

Great Tree Zen Temple

newsletter / fall-winter / 2016 -17



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“Reflection,”

we call the mountain in the lake
whose existence resides
in neither stone nor water.

– Jayne Hirshfield –
excerpt from her poem
“Articulation: An Essay”

GREAT TREE

Our mission is to create a community, based on teachings of Dogen Zenji in the Soto Zen tradition, which serves all whose journey brings them to Great Tree, and to support a residential practice for women.

We are wholly supported by gifts from our friends, membership, volunteers and sangha.

Abess

Rev Teijo Munnich

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Great Tree is a 501(c)3 religious organization, registered with the State of North Carolina

Settling into the Season: from Watershed Year to Looking Ahead

— Reverend Teijo Munnich

Every year at this time I look forward to settling into fall practice period, a time designed for pausing and reflecting. This has been a watershed year for Great Tree and for Chimyo and me. Between the many retreats and workshops we offered, we have been squeezing in a lot of Zen travel. So this is one of those years when sitting quietly and settling into the season is especially appealing.

Ceremonies, Anniversary, & Travel

In June Chimyo and I, along with Sangha members Jayne, Drew and Chloe Harnett-Hargrove, went to Japan for Chimyo's zuisse, which marks the completion of her training and certification. Zuisse means “abbot for a night,” and candidates are asked to function as the abbot for a night and a morning at the two major Japanese Soto Zen monasteries, Eihei-ji and Sojiji. At Eihei-ji Chimyo was the only person doing zuisse on that day and thus she had to remember all the details of how to lead the ceremonies. At Sojiji she was with two Japanese monks but was positioned very visibly in the center. Though she is not very tall and the halls were large, one could see the energy and steely will in her face and her body language. She led morning ceremonies and performed zuisse ceremonies in the hot and humid Japanese rainy season, during which the slightest movement caused perspiration, particularly under layers of robes. As many of you know, Chimyo is a great gift to Great Tree, and we celebrate her accomplishment.

After the zuisse ceremonies, the five of us went to an Airbnb which we used as a base for exploring Kyoto and the surrounding area. Chimyo had practiced at the Aichi Senmon Nisodo, the women's training monastery, for six months, but I had never been there, and we wanted to pay respects to the abbess, Rev. Shundo Aoyama. Neither of us knows her well, and with our limited Japanese, we were pretty nervous—especially since we arrived in somewhat informal attire and were scheduled to have tea with Aoyama Roshi at 3 pm. But Roshi was very gracious. She served us tea and gave Chimyo a gift of a dark earthy green raku with her beautiful calligraphy on the back. Then she suggested we join the other nuns for their teatime. As we walked into the tea room, voices rose in chorus,

“Chimyo!”—and Chimyo just melted into the group. Our language and cultural differences evaporated, and before long the nuns were dunking the biscotti we brought from America into their green tea, probably a first in Japan. It was such a fun and wonderful experience, and we left bursting with joy.

Also in June I celebrated the 35th anniversary of my priest ordination. Ordination is the first step of Buddhist priest training, and is considered a new birthday. So this year I turned 35 years old in priest years. And in August I celebrated my 70th year of being on this earth, which makes me acutely aware of how quickly time passes.

In early September I attended a conference in Los Angeles for Zen teachers who are certified in the Japanese system. We welcomed as keynote speaker Rev. Yusho Sasaki, the first woman director of European Soto Zen, who raised a family before ordaining. As it is uncommon, even taboo,

for women priests to marry in Japan, we had many questions for and about her, so we women invited her to dinner to get to know her and learn about her life. We arranged tables into a square so we could easily talk with each other. Her English is very good, and she understands Western culture because she is married to an Englishman and lived in London while they were raising their children.

After that she spent time at the Aichi Senmon Nisodo and came to greatly respect Aoyama Roshi. She wanted to ordain, but Aoyama Roshi usually doesn't ordain married women because she believes that a mother's profession is to take care of her children and her home; being a nun would add another profession, and neither could be done well. However, since Yusho's children were grown and Yusho's husband was very supportive, Aoyama Roshi agreed to ordain her. After years of Zen training, Yusho has taken a role as a teacher and is now helping with the development of Soto Zen practice in Europe. We all enjoyed this conversation very much.

