



# Prairie Wind

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## OLD FRIEND FROM AFAR

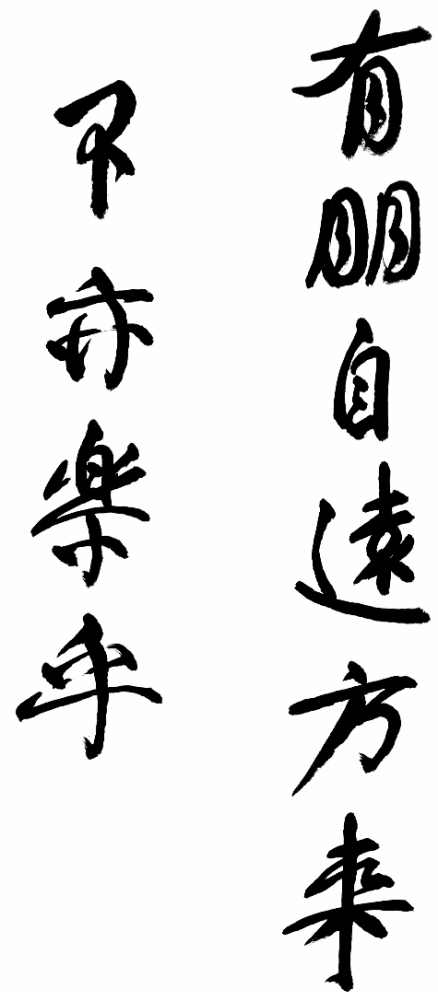
by Nonin Chowaney

One of the pieces on my website calligraphy pages is the following quotation from Confucius: “To have an old friend come from afar – isn’t it a joy?”

For me, it is indeed a joy, and I always treasure such a visit. I also treasure visits from old friends who lived long ago. Some of them are ancient Chinese poets, and they visit me via contemporary translations of their work. Wang Wei, Chia Tao, Po Chu-i, Han Shan, and Liu Tzung-yuan are just a few of these old friends. Nearly all of them were serious Zen Buddhist practitioners, and I feel a deep affinity with them.

Wang Wei (701-761) is a poet I feel especially close to. He was a high-level government official who lived at a time when Zen Buddhism was flourishing in China. During middle-age, he began practicing Zen and eventually quit his job to retire to a hermitage in the Chang-an mountains, a center of Buddhist activity at the time. Wang Wei then devoted the rest of his life to Zen practice, poetry, calligraphy, music, and landscape painting. He excelled at all four art forms. Very few of Wang Wei’s paintings or calligraphy have survived, but most of his poetry has. Along with Li Po and Tu Fu, he is considered one of the all-time top three Chinese poets. This is not a small distinction, for Chinese poetry goes back over three thousand years!

I’d like to introduce you to my old friend Wang Wei through some of his poems. The following is one of his best and most well-known; I compiled the translation from a variety of sources:



To have an old friend come from afar —  
isn’t it a joy?

Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

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# Poems by Old Friends

## **Returned from Yang-chou, Up the Hill to view the Snow**

I.

*There and back, ten days . . .  
The boat returned, with the sun and the river.  
Now, to view the snow, I'll go on up the mountain.  
Lusting still for idleness, I won't go in the city.*

*Snow petals brighten the moon's dark face.  
Freezing rain sings the Spring's song.  
Overnight beside wild rapids  
To sound the watches, a single swan.*

II.

*If you don't climb a thousand crags,  
how can you learn  
all things are empty?*

*The mountain's head is white and mine is too.  
December dies, the year  
runs out its string as all things do.*

*At the summit: one rude hut, the snow,  
this lonely body, and the wind.  
I lean on the rail, heart sudden struck:  
the moon rises from within Great River: there.*

*Yuan Mei  
trans. J.P. Seaton*

## **Mourning My Teacher the Venerable Nun Zhiyuan**

*After submitting myself to her rigorous  
training for several years,  
A midday dream shattered awake,  
tears not yet wiped away.  
Alas, why did I have to be separated from my  
teacher so soon?  
The family pine tree has grown still and  
knows no sorrow.*

