

# *Prairie Wind*



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**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*** (© 2008 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

**Cover Calligraphy (Peace) by Nonin Chowaney**

We **always** need material for ***Prairie Wind***. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, cartoons, etc. The deadline for publication in our Spring issue is **Feb. 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)**

# CONTINUOUS PRACTICE WITH A TEACHER

by *Nonin Chowaney*

**I**n Soto Zen Buddhism, practicing under the guidance of a teacher is extremely important.

When I practiced in Japanese monasteries, this was stressed over and over again. Whenever I met someone new, they invariably would ask, "Who is your teacher?" This emphasis has been carried over to Soto Zen practice in America, for our Japanese teachers stressed the importance of finding a teacher and sticking with him or her over time.

The first Zen teacher I ever met was Dainin Katagiri. I was so impressed by him that I decided to study with him, and after a few years, he became my priest-ordination teacher. Years later, I went through dharma transmission with him. In between, Katagiri-roshi sent me to study Buddhist psychology (Abhidharma) with Tenshin Anderson in California, who became an important teacher for me, as did Sojun Weitsman, who was my teacher when I trained as head monk at Tassajara monastery. After my time at Tassajara, Dainin Katagiri sent me to Japan to study with Ikko Narasaki, who also became an important teacher.

So, when I think about it, I've had four main teachers and many, many lesser

ones along the way. All teachers have a particular way of practicing and presenting the dharma that reflects their personality and their individual background. Studying with different teachers clarified for me the Buddha dharma beyond individual preferences and styles, for each teacher was quite different, but the essence of the teaching was the same. Also, each teacher presented the form and function of the teaching in a different way but maintained core Soto Zen Buddhist practices. Practicing with only one teacher in one place leads people to believe that there is only one way to practice and closes their eyes to the breadth and depth of the Soto Zen Buddhist way.

I've been very fortunate to have practiced and studied with such a variety of teachers. Dainin Katagiri, however, was my master. I was his disciple. That relationship is very special; it needs to be understood and acknowledged. Although others have been my teachers, my relationship with Katagiri-roshi was the deepest, the most complete. After meeting him, I made radical changes in my life.

What most impressed me about him during my early years of study were

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## Continuous Practice

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his daily commitment to Zen practice and his ability to stand (and sit) up straight through all the ups and downs of life. Over the long run, the most important lesson he taught me was to do the same.

Carrying on a daily practice is not easy, especially at first. It demands a refocusing of your life.

When I first started, I usually walked to morning zazen in Minneapolis through the back alley, and when I passed through the gate, the first thing I'd look for was Katagiri-roshi's bathroom light. It was *always* on. He didn't travel much the first couple of years I practiced with him, and during that time, the light *not* being on was a rarity, a shock, for he was always up, getting ready for zazen. When it wasn't on, we'd buzz while taking off our shoes: "Is roshi sick? His light wasn't on." "He was coughing during zazen last night." Later on, I found out that while I was walking through the back gate looking at his light, he was taking a cold shower. When I heard that, I was *really* impressed!

From Katagiri-roshi, I learned not only the importance of a strong daily zazen practice but also the possibility of

maintaining it and seeing it through moment-by-moment in our lives *as they are*. He taught this not through words but by example. There was never any question for me about what Soto Zen practice was. I looked at him and saw it. He got up in the morning, sat zazen, and did service. Afterwards, he went upstairs, did his

***From observing Katagiri-roshi's life, I learned the importance of showing up and continuing day-by-day, moment-by-moment, no matter what the ups and downs, the daily fluctuations, of our lives.***

personal service, ate breakfast, and then began carrying on the business of the day: seeing people, preparing his dharma talks, helping with the shopping, cleaning, etc. After supper, he went to the zendo to sit zazen or participate in whatever activity was going on. For over forty years, he practiced in this way, which he had learned from his teachers and at Eiheiiji monastery. He carried on this way of practice until he became too sick with cancer to do it any more, and then he carried it on in bed the best he could until he died.

