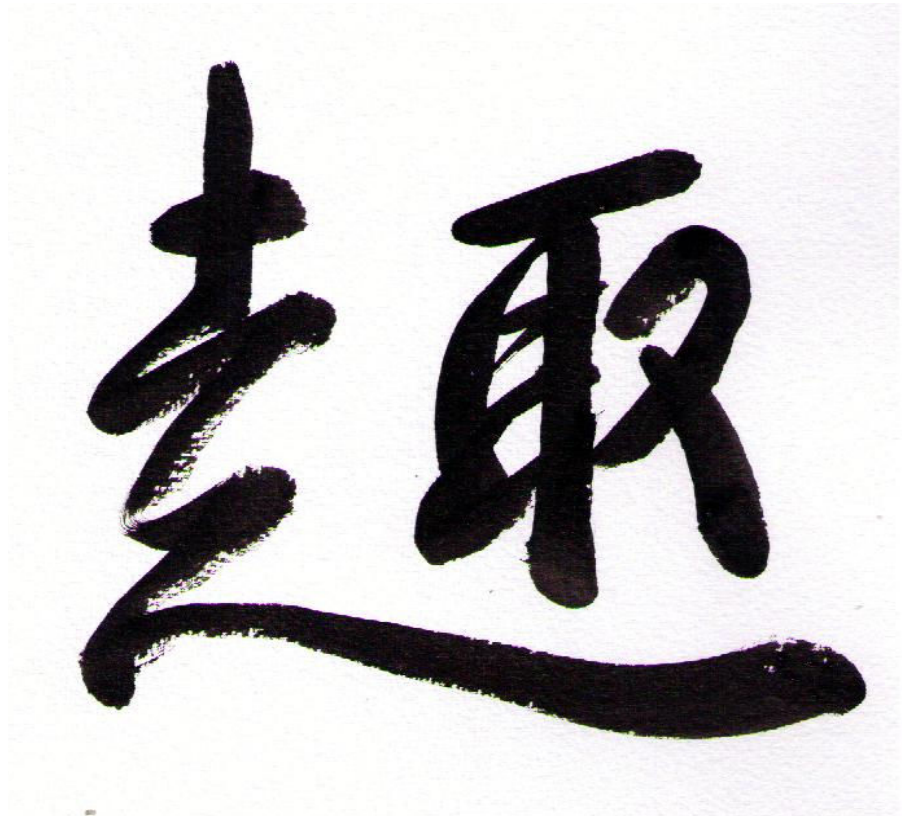


# Prairie Wind



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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* (© 2012 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

**Cover Calligraphy: Grace**, by Nonin Chowaney

We **always** need material for *Prairie Wind*. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, etc. The deadline for publication in our **Spring** issue is **February 15th**.

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

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# WILLIAM STAFFORD'S DHARMA EYE

by *Nonin Chowaney*

I like to take the dharma where I find it. By "dharma," I mean truth, and by "taking it where I find it," I mean anywhere, from anything that manifests it, or from anyone who writes about it. I define "truth" as "things as they are," or sometimes, "words that describe things as they are." When things, events, or words manifest truth, we intuitively know it, and we can learn from it. Neither Zen Buddhist practitioners nor followers of any other spiritual paths have an exclusive franchise for either understanding or manifesting the truth of human existence, so I don't limit my activity to temple life or my friends and acquaintances to Zen practitioners.

Nor do I limit my reading and study to Buddhist books. I love to read poetry, and frequently, I write articles and give talks on either specific poets and poems that speak to me not only about life as I see and experience it but also in ways that I've read and heard before over my thirty-five years of Zen Buddhist practice and study. Some of my favorite American poets are Jane Hirschfield, Gary Snyder, Mary Oliver, Billy Collins, Wendell Berry, and William Stafford. Some of these poets are familiar with Buddhism; some aren't. Some either practice or have practiced Zen Buddhism; some haven't. All of them, however, have discerning eyes and are able to see "things as they are." When

they write poems about these experiences, we are able to share their insights, and when these insights are the same as our own, they confirm our own experiences and function as a spiritual second opinion.