## **Off Hand Poem Written During The Seclusion Fast**

*Replenishing the censor, a servant  
adds one stick of fragrant incense,*

*and I can still sit up, keep the bed  
half clean with my deer-tail whisk.*

*Moving into my library for the sun,  
I raise blinds, gaze into azure skies*

*and savor fruit tarts, fresh and sweet,  
keeping warm in gentle old robes.*

*In easy contentment a tranquil life,  
in idleness aplenty a joyful nature:*

*I don't cling to yes this and no that  
or resist the play of motion and rest,*

*so what can tangle me in this world?  
Heart empty, forgetfulness replete,*

*I'm old and sick and free of worry:  
Mind is the master of its own cures.*

*Po Chu-i  
trans. David Hinton*

*Since when have spring and fall passed  
without me serving her?  
I find myself imitating the birds crying over the  
fallen branches.  
Brokenhearted, I listen as again and again  
they return my calls,  
Then silently I shut the brushwood gate  
against the wind and rain.*

*Yikui  
trans. Beata Grant*

# OF CATS AND COMICS

by Tonen O'Connor

I've been thinking a good deal of late about the Buddha's Second Noble Truth. You know, the one that says we suffer due to our propensity to cling (to what we have) and crave (what we don't have). Both of these tendencies bring us into conflict with the impermanence of the world and our inability to possess either the things of this world or life itself.

If the Buddha's teachings of impermanence and interdependence and the absence of permanent self-being represent a true vision of the world, why do we continue to cling and crave? What is it we don't see? The Buddha would say that we can't see beyond our own delusory thinking, beyond that insistent whisper in our head that suggests that if we only hang on tightly enough or want fiercely enough, our desires to have and to hold will be answered. It is the great barrier of our own illusions that stands between us and our release from the Noble Truth of Clinging and Craving.

As some of you may know, I have a cat. Actually, two cats, but the cat in question here is a sweet tabby named Annie. She is affectionate and very smart, and we've lived together for ten years now. Recently, Annie became prey to a delusion to which she clings fiercely. It began when she noticed that the sunlight on my wrist watch throws little moving circles of light on the wall. She began to chase them. This was fun, and she became enamored of the game. Then I got new glasses and moved into a new spot on the couch to be closer to both the radiator and the lamp. The new glasses also throw a brief, scintillating flash of light on the couch to my right, where it appears to dance over the cream-colored surface.

Annie reacted immediately. Perched on the coffee table with the glare of one obsessed, she regarded the light and shadow with fixation. Before I realized the source of her obsession, I was inclined to think that she'd gone nuts. Finally, she worked up the courage to move to the

couch and attempt to catch the moving light and shadow. You can't catch light and shadow, but Annie doesn't know that. She pounces again and again, rucking up the couch cover in her frustration. No matter how still I sit or how I hold my book, I cannot help throwing a reflection. And there we are, bound up in her illusion that there is something menacing that must be caught and my determination that she learn that it's nothing.

And what has she learned? That her nemesis only appears on the couch when I sit down to read. Otherwise, she sleeps contentedly on the very spot sometimes inhabited by her demon. But when I approach the couch to sit down, she comes running from wherever she may be to leap to attention beside me, positive that this time she'll capture it. As I become frustrated with her behavior, I become noisier and noisier in my attempts to dissuade her from the couch. But she perseveres, knowing that I am wrong and she is right.

Her ultimate cat happiness depends on catching what she believes is there. Just so, we develop powerful beliefs that our happiness will result from things just as illusory as her spot of light. The problem, of course, lies with the impermanence of things in contrast to our fierce illusion that they can bring long-lasting happiness and our refusal to understand that we cannot keep them.