From observing Katagiri-roshi's life,

## Continuous Practice

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I learned the importance of showing up and continuing day-by-day, moment-by-moment, no matter what the ups and downs, the daily fluctuations, of our lives. Zen Master Dogen calls this *gyoji*, "ceaseless" or "continuous practice," meeting our lives moment-by-moment *as our practice*, and continuing endlessly. In the *Shobogenzo* fascicle titled "Gyoji," Dogen presents a variety of examples of ancient masters who practiced continuously over long periods of time, masters such as Baso of Kosei. Dogen writes that "Baso received the seal of transmission from Nangaku. He instructed his Dharma-heirs never to neglect zazen. Those who came to study zazen were surely given the mind seal of zazen practice. Whenever there was temple work to be done, Baso was always the first to begin. Even when old he did not slack off."

Elsewhere in *Shobogenzo* "Gyoji," Dogen writes:

Ceaseless practice of the present is not the ceaseless practice of the original self, nor does it come and go, exit and enter. 'In the present' does not mean 'existing prior to ceaseless practice.' It refers to the time ceaseless practice emerges. That is why the ceaseless practice of one day is the seed of all the Buddha. Through ceaseless practice, all Buddhas are manifest and their ceaseless practice occurs. No ceaseless practice

emerges when we despise the Buddhas, do not respect them, detest ceaseless practice, do not identify life and death with Buddha, and do not study and practice.

Because practice and enlightenment are one and the same, continuous practice is the means by which enlightenment is manifested. This is why continuous practice is so important.

After I left Minneapolis to study elsewhere, I learned that this is what our practice is: living with our teachers, following the schedule they follow, and observing how they conduct their lives as Buddhas. Zen Master Dogen said that when we meet a true teacher, we should enter the training place, inquire about the schedule, and then follow it, listening to the teacher's instruction and practicing as instructed. If we don't enter, we will never experience face-to-face transmission; if we don't listen and practice as instructed, we let our own ideas and opinions get in the way and cannot absorb the teaching.

I wish I had wholeheartedly listened and practiced as I was instructed all the time I lived in training places. Sometimes, my head was so full of my own ideas, nothing got in. But good teaching can have a delayed effect; it swishes around until there's room and then pours in. I'm still

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## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

**ANNUAL FUND-RAISING BEGINS.** By now, you should have received our **annual fund-raising appeal** for financial support to continue our on-going programs. We do a lot at NZC, and we do it with limited funds. **Please consider helping us with a donation.** We will be grateful for any support that you can give. All donations to NZC are **tax deductible.**

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** will be held on **Saturday, February 7th at 10:00 a.m.** We will be replacing board Members whose terms have expired and electing Officers for 2009. We will also be reviewing and finishing business from 2008. **We encourage all who practice at Heartland Temple to attend this meeting. Lunch will be served afterwards.**

**Winter Practice Period** will begin with **February Sesshin** on the **14th and 15th** and will end with **April Sesshin** on the **25th and 26th.** Practice Period is designed to provide structure for those who wish to **intensify their practice and their sangha connections for a specific period of time.** Practice Period students commit to intensifying practice in three areas: (1) **daily practice at home** (sitting and devotional services), (2) **regular involvement at the temple** (e.g., on Sunday mornings and for work practice, and (3) **special events** (e.g., sesshins, study groups, and Precept Ceremonies). Practice Period Students also commit to keeping a **daily practice journal** and to attending periodic **Practice Period Group Meetings.** Interested students should write up their **Practice Period commitments** and turn them in to **Nonin** before **February 10th.** If this is your first Practice Period, **speak with Nonin** before turning in your commitments.

**Many thanks** to **Eisai Elizabeth Muia** for organizing our **Fall lawn clean-up** and to the **many sangha members** who participated. We filled around eighty bags full of leaves and sticks!

Sangha member **Toze Hal Holoun** is showing a collection of his most recent oil paintings at **Kiechel Gallery** in Lincoln, NE. Hal is an accomplished painter and this show is one of his best.

Most of you know that our abbot, **Rev. Nonin Chowaney**, has been undergoing treatment for **lung cancer.** Nonin is slowly recovering from surgery that removed part of one lung and has recently completed his last chemotherapy treatment. Right now, he is cancer free, and his doctors will be monitoring him over the next few months. Nonin is concentrating on recovering and regaining his strength. Many thanks to all who have expressed their best wishes and who have been helping Nonin and keeping the temple going over the past few months.