William Stafford, who died a few years ago, had a clear eye for the truth of our existence. I call that a "dharma eye." In this article, I'd like to take a look at a few of his poems. All of them appear in *The Way It Is, New and Selected Poems*, published by Graywolf Press in 1998. Here's the first:

*You Reading This, Be Ready*

*Starting here, what do you want to remember?  
How sunlight creeps along a shining floor?  
What scent of old wood hovers,  
what softened  
sound from outside fills the air?*

*Will you ever bring a better gift for the world  
than the breathing respect that you carry  
wherever you go right now? Are you waiting  
for time to show you some better thoughts?*

*When you turn around, starting here, lift this*

continued on page 4

## William Stafford's Dharma Eye

from page 3

*new glimpse that you found; carry  
into evening  
all that you want from this day. This  
interval you spent  
reading or hearing this, keep it for  
life—*

*What can anyone give you greater than  
now,  
starting here, right in this room, when  
you turn around?*

In this poem, Stafford focuses on the here and now, what's right in front of us, in the same way that Zen Masters tell us to focus on "just this," this moment and this place, for this is all we have. The past is gone; the future hasn't arrived. The only place we can truly be is here, and the only time we can be here is now. The poet focuses us on sights, smells, and sounds arising and asks us what better gift can we bring to the world in this moment, or in any moment, than respect for things as they are, and he calls it "breathing respect," something alive and vibrant.

The "aliveness" that this poem conveys is palpable. It says to me, be ready, be ready to live fully and completely when you turn away from this keyboard and walk out of this room; be awake, be aware of your feet touching the floor, of the light coming into the window. This is your life; this is all you have, this moment. Drop what you've been doing, drop what you've been thinking. Live this moment fully and completely, as an awakened person.

Whenever I read this poem, I am reminded of the first Bodhisattva Vow, which is, "Beings are numberless; I vow to free them." What are we to free them from? Suffering. Because they are numberless, this appears to be an impossible task, and early on in my practice with my master, Dainin Katagiri-roshi, I asked him, "How do we free all beings?" He replied, "By encountering them wholeheartedly wherever we find them." At the time, I was puzzled, but after a while, I came to understand that what this means is to be there with them completely, openly, intimately, and kindly. Treat them with respect, gently and thoughtfully. Then, you give them no cause for distress or concern; put them at ease, and provide a kindred spirit for them to relate to. This includes all beings animate and inanimate -- human beings, dog beings, tree beings, flower beings, dish beings, shoe beings, and car beings.

As Stafford says,

*What can anyone give you greater  
than now,  
starting here, right in this room, when  
you turn around?*

And what can you give all beings greater than your complete attention and respect when you turn around?

Here's another William Stafford poem:

## William Stafford's Dharma Eye

from page 4

### Why I Am Happy

*Now has come, an easy time. I let it  
roll. There is a lake somewhere  
so blue and far nobody owns it.  
A wind comes by and a willow listens  
gracefully.*

*I hear all this, every summer. I laugh  
and cry for every turn of the world,  
its terribly cold, innocent spin.  
That lake stays blue and free: it goes  
on and on.*

*And I know where it is.*

I read this poem as both realistic and metaphoric. The poet has come to an "easy time," and he is enjoying it, letting "it roll." Then, does he imagine a blue lake, open to anyone, and a willow tree -- they grow by water -- swayed by the wind? Is this a pleasant metaphor for his "easy time," or does he really know of such a place? Does he visit it every summer and enjoy "easy times" there? He then laughs and cries as the world spins through the ups and downs of his life and of the lives of all others, but the lake "stays blue and free; it goes on and on." There is a "rightness" and a constancy here that transcends his laughing and crying.

Is the lake an actual place? I don't think so, for he says, it's "somewhere." For me, the "blue and free" place is within, and it's not a place but the peaceful state of mind that arises

when we realize that whatever "up" or "down" arises for us, our lives continue on and on, merging the two into one whole and that whole is "blue and free;" it all "is," and it goes on and on. Then, Stafford says, "*And I know where it is.*"

Well, where is that blue and free lake? Peace arises when we accept all the circumstances of our lives with a measure of equanimity and live "what is" without rejecting or clinging. That calm, blue, and free place is within us, and we inhabit that place that is not a place when we sit zazen and manifest zazen mind, the mind that abides nowhere, when we rise from our cushions and live our lives moment-by-moment.