There is another side to this as well. We are influenced by the delusive thinking of others, of our friends, our cohorts, and the advertising media. The story of the Buddha's encounter with the Kalamas is instructive. When he encountered these villagers, they asked him to explain what was so wonderful about his teachings, and he instructed them to live in

## Nebraska Zen Center Officers

Ryoshin Joe Marshall	President
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Noshin Marcia Prideaux	Secretary
Chuko Jean Bailey	Treasurer
Gary Carlson	Board Member
Zenshin Keith Hale	Board Member
Hal Holoun	Board Member
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Randy Putnam	Board Member

Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW      Abbot



Nebraska Zen Center 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, an American Zen Master, is NZC's Head Priest and Teacher. 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 certified to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan.

clarity and not embrace something as true because others said so; in fact, not even if he said so. He instructed them to examine things deeply in their own hearts before embracing them. But poor Annie, like the

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER — SANGHA NOTES

Our **ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DRIVE** has been very successful. We raised over **\$15,000** in cash donations so far and over **\$12,000** in pledges for 2005. **Thank you all for your generosity!**

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** brought some changes to our **Board of Directors**. **Hal Holoun's** term had expired, and he was re-elected to another. **Gary Carlson** was elected to fill the spot vacated when **Kido Albert Lickei** moved to Arizona last Summer. Our **Officers** for 2005 are: **President — Ryoshin Joe Marshall; Vice-President — Koshin Bob Schenck; Secretary — Noshin Marcia Prideaux; Treasurer — Chuko Jean Bailey**. Many thanks to new and continuing Board Members for serving the sangha in this way!

Sangha members **Vicki Grunwald** and **Hal Holoun** are **sewing rakus** in preparation for the **Precept Ceremony** signifying **Lay Initiation** on **March 6th**.



Bodhidharmas

We are moving ahead with our **temple expansion plan** by working with the city zoning office to make sure that our building plan is within all code restrictions. We've also begun to **contact builders** and are **soliciting bids** for construction in two phases. **Phase One** will include **all external work** needed to make the structure winterproof. **Phase Two** will include **all internal work** — plumbing, electrical, insulating, sheet rock, taping and painting, flooring, and finishing. We hope to begin Phase One late this Summer and will **resume fund-raising** soon. Currently, we have **\$40,700** in our Building Fund and **\$15,500** more pledged, which adds up to **\$56,200**. We need to raise **\$29,000** more to reach the half-way point to our **goal of \$170,000**.

Many thanks to the **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple** sangha members who sat **Rohatsu Sesshin** with us at Heartland Temple. **It was great to have you all here!**

Heartland Temple will be **closed** over **Memorial Day Weekend**. There'll be **no sitting on Thursday, May 26th**. The temple will re-open with **morning sitting on Tuesday, May 31st**.

### SESSHIN

There will be two sesshins at NZC this Spring, a **One-day Sesshin** on **March 12th** and a **Two-day Sesshin** on **April 16th and 17th**. Fees are: \$30 per day for members; \$40 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. To register, **e-mail heartand@prairiewindzen.org** or call **402-551-9035**.

### BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

We'll celebrate **Buddha's Birthday** with a special service on **Sunday, April 10th at 10:00**. Afterwards, there'll be a **dharma talk** and a **Pot-luck Lunch** with **birthday cake** and **ice-cream**. **Everyone is invited to attend.**

### REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY

A special service dedicated to deceased Sangha members, relatives, teachers, and friends will be held on **Sunday, May 15th** before dharma talk. Either **bring photographs** of those you would like to remember or **write their names** on small cards to place on the Buddha Hall altar (we'll have cards at the temple).

### OTHER WINTER EVENTS

Mar 6	Lay Initiation
13	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion
23	Precept Ceremony
Apr 3	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion
27	Precept Ceremony
May 1	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion
25	Precept Ceremony

# ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH – SANGHA NOTES

## ZCP FALL EVENTS

### MARCH

- 6 — World Peace Ceremony  
Annual Sangha Meeting
- 10 — Sitting at Mt. Alvernia\*\*
- 20 — Beginners One-day Sitting\*\*\*
- 29 — Ryaku Fusatsu; Study Class Begins

### APRIL

- 1 — Intro to Zen
- 3 — Buddha's Birthday celebrated
- 17 — Lay Precept Ceremony (tentative)
- 21 — Sitting at Mt. Alvernia\*\*
- 22 — Intro to Zen
- 26 — Ryaku Fusatsu
- 29-1 — Two-day Sesshin\*\*\*