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER WINTER EVENTS

### SESSHIN

There will be two sesshins at NZC this Winter, a **Two-day sesshin** on **February 14th and 15th** and a **One-day sesshin** on **March 21.** Fees: \$30 per day for members; \$40 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.

### LAY INITIATION — RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS

A **Precept Ceremony** signifying **Lay Initiation** will be offered at Heartland Temple next March. Anyone interested in participating should talk to **Nonin.** He suggests the following guidelines for considering this step: **a commitment to zazen, a commitment to study with a teacher, a commitment to sangha, and a commitment to dharma study.** **Rakusu sewing** will begin on February 1st.

### DHARMA STUDY CLASS

**Nonin** will lead a **Dharma Study Class** at the temple this Winter. It will meet on four successive **Saturday mornings**, from **10 a.m. till noon** on **February 28th** and **March 7th, 14th, and 21st.** The text for study will be announced later. This class is **free to members.** The non-member fee is **\$15 per class.**

### 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.

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 by going to <http://www.prairiewindzen.org/zcp/list.htm> and registering, or send an e-mail to Zen Center of Pittsburgh at: [kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org).

Sangha members **Tony Roscoe** and **Ryan Minster** completed **Lay Initiation** in September. Tony's dharma name is **Keisei — Valley Sound**, and Ryan's is **Choan — Morning Hermitage**. We offer our congratulations and thank them for their efforts on behalf of our community.

Residents **Ryushin John Ott**, **Jyoshin Bryan Ritti**, and **Eishin Paige Ritti** have moved out of Zen Center. **Thank you** for your hard work and constant practice, and **best wishes** to you all!

Sangha members **Adam Litchfield** and **Caitlin Martine** have move to the DC area to take jobs as chefs. **Best wishes** to you, and please visit soon!

Either **Kyoki** or **Jisen** visited classes at Carnegie Mellon University and Butler, Saxonburg, and Central Catholic High Schools this fall. A class from Mt. Aloysius College visited us here at Deep Spring Temple.

Both **Kyoki** and **Jisen** attended the Soto Zen Buddhist Association (SZBA) National Meeting in San Francisco in October. Kyoki serves on the SZBA Board, and She made presentations on teacher-to-teacher ethics and the training of novice priests.

**Shinkai Tom Persinger** is handing over the reins of our website to **Manzen Jay Volk**. Our deepest thanks to Tom for developing the website and maintaining it for over eight years. We also thank **George Macdonald** for taking over the bookkeeping from **Jyoshin Bryan Ritti**, and many thanks to **Bryan** for his service.

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website: [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org)

## ZCP WINTER EVENTS

### DECEMBER

11—Intro to Zen, 6pm\*\*  
14—Buddhist Studies Class, 8:30am  
16—Precept Renewal, 6pm  
20—1/2 Day sitting at FMH  
21—Buddhist Studies Class, 8:30am  
24-26—ZCP Closed  
31—New Year's Eve, 6pm-1am

### JANUARY

1-2—ZCP Closed  
4—World Peace Ceremony, 10am  
7—Intro to Zen, 6pm FMH\*\*  
14—Intro to Zen, 6pm FMH\*\*  
17—1/2 Day sitting at FMH  
19—Dainin Katagiri's Birthday\*  
30-2/1—Sesshin\*\*

26—Zen Master Dogen's Birthday\*

### FEBRUARY

5—Intro to Zen, 6pm\*\*  
10—Precept Renewal, 6pm  
27-3/1—Sesshin

### MARCH

1—Dainin Katagiri's Memorial\*  
5—Intro to Zen, 6pm\*\*  
10—Precept Renewal, 6pm  
36—Intro to Zen, 6pm\*\*

Unless otherwise indicated, events are at DST  
\*Special morning service  
\*\*Please register for this event

## ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Closed Mondays

Tuesday — 7-7:40 a.m. MFM  
6-7:15 p.m. DST  
Wednesday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST  
6:00-7:15 p.m. 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 — 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. DST

MFM — Mattress Factory Museum, Northside  
FMH — Friends Meeting House, Oakland  
DST — Deep Spring Temple, Bell Acres

## WHITE LOTUS SANGHA NOTES

**Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer** and **Kanho Doug Dittman** are working with two White Lotus Sangha members at Nebraska State Penitentiary in preparation for **Lay Initiation**. The inmates have begun sewing rakusus and will participate in a Lay Initiation Ceremony at the prison sometime after the first of the year.