This next Stafford poem is one of my all-time favorites:

### It's All Right

*Someone you trusted has treated you  
bad.  
Someone has used you to vent their ill  
temper.  
Did you expect anything different?  
Your work – better than some others'  
– has languished,  
neglected. Or a job you tried was too  
hard,  
and you failed. Maybe weather or bad  
luck  
spoiled what you did. That grudge,  
held against you  
for years after you patched up, has  
flared,*

continued on page 5

continued on page 14

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** will be held on **Saturday, February 2nd at 10:00 a.m.** We will be replacing Board members whose terms have expired and electing Officers for 2013. We will also be reviewing and finishing business from 2012. **We encourage all who practice at Heartland Temple to attend this meeting.**

**Winter Practice Period** will begin with **February Sesshin** on the **9th and 10th** and will end with **April Sesshin** on the **20th and 21st**. 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 their practice** in three areas: (1) **daily practice at home** (sitting and devotional services), (2) **regular involvement at the temple** (eg. on Sunday mornings and for work practice, and (3) **special events** (e.g., sesshins, study groups, and Precept Ceremonies. 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 6th**. If this is your first Practice Period, speak with Nonin before turning in your commitments.

**Many thanks** to all who helped with work on the Western part of our new temple addition, especially **Mike Zagozda** for electrical work, **Kanho Doug Dittman** for laying tile and wood flooring, **Sarah Nepl** for helping with insulation and interior painting, and **Rob Bailey** and **Kanho Doug** for staining and installing trim and bathroom doors. We should be finished with the West side soon.

Also **many thanks** to all those who worked on **painting the exterior** of both the original building and the new additions. We finished both coats on the siding and will be painting the trim next Spring. **Thanks go** to **Pam Griffin** for her work on the gardens and grounds and for supervising the Fall yard clean-up, to **Sozen George Patenode** for cleaning the gutters and hanging the storm windows, and to **Sokei J.P. Loeffler** for helping. **Many thanks also to anyone else helping around the temple that may have inadvertently been left out!** We've taken on a lot this year, and we wouldn't have completed any of it without those who generously volunteered their labor.

**Nonin** visited and gave talks the Fall to classes at **Millard North High School** and **Brownell-Talbot School**. He also gave talks and zazen instruction to groups visiting NZC from **Central High School, University of Nebraska — Omaha,** and **Midlands Lutheran College**.

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER FALL EVENTS

### SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins at NZC this **Winter**: a **Seven-day sesshin** (Rohatsu) from Dec.1-7, a **Two-day Sesshin** on February 9th and 10th, and a **One-day sitting** on March 9th . Fees: \$40 per day for members; \$50 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. **E-mail us at heartland@prairiewindzen.org** or call **402-551-9035** to register.

### 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 Feb. 23rd, and March 2nd, 9th, and 16th . The subject for study will be announced later.

### 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 suggest the following for considering this step: firm commitments to **sitting zazen**, to **practicing with a teacher**, to **participating in sangha**, and to **continuing dharma study**. **Rakusu sewing** will begin on **February 16th**.

### 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](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org). You will also receive our monthly e-Newsletter.

The big news this Fall is that after months of contracted labor and volunteer help from numerous sangha members, we have **completed building an apartment** on the North end of the garage for our United Methodist pastor friend **Rev. Judy Dye**. A **deep bow of gratitude** to all for the help, and **special thanks** to **Kevin Coghlan** and **Steven Coraor** for laying tile. The apartment was financed by generous donations from **Judy** and **Kyoki**.

Many thanks to **Kyoki**, **Steven**, and **Kaethejean Bleicher** for laying a new brick sidewalk between the parking lot and the East door.

**David Pettersen** and **Dave Belako** are sewing rakus in preparation for **Lay Initiation** in January.

**Jisen** has been working on the City Dharma website, [www.city-dharma.org](http://www.city-dharma.org), and she and City Dharma now offer **bi-weekly sitting at Church of the Redeemer** and **weekly sits at Kearns Spirituality Center in the North Hills**. In addition, **Jisen** offers **monthly one-day sittings** in town. **Please check her calendar** and the one on the next page for details.