### MAY

- 1 — World Peace Ceremony
- 13 — Intro to Zen
- 15 — Remembrance Day
- 19 — Sitting at Mt. Alvernia\*\*
- 24-30 — ZCP closed

### JUNE

- 1-30 — OPW Practice Period

\*after evening zazen

\*\*There is no evening sitting at ZCP on the nights we sit at Mt. Alvernia Monastery

\*\*\*Please Register for this event

ZCP Sangha members **Debra Callahan, Myo-en Margaret Coghlan, Elizabeth Muia, Ryushin John Ott, Kyoki Roberts, and Li'l Red** sat **Rohatsu Sesshin** last December at **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple**. There was a wonderful blend of the two sanghas, and we are deeply grateful to our sister sangha for including us. We were also able to stop in Des Moines, IA and have a delightful visit with Kyoki's dharma brother, **Tetsugen Heinz**, and his wife, **Kaye Bair**.

Many, many thanks to **Denny Muia**, ZCP sangha member Elizabeth Muia's father, for building and donating our **new zendo altar**. **Elizabeth** and **Myo-en Margaret Coghlan** brought Denny the design specifications of the altar at Heartland Temple in Omaha, and he was able to re-create our sister temple's altar in red oak. The Japanese Soto Zen tradition is for sangha members to write either the Heart Sutra or part of it on a stone to be placed at the base of the altar, and we intend to do that at ZCP.

We have completed our **annual fund-raising drive**, and are delighted to report a total of **\$4175 in cash donations** and **\$13,756 in pledges** for 2005. **Our deepest gratitude for your generosity.**



Bodhidharma

## ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

### AM

#### Tuesday

7:00 a.m. - Zazen at the Mattress Factory

#### Wednesday - Saturday

5:30 a.m. - Zazen

6:45 a.m. - Morning Service

### PM

#### Tuesday - Friday

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

#### Sunday

10:00 a.m. - Zazen

10:40 a.m. - Work Practice

11:15 a.m. - Service/Dharma Talk

12:30 p.m. - Lunch

Closed Mondays

In her capacity as a member of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association's **Board of Directors**, **Kyoki** has been organizing the inaugural **Soto Zen Priest Training Sesshin**. It will be held in September at **Mt. Equity Zendo** in Muncy, PA and will be lead by that temple's abbot, **Rev. Dai-en Bennage**.

**Myo-en Margaret Coghlan** entered postulancy last year and will be ordained a Soto Zen Buddhist priest on **September 18th, 2005** by **Kyoki**. All are invited to attend this auspicious event.

## Old Friend From Afar

from page 1

### Mt. Chungnan Cottage

In middle age,  
I became fond of the Way.

Now I'm old, and settled  
in a Chungnan cottage.

Sometimes, I get the notion  
to wander off by myself

to marvelous places  
I alone know,

hiking to the stream's source;  
sitting, watching clouds arise.

Sometimes, I come across  
an old recluse.

We chatter and laugh  
and forget to go home.

This poem is one of my favorites, for I, too, became fond of the Buddha way in middle-age. I began practicing in my late thirties; Wang Wei bought his Chungnan cottage shortly after his fortieth birthday. Now that I'm getting older – I'll be sixty-four this year – I'm settled into the Way here at the temple in Omaha, as Wang Wei was in his cottage on Chungnan mountain. Reading "Mt Chungnan Cottage," I am soothed by the calm joy that pervades the work, for I share the poet's contentment with simple pleasures.

Sometimes, I read this poem with envy, because I often get very busy here at the Omaha temple, and a mountain of work stands between me and the opportunity to wander. On a recent day off, however, I drove out west to Platte River State Park with my dog Sammy, and we hiked up into the wooded bluffs along the river. A couple of inches of snow had fallen overnight, and the trees along the trail were lightly covered. With their boughs gently bending under the snow, the cedars were especially beautiful. The woods after a snowfall are delightfully silent and still, and when I thought to myself, "what a marvelous place this is," I was reminded of Wang Wei's poem, for I had been

looking at it the day before in anticipation of writing this article. I smiled to myself, for my old friend Wang Wei understood, as I do, what a joy it is to wander off to a marvelous place.