Later in September Chimyo and I attended an American teacher's conference in Minnesota during which she participated in the American version of zuisse before the many teachers who attended the conference.

with Rev. Shundo Aoyama and the nuns of Aichi Senmon Nisodo



From Minnesota we went to Dai Bosatsu Monastery, in the Catskill Mountains about three hours from New York City. Sara Myojo Wexler, also known as “Myojo Morningstar,” a member of the Great Tree Sangha and sewer of Buddhist robes, died on July 20. She was buried at Dai Bosatsu near her husband and son. She will be missed, but Great Tree inherited her dog Justin, so she is truly not forgotten.

Practice Periods

So I am ready to settle for a while. Sinking into practice has always been a great help for me—like when the water becomes still and everything sinks to the bottom. These times provide clarity, bring me back to the present moment (for better or for worse) and give me a fresh start. This wasn’t the origin of practice periods in Buddhism, though. In the time of Shakyamuni Buddha these were simply times when he and his followers, all wandering monks, stopped for a few months during the rainy season in India. Somehow it became a tradition in all kinds of Buddhism. In Japanese Zen, practice periods (*ango* in Japanese) are held twice a year, one beginning at the end of March and going into July and the other beginning in late September and going until mid-February. At Great Tree we have Practice Periods in the spring and the fall and a short one in early summer to help ease us through the transitions of the seasons.

The kind of slowing down that we experience during practice period is different from—perhaps the opposite of—taking a vacation. When we go on vacation we still carry our mental baggage with us, and what helps us “relax” is that we step away from it for a moment. Practice Period is the opposite—settling ourselves, our awareness increases and we watch our minds, bodies and everything around us. This awareness may be pleasant or unpleasant, but either way we are noticing life more vividly. And that helps us step out of our ego-centered world and reminds us of the larger picture of life.

When I first started Zen practice I had been dabbling in several different spiritual practices. So I decided it was time to stop shopping around and explore something more seriously. I actually didn’t like Zen practice, but when I did it I always noticed small shifts in the way I saw life. I had found a good teacher and felt I needed to make a commitment in order to learn from him. So I committed to one month. After a month I realized that I needed more time, so I committed to six months. After six months I committed to a year. At the end of that year my teacher, Katagiri Roshi, offered the first practice period at Minnesota Zen Center—and I jumped right in. The rest is history.

In September the Women’s Retreat was reinstated. We haven’t had a Women’s Retreat for several years but from starting up the women’s group “Attending the Moon” this year, this retreat naturally came about as one way of serving the Sangha. In 2017 we

will continue to offer many opportunities for practice: practice periods, *sesshins* (meditation retreats), women’s and men’s retreats, Zen and body awareness, introductory workshops, flower arrangement (*ikebana*), 12-step retreat, writing retreats, retreats for youth, along with ongoing meditation, study, and work practice opportunities. Next year, in addition to our monthly yoga on the third Sunday of each month, we have scheduled four yoga workshops with local teachers.

At Great Tree our aim is to offer a practice that will be both a refuge from the busyness of life and a way of looking deeply at what life is and noticing how we get in our own way. There is always something going on here, and we invite and encourage you to join us as our Sangha develops and changes.

The Question is the Answer

Every person has different spiritual needs. Some come for *zazen*, some for special events, others for study or to help out in various ways. Spiritual practice includes all of these and also recommends that we “just do it.” This recommendation is based on our inclination to resist looking deeply in favor of something easier or more exciting. Spiritual practice not only offers peace and harmony, but also brings up our demons, those things we don’t enjoy seeing. Yet sustaining peace and harmony comes about precisely when we “just do it” and acknowledge both the comfortable and uncomfortable aspects of life. That very acknowledgment begins to diffuse some of our angst, though with some things it takes longer than others. And the more we just do it, the deeper the issues that can come up. Often it seems like nothing is happening when we are most diligently practicing. Yet even though we may not realize it, something moves inside us that was stuck, and the acknowledgment of a difficulty also brings with it the wisdom of the solution to the dilemma.