*Each New Year's Eve the sangha welcomes one and all to Deep Spring Temple for conversation, fellowship, a wonderful vegetarian pot-luck dinner, music, zazen, and traditional Japanese soba noodles served with broth and toppings by our priests. We begin at 6:00 p.m. with a potluck dinner. Then, there'll be music and other entertainment till 9:00 p.m., when we'll burn papers on which we have written things that we wish to be free of. This will be followed by zazen till midnight. Beginning at 10:00pm, participants help strike a bell 108 times, signifying the removal of delusions. At 12:00 midnight, soba noodles will be served by head priest Kyoki Roberts and senior priest Jisen Coghlan. Everyone is welcome to attend!*

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

## ZCP FALL EVENTS

### DECEMBER

- 1-7 — Rohatsu Sesshin\*
- 8 — ZCP Closed
- 9 — Buddha's Enlightenment Day Celebration
- 13 — at City Dharma, Rev. Daishin McCabe, guest teacher
- 15 — at City Dharma, One day sitting with Rev. Daishin McCabe\*
- 16 — at Deep Spring, Daishin McCabe will give Dharma Talk
- 20 — Precept Renewal, 6:00 p.m.
- 25-28 — ZCP closed
- 31 — New Year's Eve at Deep Spring

- 6 — Lay Initiation
- 11-13 — ZCP Closed
- 19 — at City Dharma, One-day Sitting\*
- 26 — Zen Master Dogen's Birthday

### FEBRUARY

- 1-3 — Sesshin with guest teacher, Rev. Doshō Port\*
- 3 — World Peace Ceremony
- 15 — Buddha's Parinirvana Day
- 23 — at City Dharma, One-day Sitting

\*Please register for this event

### JANUARY

- 1 — ZCP closed

## 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

### KENNY

by Zenryu Vicki Grunwald

Earning a prison inmate's trust is not always easy. Sometimes, it takes several months, and other times, it may take a few years. I met Kenny about 5 years ago. Trust was not something he gave easily. He hated "blue shirts," which is a term inmates sometimes use to refer to prison staff. I spent close to two years convincing him that I am not a "blue shirt." I don't want to betray his hard earned trust by writing about him in this newsletter. My intent is to honor and respect his memory. Therefore, it is with honor and respect that I write this article.

When I met Kenny, he had just spent four years in "the hole," or segregation. He used his time for spiritual growth with a focus on zazen and the Bible. Later, during our White Lotus Sangha meetings, his questions were astute and his spiritual presence strong. He inspired our volunteers and other inmates.

During a first clergy visit to an inmate in segregation, I always tell the men a little about myself -- how I came to Zen, why I volunteer, and at the risk of sounding like a game show contestant, that I have 3 cats, like music, and live in Omaha. Kenny said that he also liked music and wanted to know if I liked rap. I

then tried to rap for him. It is an understatement to say that I am not a good rapper. He laughed so hard at me trying to rap a few lines of an old Grand Master Flash tune that he was actually slapping his thighs. Several minutes later, he would erupt in laughter again. The hole can be really hard on the men. The reduced social contact can make their reflexes slow and they can feel overwhelmed by a lot of so-

### 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](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org), call (402) 551-9035, or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363.**

cial activity and stimuli. To see him laugh like that was a joy. I will always remember him slapping his thighs and laughing.

My sense was that Kenny was not easy to get to know. He was always guarded around others, including other inmates. It took many services and many interactions to break down that barrier. The side of

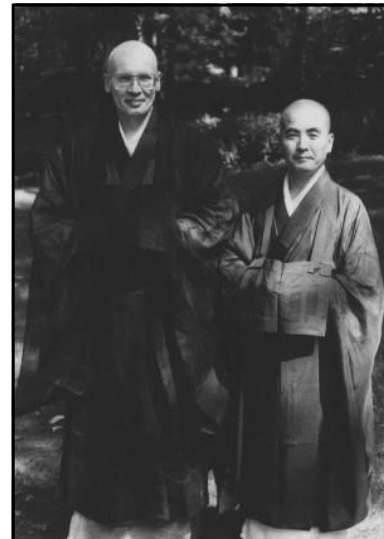
## SCENES FROM THE PAST



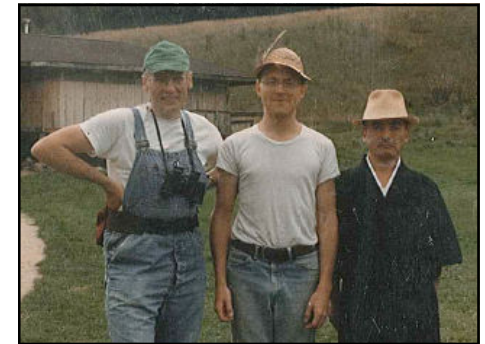
June, 1984 Priest Ordination — Katagiri-roshi adjusting robes for Nonin Chowaney, Dokai Georgesen, and Dosho Port.