Wang Wei and I also share a love of zazen. I read the lines "hiking to the stream's source / sitting, watching clouds arise" as a depiction of zazen, both realistic and metaphoric. It was too cold and I was too bundled up to sit zazen outdoors on my hike, but I did a little standing zazen with my back against a tree on top of a bluff overlooking the river and, for a time, watched the thought-clouds arising and passing away.

I never did, however, come across an old recluse in the woods, but later, when the waitress in a little country bar and restaurant near Wahoo, Nebraska dropped a plate of enchiladas on the floor before she got to my table, she looked at me and said, "I hope you weren't in a hurry to get anywhere, 'cause we're going to have to warm up another plate!" I replied "The only thing I need to get to is a plate of enchiladas." We both laughed and chattered a bit while the cook warmed another one in the microwave!

Wang Wei often wrote about the quiet, peaceful life he lived in the Chang-an mountains. The following is another example:

### Autumn Evening in the Mountains

After the rain  
that covered these mountains  
the night air  
smells of fall

The moon gleams  
among long-needled pines

Rushing softly across its rocks  
the creek  
glitters

## LINCOLN ZEN GROUP

A group affiliated with NZC meets in Lincoln weekly on **Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm** at the **Unitarian Universalist Church, 6300 A St.** For further information, e-mail or call **Seishin Larry Pelter** at **lpelter@alltel.net** (402-483-1755) or **Koken Greg Petitto** at **gppetto@hotmail.com** (402-477-0558). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

## WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

The **White Lotus Sangha**, a group affiliated with NZC, meets in three Nebraska prisons, **Nebraska State Penitentiary** and **Lincoln Correctional Center** in Lincoln and **Tecumseh State Correctional Institute** in Tecumseh. For further information, call **(402) 551-9035**, e-mail **heartland@prairiewindzen.org**, or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363**.

Women chatter  
bringing their laundry home  
through the bamboo

A fisherman poles his boat  
swaying through the heavy lotus leaves

The spring flowers  
and their heavy odors are gone

Stick around anyway  
old friend  
for the beauty of fall

trans. David Young

I love the way this poem ends. After Wang



## Old Friend From Afar

from page 7

Suffering is built into the framework of existence. If we stop looking at it as suffering and start looking at it as “life,” suffering then becomes something different, something we can’t avoid no matter how hard we try. So why try? I was complaining once to my master, Dainin Katagiri, about some difficulty I was having, and he said, “You’re suffering? Well, suffer! It’s a sign you’re alive.”

When we stop trying to avoid suffering, we live it, pass through it, and it ends. Only for the moment, however, for life and suffering are one and the same, and more lies just around the next bend.

The following Wang Wei poem deals with a similar theme:

### Fall Evening Music

Moon newly risen;  
autumn dew still light.

Though my silk robe is damp,  
I do not change it.

On the silver zither  
I play long into night,

not wanting to face  
my empty room.

trans. Mike O’Connor

Who among us has not felt loneliness?  
Who has not driven around at night  
because they cannot yet bear going home  
to an empty house or apartment?

When I’m feeling sad or lonely, I’ll pick up a book of poems by one of my old friends, like Wang Wei. I bring my loneliness to him, and he shares his with me. Through this process, I am soothed, for I am no longer alone.

In Wang Wei’s poetry, there’s a always a balance, for he’s writing about daily life, which is full of ups and downs. A sad poem like the one above dealing with loneliness might be balanced later on by one like the following:

### Spring in the Garden

After a night of rain  
I go out, wearing clogs

wrapped in an old overcoat  
against the spring cold

water pours white  
through the open dikes

peach blossoms glow red  
beyond the willows

fields of new grass spread away  
edged and checkered

poles rise from the wells  
at the wood’s edge

I go back in  
to write at my small desk

evening arrives, I’m alone  
happy among green weeds.

