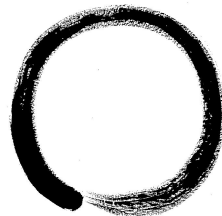
Answer: Compassion literally means to

feel with (*com* means "with;" *passion* means "feeling.")

In Buddhism, compassion means to empathize with another being's suffering and want to do something about it. What we do depends on the situation and what we are able to do. Sometimes all we can do is empathize; sometimes we can offer a kind word, give a hug, adopt an animal, feed the birds in the winter, feed the homeless, work in a shelter, water the flowers.

Zen Buddhist practice -- zazen, chanting, bowing, ritual, and ceremony -- cultivates compassion. Manifesting ourselves in sangha cultivates compassion. Through all of these practices, compassion arises spontaneously. Also, I've found that chanting the Sutra on Loving Kindness (Metta Sutta) helps to develop compassion, as does doing Loving Kindness (Metta) Meditation. However, one needs to learn this meditation from a teacher, either directly (face-to-face), or from a cd or tape recorded by a good teacher.

Nonin Chowaney is the Abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple.



After Priest Ordination — Revs. Jisen Coghlan, Nonin, Shuji Mintzmyer, and Kyoki Roberts



Kyoki after the ceremony



Shuji and son Ben