Pam Thorston brandishing straight razor she used to shave Dokai, Nonin, and Dosho.



Nonin and Katagiri-roshi after ordination, in backyard of Minnesota Zen Meditation Center



Summer, 1984 — Nonin, Dosho, and Katagiri-roshi at Hokyo-ji Monastery

# MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR MY PARENTS

by Julie Kellie

When my mother died of cancer fifteen years ago, I was far from Christianity, farther still from the Catholicism in which she raised me. I'd read a few books about Buddhism and Zen but my knowledge was slim.

As I struggled with my anger and grief, I read about death and mourning, and I found the Buddhist story of Kisagotami and her dead son. Her search for a mustard seed from a house where no one had died brought me the only relief I'd found. Kisagotami's story didn't give me the answers to any of my questions about life and death, but it helped me begin to realize that the questions themselves were pointless, unanswerable, and in the past. It also made me want to learn more, which brought me to one of Nonin's classes on meditation, and to Nebraska Zen Center.

In the following years, I read too much and sat too little. As my parents' generation aged, I attended more than a few funerals, all of them Christian. I became less and less able to bear the words I heard at those services. They emphasized a belief in a world-to-come over the world-that-is, and they exhort us to ask a teacher to change the world in accordance with our prayers, rather than teach us how to best live in that world and change it ourselves. I don't begrudge others those beliefs, but I don't

share them, and I don't find comfort in them.

At some point, I brought a small blank book with a plain black cover. I spent several hours writing out sutras, poems that I learned from Nonin, and the story of Kisagotami. I take it to Christian services (on happy occasions or sad ones) and read quietly, without drawing attention to myself. It helps tremendously; I am able to concentrate on my own beliefs without disturbing others.

In 2010, my father died, He and I had become very close in the years since my mother's death. Life was very difficult for him in old age, and I knew he wanted release, so his death was more bearable than my mother's. Still, the idea of a Christian service for my father was very difficult for me. It was the right thing to do; my entire family is Christian, and my nephew, a Catholic priest, conducted the service. Adding Buddhist elements would have been upsetting to family members, and therefore wrong. But the Christian beliefs expressed were equally wrong for me.

I did what I could at the Christian service. I kept my sutra book close to me; I started and ended the service with silent chanting of the opening

## 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 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 [dougd@windstream.net](mailto:dougd@windstream.net) (402-783-2124). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

## William Stafford's Dharma Eye

from page 5

*and you've lost a friend for a time.  
Things  
at home aren't so good; on the job  
your spirits  
have sunk. But just when the worst  
bears down  
you find a pretty bubble in your soup  
at noon,  
and outside at work a bird says, "Hi!"  
Slowly the sun creeps along the floor;  
It is coming your way. It touches your  
shoe.*

All of us can certainly relate to this poem, especially to the first ten lines! Negative things happen to us all the time, and they are hard to live through. Also, negative mental states arise and linger when we become embroiled in them. Sometimes they are hard to let go, and we roll them over and over in the mind. We carry the hurt from anger directed at us, or someone we've trusted has betrayed that trust, and we wonder why, how could he do that? We live these moments over and over and by doing so are living in our heads, in our thoughts, and by doing so, are not aware of what's happening right in front of us. Stafford then writes:

*But just when the worst bears down  
you find a pretty bubble in your soup  
at noon,  
and outside at work a bird says, "Hi!"  
Slowly the sun creeps along the floor;  
It is coming your way. It touches your  
shoe.*

If we can let go of our thoughts and focus on the present moment, we may find something wonderful. We can hear the lovely bird song through the open window when we drop the difficulties we've been trying to solve on the computer and be uplifted by it. We can see something lovely in a bowl of soup!