**Joseph White**, who was an early White Lotus Sangha member at Nebraska State Penitentiary has been in the local and national news recently. He was been released from prison after twenty years and completely exonerated of the crime he was falsely convicted of after DNA evidence proved that he was not involved. **Our heartfelt congratulations to him!**

Prison volunteer **Kanho Doug Dittman** writes: "On a recent visit to the Penitentiary, the guards that escorted me to and from the chapel both commented that they appreciated our visits, for they felt that they were of great benefit to the men. This was encouraging to hear. I was further encouraged recently when two former members of our prison sangha came to the temple after their release to say thank you and to visit the place that previously they could only hear about. One of these men is involved in a work release program at an Omaha

## 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**.

facility and is coming regularly to our Sunday morning services.

The gap between our practice and that at the prison continues to narrow now that the men can sew rakusus, go through Lay Initiation, and participate in one-day sesshins at the prisons. Week after week, the men make the effort to sit, hold services, support one another, and make these practices available to anyone else who's interested. I'm encouraged to visit White Lotus Sangha groups more frequently by the men's efforts in the midst of their lives in prison, which can be such a negative environment."

Many thanks to **Kanho Doug** and our other prison volunteers: **Zenryu Vicki Grunwald**, **Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer**, **Seishin Larry Pelter**, **Ryoshin Joe Marshall**, **Koshin Milo Alexander**, and **Greg McLawsen**.

## Continuous Practice

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learning from teaching I resisted years ago, especially in Japan. Things come up and I remember, "Oh, *that's* what was going on." Why didn't I see it before? My cup was too full.

Katagiri-roshi was frequently disappointed and discouraged in his attempts to transmit the Buddha dharma to stubborn Americans. Students he had high hopes for drifted away (or sometimes bolted!). The "big donors" never came through. The monastic practice he deeply wanted to develop in Southern Minnesota never materialized. Yet through it all, he never quit; and he didn't leave, even though he sometimes wanted to. He sat through his disappointment and discouragement and continued the practice he'd learned from his teachers years before. His faith in this Way was boundless. He called it "spiritual security," and it manifested in his life as incredible depth and strength.

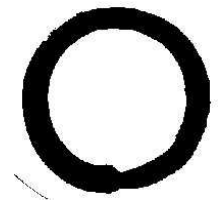
I lived in close proximity to Katagiri-roshi for less time than any of his closest disciples. After I'd studied with him a few years and had been priest-ordained a year, he sent me to study with other teachers so I could benefit from their strengths and weaknesses and broaden my experience. I left for California and then Japan. During the last five years of his life, I saw him for one day at Tassajara (the day of my Head-monk ceremony), two months in Japan when we practiced together at Shogo-ji, and for a month at dharma transmission time in Minneapolis. I

was back in Japan when he died. He had asked me not to come back until I finished what he wanted me to finish, so I didn't.

During those last five years, he had turned my training over to other capable teachers, but he continued to teach me in many ways. The most important lesson was how to stand on my own two feet. He emphasized this by sending me away.

For the past seventeen years, I've been on my own here in the Heartland, but my master is still teaching me. My situation now is similar to his in Minneapolis. Here I am, trying to continue the daily practice I learned from my teachers as best I can, right in the middle of the ups and downs of daily life. The dharma-stream of the Buddhas and Ancestors continues.

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



# OPENING YOUR HEART

by Dainin Katagiri

from *You Have to Say Something*,  
Shambala Publications, 1998

**F**or anyone living a spiritual life, the most important practice is openheartedness. But dealing with life with compassion and kindness is not easy. We tend to live in terms of “me.” But if you’re interested in the spiritual

openness of heart brings into life flexibility, tenderness, and magnanimity. This can’t be fully explained conceptually. You can’t put your finger on it, but you can feel it. To live this way is what you’re really looking for.