trans. David Young

In this poem, the poet is again alone, but loneliness does not come up. He’s happy to be by himself, writing at his small desk. In Chinese Zen literature, “weeds” refers to intellectual discussion. The “green weeds” he speaks of in the last stanza are the recent experiences or feelings he’s writing about. The poet is content sitting at his desk writing about everyday events, for poetry does not have to be about deep spiritual experiences or profound insights into the nature of reality to be great. In Chinese poetry, especially that written by Zen practitioners like Wang Wei, there’s an emphasis on immediate experience, on what’s right in front of us here and now, for Zen Buddhist practice is about being present and seeing and understanding ourselves and the world around us through direct experience. The following poem by one of my more recent old friends, the American poet Billy Collins, deals with this subject:

### In the Room of a Thousand Miles

I like writing about where I am,  
where I happen to be sitting,  
the humidity or the clouds,  
the scene outside the window –  
a pink tree in bloom,  
a neighbor walking his small, nervous  
dog.

And if I am drinking  
a cup of tea at the time  
or a small glass of whiskey,  
I will find a line to put it on.

My wife hands these poems back to me  
with a sigh.  
She thinks I ought to be opening up  
my aperture to let in  
the wild rhododendrons of Ireland,  
the sun-blached stadiums of Rome,  
that waterclock in Bruges –  
the world beyond my inkwell.

I tell her I will try again  
and travel back to my desk  
where the chair is turned to the window.  
I think about the furniture of history.  
I consider the globe, the lights of its  
cities.

I visualize a lion rampant on an iron  
shield,  
a quiet battlefield, a granite monument.

And then – just between you and me –  
I take a swallow of cold tea  
and in the manner of the ancient Chinese  
pick up my thin pen  
and write down that bird I hear outside,  
the one that sings,  
pauses,  
then sings again.

I love this poem. The ability to find all we need in what’s right in front of us is not only a great joy but also the source of all true peace and contentment.

When I first started practicing Zen Buddhism in Minneapolis many years ago with Katagiri-roshi, I was working as a pipe-fitter welder on heavy construction jobs in the Twin Cities area. When the bottom fell out of the iron and steel industry in the late 1970’s, I, like many others, was unable to find work and was

continued on page 10



# ZEN BRUSH CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP

*Practicing* with brush and ink, we bring quiet attention into each moment, expressing our innermost creative spirit. In this workshop, you'll learn traditional brush skills and enter the creative process by working with selected ideograms. Instruction will include everything from ink preparation to creating a finished piece. *No prior experience is necessary.*



**Led by:** Nonin Chowaney, Abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple. Nonin learned brush calligraphy while training in Japanese Zen monasteries and has been practicing the art for many years. His work hangs in homes and temples throughout the world.

**At:** Nebraska Zen Center    **On:** Saturday, April 2nd  
**From:** 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m    **Fee:** \$50 (Includes supplies and a vegetarian lunch)

**Prior registration is necessary**, for space is limited. **To register**, or for further information, e-mail [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org) or call 402-551-9035

## Calligraphy For Sale



Suchness

Nonin's calligraphy can be purchased through our website, at [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://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.

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

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

## From the editor:

We always need material. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, cartoons, letters, etc. The deadline for publication in our Summer issue is May 1st.

Websites for Nebraska Zen Center and Zen Center of Pittsburgh are at: [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org)

Nebraska Zen Center's e-mail address is: [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org)

Zen Center of Pittsburgh's e-mail address is: [kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org)

## *Of Cats and Comics*

from page 3

rest of us, is not examining the situation deeply but merely impulsively responding. To act in genuine accord with the Buddha's admonition, we must look more closely than is generally our habit.

And, we need to persevere in the face of mass delusions to realize that the emperor is wearing no clothes, even when others say he's bedecked with finery. A recent strip in the Doonesbury comics series thrust this dilemma before the character whose recovery we have been following since his injury in Iraq. In this strip, we see him facing a military doctor for evaluation of his progress. The doctor asks him to handle some wooden blocks and then exclaims delightedly about both his amazing fine motor skills and the lifelike nature of his prosthetic hand. The patient's response is: "That's because I'm missing my LEG, not my hand." The doctor then says, "No, no. It says here that you're missing your hand." The exasperated patient replies, "But I'm obviously NOT!" (accompanied by a desperate waving of hands). The doctor's response to this is: "Who am I going to believe, you or the Army?"