When I was practicing at Tassajara Zen Monastery in California years ago, I was serving as Head Monk for a three-month practice period. About half-way through, I got sick with a nasty virus and was confined to my cabin for about a week. Toward the end of it, I was sitting in the sun behind the cabin in the afternoon, drinking a cup of tea, blowing my nose, and moaning and groaning about being sick and not being able to follow the schedule and carry on my head monk duties. All of a sudden, I looked at the stone wall at the base of the zendo across the way, and it was indescribably beautiful. The stones were glowing in the sun, and there were a couple of varieties of luscious green ivy with yellow and blue flowers climbing up the wall. At the base, there were different varieties of plants, some with lovely flowers, in a variety of colors. I was so uplifted by this scene that I forgot about everything else, took it all in, and started laughing. I was so happy just to be there at that moment and be able to drink in all the loveliness. Just a moment before, I was bewailing my fate and didn't see any of it.

In these poems, William Stafford gives us beautifully crafted, evocative exam-

## William Stafford's Dharma Eye

from page 14

ples of being "here," being present in each moment of our lives and responding fully to what's right in front of us. These poems speak to me in a way that a dry Buddhist text can't, for they root the teaching in daily life. Theory is easy to dismiss. Concrete examples are hard to ignore, for they strike with great force, especially when they are presented by great poets.

I'll leave you with this Stafford poem:

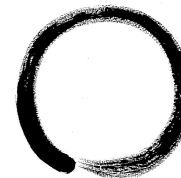
**Yes**

*It could happen any time, tornado,  
earthquake, Armageddon. It could  
happen.  
Or sunshine, love, salvation.*

*It could, you know. That's why we wake  
and look out – no guarantees  
in this life.*

*But some bonuses, like morning,  
like right now, like noon,  
like evening.*

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



### 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 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131 on Saturday, March 23rd, from 10 a.m. till 1 p.m.

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



## 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 water-color 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.**

## Memorial Services

from page 11

and closing sutras. I said goodbye to my father with the last lines of the Heart Sutra, and I promised myself a Buddhist memorial service on the first anniversary of my father's death.

In considering a service for my father, I realized that I needed to do one for my mother as well. The anniversary of her death fell before my father's, so I contacted Nonin to do a much-delayed service for her.

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, I brought flowers and pictures to Zen Center. I was very, very nervous. I hadn't been to the temple in a long time; my bows are awkward; I was placing too much importance on my own abilities. And I felt, oddly, as though I were about to have a conversation with my mother.

It was an amazing service. I was able to focus on my mother as a real person, someone with an identity beyond "Mom." I thanked her for raising me to be a strong woman. I told her that I knew she wouldn't be comfortable with a Zen Buddhist service but that it was curiosity and open-mindedness – gifts from her – that had led me to the temple. I found great joy as Nonin wished my mother a good journey. I found that I could join him in that goodbye without needing to know where she was going or why her journey here had ended the way it had.

Last August, at the service for my dad, I found myself grateful for the tradition of having a service on the

first anniversary of the death. It was an emotional challenge that would have been greater if it were earlier. I was able – just – to thank Dad for the efforts he made in his life and for sharing the results of the work with me. I thanked him for teaching me some hard lessons about old age. I tried to thank him for those gifts he had given me, particularly those that held the greatest value for him. We chanted and bowed, and we wished my father well on his journey.

Nonin told my father "Your daughter must have loved you very much because she arranged this service for you." That recognition, in a formal setting, of my feelings for my father, was incredibly important to me. It was also an acknowledgment that this service, which my family chose not to attend, was nevertheless exactly what I needed in order to let my father go.

Many of us (particular in this part of the country) come to Buddhism after leaving Christianity. We don't think that we'll miss all the "religious stuff." I had a hard time applying the word "religion" to Zen Buddhism at all; it rankled. I didn't think about the place the old religious rites would continue to have in the lives of my family and friends, and I had no idea how inadequate I would find them to be when I needed something. I also didn't know how my beliefs and Buddhist rites would be important to me when I needed them.