Usually we live our lives only in terms of the world we can see. When we do, we emphasize ourselves. We place the “I” first. Even when we take up the spiritual life, we place the “I” first. In other words, we pull everything down to the level of our personal views and feelings. We never forget ourselves. This I why, at bottom, we’re often irritated or uneasy. And the more we place the “I” first, the

more irritation, uneasiness, suffering, and fear we feel.

What we tend to ignore is the world that sees us. This is not the world you think you see or hear. Nevertheless, you are supported by this world. It is actually the world as it is *before* you are conscious of it – before you form some idea about it. If you emphasize yourself, you will completely forget this world that sees, holds, and sustains you.

For instance, since I’m the head of a Zen group, even though my life is my

***If you learn to deal with your life with compassion, magnanimity, and flexibility, you will become very tender, generous, and kind. This all that is necessary.***

life, you will have to consider more than just yourself.

All religions emphasize the importance of openness of heart. But very few of us actually practice it in our daily lives. So day after day, year after year, century after century, wise people point this out to us. They know how egotistical we are. But even one person practicing love and compassion is a great source of peace in the world.

Whatever the future brings, we have to continue to seek a world based on the practice of openness of heart. Perfect

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## 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 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@neb.rr.com** (402-483-1755) or **Kanho Doug Dittman** at **dougdittman@earthlink.net** (402-783-2124). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

# SANGHA LIFE

BY Dainin Katagiri

According to Zen Master Dogen, there are three aspects to functioning in the Buddhist community we call the sangha. We practice (1) to benefit others, (2) to develop the sangha, and (3) to follow the ways of the Buddhas and ancestors.

First, the sangha is not a place to practice Buddhism just for ourselves; we practice to do something for others. Our practice is not to enhance our personality or deepen our character but to express our deepest gratitude for all beings, by which our lives are already supported and helped. If we don't practice in this way, our practice is consciously or unconsciously based on egoism.

Yesterday, I received a journal from Eiheiji Monastery. In it, a professor of education wrote of his impressions when he visited Eiheiji. From the monks' attitudes he felt very deeply how strict their life was. On the other hand, he found something completely different, a sense of arrogance. A monk showed him all the buildings, explained their functions, and described the strictness of daily life, but this monk never expressed his gratitude for all beings.

Monks cannot practice at Eiheiji without the help of all beings. Many people work in order to support the monastery and the monks – growing vegetables, working at jobs, and serving society. To create just one

grain of rice takes a lot of effort. Without expressing our deepest gratitude for these people and these things, we cannot practice. That is why the professor said that he found a sense of arrogance. This is really egoism. Though we practice very hard, if we don't express our deepest gratitude for our lives, we cannot practice as Buddha taught. Practice must go on very quietly, not showing off, with humility, gracefulness, even shyness sometimes, with nothing to say, not comment, very quiet.

So remember the real meaning of practice. Particularly in the Buddhist sangha, we have to practice not for ourselves but for others first. Otherwise, egoism and self-centered ideas will always come up. "For others" means not only for human beings but also for all living beings, for a piece of toilet paper, our clothes, our cushions, vegetables, pans, everything. Help all living beings. This does not mean to give them something material or psychological. Giving lots of material things to others isn't necessarily helpful. To help all living beings means to deal with them wholeheartedly whenever we encounter them. Show them compassionate, kind attention. This is the way to help others and all things around our lives: vegetables, books, tables, floors, lights, water – all things, visible or invisible.

Once I had an experience at Eiheiji. We had electricity there just as we have here, so everything was very bright. One

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## Sangha Life

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day, we had a severe thunderstorm during morning service. One hundred and fifty monks were chanting sutras in the Buddha hall when the lights went out. It was completely dark, yet the



Sangha — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

chanting continued. It was beautiful; all the monks were chanting in the dark. I was very impressed. Then, a monk who took care of the Buddha hall carried in two candles, one for the practice leader and one for the leader of the service. Only two candles for the whole hall, which was very large. The light was very soft and created shadows of the monks on the floor and walls. I was very impressed by these shadows and the light of the two candles. I felt truly

grateful for the light. Usually, we don't have a chance to feel grateful for light, because we are always soaking in it. We forget how wonderful the light is.