My cat is slowly coming to realize that catching a spot of light is an exercise in futility and liberating herself from that delusion. The question for us is: Do we believe only what we wish to believe or can we see the hands waving at us?

We need to look very, very closely at our most cherished illusions, remembering that the clenched fist can receive nothing, whereas the open hand may fill with surprising happiness.

*Tonen O'Connor is Resident Priest at Milwaukee Zen Center in Wisconsin. The above article originally appeared in MZC's newsletter. It is reprinted by permission.*

## *Old Friend From Afar*

from page 8

unemployed for many months. Fortunately, I was able to collect unemployment insurance, and during this period, I practiced daily with my master, was able to study works by ancient masters, and spent a lot of time wandering around the many nature reserves and other wild areas around the Twin Cities. I wrote the following poem during this transition period in my life:

### **mid-february thaw**

laid off  
out of work  
snow gone  
temperature 55

free to wander  
like han shan's  
drifting boat  
i scribble in my journal  
back against oak  
remembering old friends  
from long ago

wang wei  
laughing and chattering  
with some old coot  
he met in the woods  
forgetting to go home

ryokan  
playing ball  
with the village children

li po  
out buying wine

the workaday world  
drops away

grey squirrels skitter  
on an oakstudded knoll

a dirt road  
sun flashing in puddles

gnarled oak limbs twist  
into a cool blue sky  
last year's leaves  
golden in the sun

Through shared experiences – long walks

through prairie and woods, early morning zazen, quiet times alone in my room, sadness at the loss of friends and companions – my old friends and I draw closer as the years pass by, one by one. As Confucius said, "To have an old friend come from afar – isn't it a joy?"

*Nonin Chowaney is the abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple and of the Order of the Prairie Wind.*



## ZEN MEDITATION WORKSHOP

A **three-hour workshop** in Zen Meditation for the beginner, including **instruction in sitting and walking meditation** that harmonizes body, mind and breath.

Taught by **Rev. Nonin Chowaney** abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple

at **Nebraska Zen Center**

On **Saturday, March 26th**, from **10:00 a.m. till 1:00 p.m.**

Cost: **\$20**

For further information or to register, either e-mail NZC at [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org) or call **402-551-9035**

## PRAIRIE WIND PRACTICE PERIOD

The annual **Prairie Wind Practice Period** will be held at **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple** for the entire **month of June**. **Rev. Nonin Chowaney**, Abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple will lead practice, assisted by **Rev. Kyoki Roberts**, Head Priest at Zen Center of Pittsburgh.

We will follow a daily schedule of **zazen, services, formal and informal meals, work practice, and dharma talks and classes** based on Soto Zen practices in the tradition of **Zen Master Dogen**.

**We invite you to join us**, for either all or part of this practice period.

For further information, cost inquiries, or to register, please contact **Zen Center of Pittsburgh** at **124 Willow Ridge Road, Sewickley, PA 15143**  
[kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org)  
**412-741-1262**

## COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP



**Kyoki**

**Rev. Kyoki Roberts**, Head Priest at Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple will offer a **Communication Workshop** that she has developed especially for **Buddhist Sanghas** at **Nebraska Zen Center** on the weekend of **May 7th**. She will lead participants through **skill development** in **Active Listening, Speaking Up, and Managing Difficult Conversations and Conflict**. Kyoki has over **ten years** of hands-on mediation experience and was formerly a **mediation trainer** for the State of Nebraska. She has also **worked professionally** as a mediator and facilitator with **church** and **sangha** groups.

The Workshop will be a continuation of the one Kyoki led at NZC last year. **She will structure this year's Workshop to accomodate both former attendees and newcomers.**

The Workshop has as its foundation the **Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts** and the recognition that each of us is Buddha. It will begin with **zazen** at **6 pm on Friday evening, May 6th** and will end at **10 am on Sunday, May 8th**.

**This workshop is free to NZC members.**  
For non-members, the **cost is \$75**, including meals.

For further information and to register, contact **Nebraska Zen Center** at **3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131-1363**  
[heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org)  
**402-551-9035**

## 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 needed)

We are closed on Monday

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

(402) 551-9035  
heartland@prairiewindzen.org

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