Holding Buddhist memorial services

### **THE LITTLE WAYS THAT ENCOURAGE GOOD FORTUNE**

*Wisdom is having things right in your life  
and knowing why.  
If you do not have things right in your life  
you will be overwhelmed:  
you may be heroic, but you will not be wise.  
If you have things right in your life  
but do not know why,  
You are just lucky, and you will not move  
in the little ways that encourage good fortune.*

*The saddest are those not right in their lives  
who are acting to make things right for others:  
they act only from the self—  
and that self will never be right:  
no luck, no help, no wisdom.*

*William Stafford*

### **HUNGER**

*When it's your own pain, you notice it.  
A bird that sings when you go by.  
No road goes far enough – you understand?  
And no sound can find the note – some call  
has caught what wrings hope out of  
evil history. But we can't reach it,  
hear it, find a way to deserve even  
the immediate offering. I reach far beyond  
the music, run forth to contemplate  
a clod, or a mountain. They help, yes,  
but no road goes far enough. You understand?*

*William Stafford*

### **Kenny**

from page 10

him that I got to know was calm, peaceful, and spiritually aware, although his past behavior and sometimes his present actions made his relationship with prison staff tenuous at best.

The last time I saw Kenny was about three months before his death by suicide at age 39. He had gone back to the hole for an alleged fight and expected to be there for many years. He was smiling and open, more open than I had ever seen him. The last thing he said to me besides goodbye was “Don’t worry about me. I know how to do my time in here.” Some people mistakenly see suicide as weakness of character. Kenny would be the last person I would expect to take his own life because he was not a weak person. I attended the visitation at the funeral home and offered condolences to the family. As we spoke about him and his character, it was very clear that Kenny shared a side of himself with me that he didn’t share with many people. I felt so honored.

To try to make sense of our world, we all tell ourselves stories about people and events, and we believe them. However, we know from practice that stories are exactly that -- stories. Everyone had an idea about Kenny, who he was and what he was “really” like. All stories are true, yet no story is complete. I have a story about his death. Even though I know that it is only a story, I choose to believe it. Kenny was not acting from despair and anguish, but believing in

an afterlife, was at peace with his decision to go now rather than later. I respect his decision.

Kenny, it was an honor to know you. In honor of my favorite memory of you, I will close with the lyrics of Grand Master Flash, “Don’t push me ‘cause I’m close to the edge. I’m tryin’ not to lose my head. Huh, huh, huh, huh. It’s like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from goin’ under.”

**Zenryu Vicki Grunwald serves as a Lay Minister for at White Lotus Sangha.**

### **Memorial Services**

from page 17

for my parents, formally recognizing their loss, allowed me to honor them, to honor the place their religious beliefs had in the lives of my family, and to honor the Triple Treasure. I am deeply grateful to Nonin and to the temple.

**Julie Kellie is a member of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple**



## **ATAVISM**

1

*Sometimes in the open you look up  
where birds go by, or just nothing,  
and wait. A dim feeling comes  
you were like this once, there was air,  
and quiet; it was by a lake, or  
maybe a river you were alert  
as an otter and were suddenly born  
like the evening star into wide  
still worlds like this one you have found  
again, for a moment, in the open.*

2

*Something is being told in the woods: aisles of  
shadow lead away; a branch waves;  
a pencil of sunlight slowly travels its  
path. A withheld presence almost  
speaks, but then retreats, rustles  
a patch of brush. You can feel  
the centuries ripple generations  
of wandering, discovering, being lost  
and found, eating, dying, being born.  
A walk through the forest strokes your fur,  
the fur you no longer have. And your gaze  
down a forest aisle is a strange, long  
plunge, dark eyes looking for home.  
For delicious minutes you can feel your whiskers  
wider than your mind, away out over everything.*

*William Stafford*



c. 1984 — Katagiri-roshi in Iowa City.

## **THE LIGHT BY THE BARN**

*The light by the barn that shines all night  
pales at dawn when a little breeze comes.*

*A little breeze comes breathing the fields  
from their sleep and waking the slow windmill.*

*The slow windmill sings the long day  
about anguish and loss to the chickens at work.*

*The little breeze follows the slow windmill  
and the chickens at work till the sun goes down--*

*Then the light by the barn again.*

*William Stafford*

## SOME WORDS ON REBIRTH

by Nonin Chowaney

*Given my understanding of the psycho-physical organism and my understanding that the five skandhas, which include the eight consciousnesses, are what constitute a human being, I (provisional being Nonin) am constantly being born and dying in each moment. Because there is no soul (or self), there is nothing fixed or permanent that can carry over from moment to moment. Therefore, I am merely a constant flow of material and immaterial conditioned elements coming together and falling apart, moment after moment.*