Wherever we live, our lives are supported by all beings. We should express our deepest gratitude for this support, but at home and at work, we often are too busy, and we don't pay attention to things and express our gratitude. That is why sangha life is very important and why we have places to gather and practice. In them, we try to take care of everything with compassionate, kind attention, and with gratitude.

This is an important aspect of our practice. Sangha is not a place to build ego or promote self-centered ideas. Instead, we should do something for all beings, not only human beings but all beings. For this, we have

to give life to a vegetable as it is, to water as it is, to our clothes as they are, whenever we encounter them.

Second, to practice in the sangha we have to develop the Buddhist community. How can we do this? To help all living beings is to develop the sangha. This is not a matter for discussion. Day after day, from moment to moment, when we

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## CALLIGRAPHY FOR SALE ON OUR WEBSITE



Mu (nothing)

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.

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](mailto: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.**

## Opening Your Heart

from page 12

life, my life is not really my life. My life is really the life of all of the group. So, very naturally, even though I don't like it, we set up a schedule for zazen, and lectures, and retreats, and so forth – and I have to follow it. In other words, the group has set me in a certain way of life. In terms of my ego, I don't like it. I'd rather do just what I want to do, and not always follow the schedule.

We all fell this way from time to time. We say, "Don't tell me what I should do!" But we can't take care of our lives very well just based on our personal preferences. There's a big world that sees you. You can't ignore this world. So, even though I might not like it sometimes, the group provides me with the great opportunity to sit zazen. So when the opportunity appears, I feel grateful that I can sit zazen with all beings.

We all have memories and habits and patters in our lives, and sometimes, even though we feel good, they don't allow us to open our hearts. Intellectually we know we should, but emotionally it seems like we can't. Still, you can do it. Strictly speaking, openness of heart is beyond all speculation. It is the total picture of your life as you live it from day to day.

If you want to practice compassion, you must accept simultaneously the

world you see and the world that sees you. You can't judge your life just in terms of what you can see – that is, from your ego-centered perspective. You must practice patience, calmness of mind, and mindfulness. If you don't confine yourself to just your own view of things, these come up, naturally. When you just sit down in zazen, you can feel something. Even though you don't know what it is, it just arises, right here, right now.

Compassion is like spring water under the ground. Your life is like a pipe that can tap into that underground spring. When you tap into it, water immediately comes up. So drive your pipe into the ground. Tap into the water of compassion. We can't conceive of what real compassion and openness of heart are, but if you tap into them, you can feel them. If you learn to deal with your life with compassion, magnanimity, and flexibility, you will become very tender, generous, and kind. This all that is necessary.

We do not need an explanation. No matter how long we ask about why we are so egoistic, we will never find a clear answer. Nevertheless, right in the middle of this "no answer," your life goes on. Even though we don't understand, we can all take a deep breath. We can all

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## Opening Your Heart

from page 17

practice forgetting ourselves. Forgetting yourself does not mean destroying yourself. Forgetting yourself is just to see yourself from a different angle: the way the world sees you. Then you will see not just your little ego self but your true self, your big self, which includes all beings.

When I was fourteen years old my mother died. The world seemed completely dark. I felt there was no hope for me. Day after day, I cried in my bed. It seemed that the more I cried, the more I tried to reach for her, the further from me she became. So I cried even more. I cried constantly. But, all of a sudden, I stopped crying. I felt my mother had come into my heart. I can't explain it in words, but there was no longer any separation between me and my mother. She was in my heart.

This goes for you, too. There is you and then there is the world. If there is even a small gap between them, we fill it with thought. As long as we create this gap, we will never understand. But in truth, there is no gap between you and the world. To become one with your object is true openness of heart. This is why we do zazen.

**Dainin Katagiri was the abbot of Minnesota Zen Center and Hokyoji Zen Mountain Center. He died in 1990.**

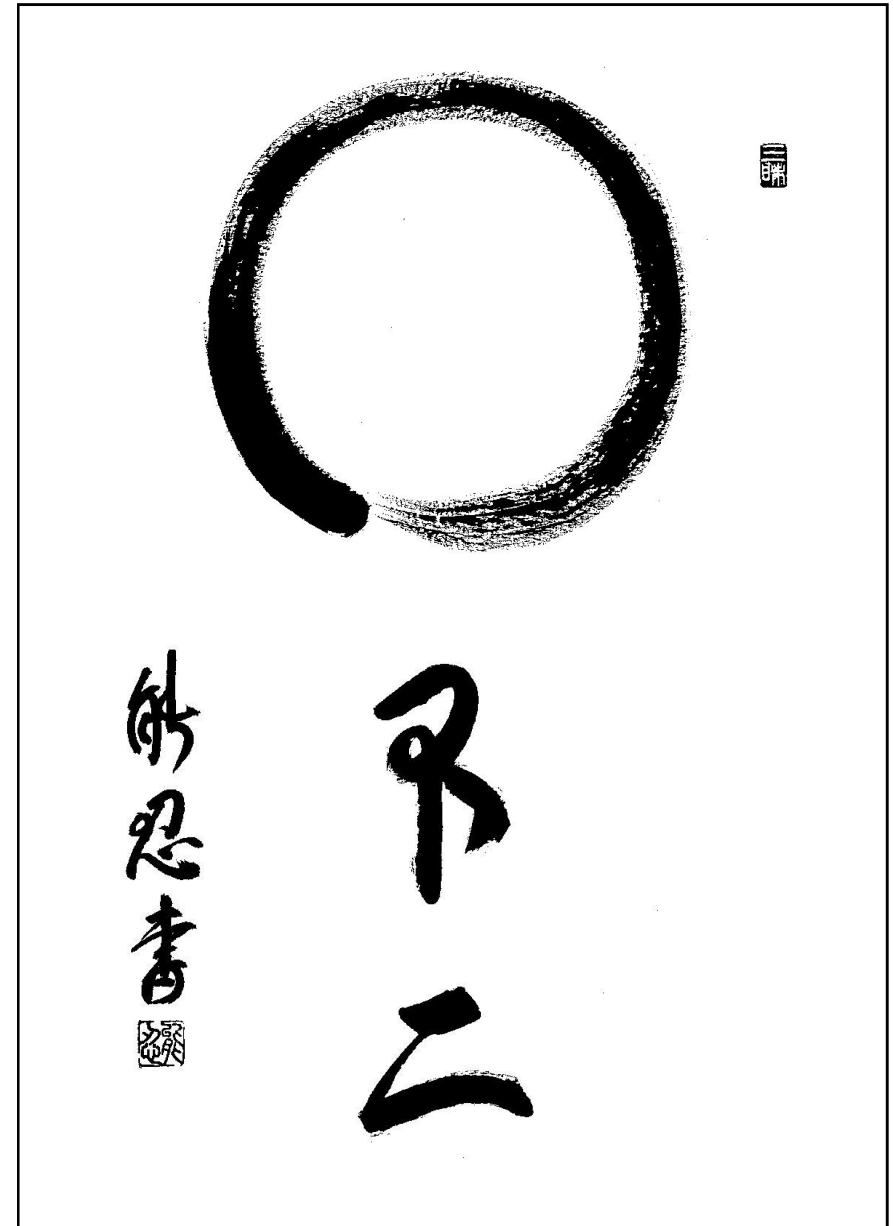
## Sangha Life

from page 15

encounter a piece of paper, we should deal with it with kind, compassionate attention and with gratitude. This is a great way to develop the sangha.

Third, practicing in the sangha, we try to follow the way of the Buddhas and ancestors. After hearing about the practice of the Buddhas and ancestors, you probably complain, saying that their circumstances were completely different from ours, that we can't live that way. But sometimes, we need to read about the lives of great people – spiritual leaders, politicians, or philosophers. It is important for us to read about and study their lives. Then, if we really want to create our lives and reach what they reached, consciously or unconsciously, we have to follow their examples. Sometimes it is impossible to repeat or follow their ways exactly because their circumstances were so different from ours. I don't mean that we should follow them exactly but that we should live according to their spirit. There are many ways to give life to these great people of the past right now, right here. We shouldn't forget to follow the example of these people; we should try to approach their lives as much as possible.