*However, there is some form of continuity from moment to moment. This is karma (action) driven. One moment of consciousness determines the next moment of consciousness in my life as provisional being Nonin, and I have no reason to believe that this process stops when the heart stops beating and the lungs stops functioning.*

*The body doesn't disappear after material death, does it? Well, it may if you get hit with a Romulan disrupter and vaporized, but even then, vapor continues!*

*Do all forms of human consciousness end when the heart stops beating and the lungs stop functioning? Does storehouse consciousness need a material form to function? Zen Master Dogen asks us to "consider the beginning and end of the body." I have done this many times in terms of time and space and have determined that there is no one place where or moment when this body begins or ends. Does any life form ever begin or end in any particular place or at any point of time?*

*Transformation and rebirth in some form is part of my understanding and also is part of the understanding of all awakened ones (including Siddhartha) that I've encountered, either personally or in print. Yet, what is reborn? Can we call it consciousness? Sure, why not? Can we call it karmic driven energy? Sure, why not? These days, physicists agree that there is a given amount of energy that constitutes the universe. No new energy can be formed nor can existing energy be destroyed. So, can we call it "energy" that is transformed and reborn from moment to moment? Why not? We can call it whatever we want as long as we don't reify it and consider it fixed and permanent.*

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER 2013 PRACTICE SCHEDULE

<b>Jan 1-15</b>	NZC Closed	<b>Jul 7</b>	World Peace Ceremony
<b>19</b>	Dainin Katagiri's Birthday*		Group Discussion
<b>26</b>	Zen Master Dogen's Birthday*	<b>20</b>	Ikko Narasaki's Memorial Day*
<b>Feb 3</b>	World Peace Ceremony	<b>24</b>	Precepts Ceremony
	Group Discussion	<b>Aug 4</b>	World Peace Ceremony
<b>9-10</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>		Group Discussion
	Winter Practice Period Begins	<b>21</b>	Precepts Ceremony
<b>15</b>	Buddha's Parinirvana*	<b>Sep 1</b>	World Peace Ceremony
<b>16</b>	Rakusu Sewing Begins		Group Discussion
<b>27</b>	Precepts Ceremony	<b>14-15</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>
<b>Mar 1</b>	Dainin Katagiri's Memorial Day*		Fall Practice Period Begins
<b>3</b>	World Peace Ceremony	<b>18</b>	Precepts Ceremony
	Group Discussion	<b>29</b>	Zen Master Dogen's Parinirvana*
<b>9</b>	<b>One-day Sesshin</b>	<b>Oct 6</b>	World Peace Ceremony
<b>27</b>	Precepts Ceremony		Group Discussion
<b>27-30</b>	Lay Initiation Week	<b>12</b>	<b>One-day Sesshin</b>
<b>31</b>	Lay Initiation	<b>16</b>	Precepts Ceremony
<b>Apr 8</b>	Buddha's Birthday*	<b>17</b>	Bodhidharma Day*
<b>14</b>	World Peace Ceremony	<b>Nov 3</b>	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion		Group Discussion
<b>20-21</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>	<b>13</b>	Precepts Ceremony
	Practice Period Ends	<b>20-23</b>	NZC Closed
<b>24</b>	Precepts Ceremony	<b>Dec 1-7</b>	<b>Rohatsu Sesshin</b>
<b>May 5</b>	Remembrance day	<b>8</b>	Buddha's Enlightenment Day*
<b>12</b>	World Peace Ceremony	<b>18</b>	Precepts Ceremony
	Group Discussion	<b>24-25</b>	NZC Closed
<b>22</b>	Precepts Ceremony		
<b>24-28</b>	NZC Closed		
<b>Jun 2</b>	World Peace Ceremony		
	Group Discussion		
<b>22-23</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>		
<b>26</b>	Precepts Ceremony		

\*Special services commemorating these days will be held before dharma talk on the Sunday nearest the date indicated.  
Precepts Ceremonies follow 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 Dinner**, followed by **Services at 8:00**. We'll then **sit zazen from 9:00 till midnight**, with walking meditation as 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 when you wish.**