Day-by-day, as we live our lives, we practice with the sangha. As we do, we should always remember to follow Zen Master Dogen's way of functioning: benefitting others,



Not Two — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

# WORKDAY AT ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH



Tracie and Harry



Sadie, Mya, and Jake having fun



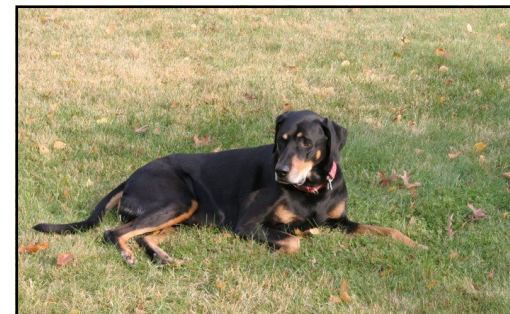
Kyoki leaning; Dustin digging



Kyoki and Jisen



Kathejean, Dustin, and John



Jake on break



Ryan Minster and Tony Roscoe After Receiving Rakus During Lay Initiation at Zen Center of Pittsburgh

### *Meditation Workshop at Nebraska Zen Center*

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**, 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131 on **Saturday, March 28th**, from **10:00 a.m.** till **1:00 p.m.**

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

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER 2009 PRACTICE SCHEDULE

<b>Jan 19</b>	Dainin Katagiri's Birthday*	<b>Jul 5</b>	World Peace Ceremony
<b>21</b>	Precept Ceremony		Group Discussion
<b>26</b>	Zen Master Dogen's Birthday*	<b>8</b>	Precept Ceremony
<b>Feb 1</b>	World Peace Ceremony	<b>20</b>	Ikko Narasaki's Memorial Day*
	Group Discussion	<b>Aug 2</b>	World Peace Ceremony
	Rakusu Sewing Begins		Group Discussion
<b>11</b>	Precept Ceremony	<b>5</b>	World Peace Ceremony
<b>14-15</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>	<b>Sep 2</b>	Precept Ceremony
	Winter Practice Period Begins	<b>6</b>	Precept Ceremony
<b>15</b>	Buddha's Parinirvana*		World Peace Ceremony
<b>Mar 1</b>	Dainin Katagiri's Memorial Day	<b>12-13</b>	Group Discussion
	World Peace Ceremony	<b>29</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>
	Group Discussion	<b>Oct 4</b>	Fall Practice Period Begins
<b>10-15</b>	Lay Initiation Week		World Peace Ceremony
<b>11</b>	Precept Ceremony	<b>7</b>	Group Discussion
<b>15</b>	Lay Initiation	<b>17</b>	Precept Ceremony
<b>21</b>	<b>One-day Sesshin</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>One-day Sesshin</b>
<b>Apr 8</b>	Buddha's Birthday*	<b>Nov 1</b>	Bodhidharma Day*
	Precept Ceremony		World Peace Ceremony
<b>12</b>	World Peace Ceremony	<b>4</b>	Group Discussion
	Group Discussion	<b>Dec 1-7</b>	Precept Ceremony
<b>25-26</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Rohatsu Sesshin</b>
	Practice Period Ends	<b>9</b>	Buddha's Enlightenment Day*
<b>May 3</b>	World Peace Ceremony		
	Group Discussion		
<b>6</b>	Precept Ceremony		
<b>10</b>	Remembrance Day		
<b>Jun 6-7</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>		
<b>7</b>	World Peace Ceremony		
	Group Discussion		

\*Special services commemorating these days will be held before dharma talk on the Sunday nearest the date indicated. Precept Ceremony follows evening zazen. World Peace Ceremony precedes monthly Group Discussion.

### *New Year's Eve At Nebraska Zen Center*

All are welcome to join us for New Year's Eve services at **Nebraska Zen Center**. We'll begin at **6:00 p.m.** with a **Pot-luck Supper** followed by **Services at 8:00**. We'll then **sit zazen from 9:30 till midnight**, with walking meditation when needed. During sitting, we'll **ring the temple bell 108 times** to mark the turning of the year.

You may attend during any part of the evening. **Come when you like, and leave whenever you need to.**