In my last interview with Harada Sekkei Roshi at Hosshinji Monastery he told me, “The question is the answer.” What does this mean? For me this is still an unfolding koan, though I’ve had some interesting insights about it. One is that often when someone tells me about their problems I notice that they simultaneously share an insight which is a key to the how to deal with it. If I listen carefully I can simply repeat back to them what they said. Within that context if we listen carefully to ourselves we can read between the angst and recognize the truth of the situation. This works best for me in *zazen* where I don’t have so many distractions.

Another thing I’ve discovered about “The question is the answer” is that if I make the question into a statement, I embody the question and recognize that the answer(s) are within—the question becomes my own and rather than searching for the answer somewhere else I take fuller responsibility for finding the answer. It doesn’t mean others can’t help, but

ultimately it is up to me. Our minds or our karmic circumstances have created our dilemmas, so no one else can understand them as we do.

So how do we do this practice? We all know the answer for ourselves. Once when asked this question by a student, a teacher I know told him, “Just show up.” We don’t have to do too much designing of spiritual practice. Each step reveals the next step. All we have to do is walk through the door. When we get to the other side, we can decide what to do next. Just walk in the door and see what happens. This is right effort.

Heat & Time by Reverend Chimyo Atkinson

In June of 2016 I was privileged to complete the *zaise* ceremony at the two major Soto Zen temples in Japan, Eihei-ji and Sojiji. June is the month of rainy season in Japan. It was hot, sticky, extremely uncomfortable. Most Japanese temples have little air conditioning and where they do have it they seldom turn it on. Writing here just a few months later I confess that the entire trip has become a blur. Memories of certain episodes have become confused with others. Names and faces are fading.

However, I do recall in the months prior to the Japan trip searching the internet and books for some description of the *zaise* ceremony and not finding one. I found variations on the standard definition, “abbot for a day,” but nothing that described the day itself, the procession, or the preparation. When I asked my teacher about her own *zaise* experience some 30 years earlier, she was unable to remember anything about it. I happened to know another monk who had completed the ceremony just a year before. She gave a very vague answer to the effect that she rode the train from one city to the next, spent a night at each temple and then made her way to another town to visit friends. I began to get a little suspicious. Maybe *zaise* was one of those secret initiations that everyone goes through but no one talks about.

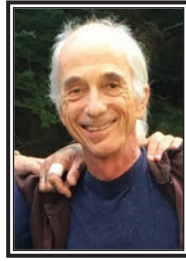
Now I’m considering that *zaise* may be just a blur for every monk. Maybe it’s how we all get “done,” so to speak. A basic tenet of cooking is that it is a process of heat and time. I have spent over 20 years being worked and shaped and reworked leading up to the few intensely hot summer hours of my *zaise* experience. I have memory of dark, heavy spaces at Eihei-ji; blackened wood infused with incense and time. At Sojiji, more modern but equally weighted; carpeted floors and tight elevators juxtaposed with time-polished wooden floors and *tatami*. Gentle monks, much younger than myself, escorted me through these corridors. They were gracious, conscientious and oddly cool-looking in the oppressive heat during the rehearsals for the ceremonies on the nights before. Standing at the door of my sleeping quarters each night, the young monks quietly instructed me to go to sleep and to be fully dressed and ready to begin when they knocked at my door the next morning.

2017 Great Tree Events, Sesshins & Retreats

JANUARY 2017

JAN 15 2-4 pm INTRODUCTION TO INTEGRAL YOGA
—led by *Foster Shugan de la Houssaye*

Integral Yoga® helped pioneer the introduction of Yoga to the western world 50 years ago. Yoga master Swami Satchidananda came to New York and shared his teachings, which promote an easeful body, a peaceful mind, and a useful life. He taught that selfless service and interfaith understanding were essential for a peaceful world.



This workshop will provide the participants an experience of Integral Yoga.

The workshop will begin with a beginning level Hatha (asana) class. This class includes the basic Integral Yoga poses (sun salutation, back bends, forward bends, inversions), chanting, deep relaxation, pranayama (breathing practices) and meditation. The class can be modified for those with restricted mobility.

We will also have a presentation and discussion of Raja Yoga, as exemplified in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. There will also be a presentation and discussion on the Bhagavad Gita, the ancient scripture that all yoga traditions use.

Foster Shugan de la Houssaye has completed three yoga teacher training programs: at Charlotte Yoga, Andrey Lappa (Universal Yoga) and Satchidananda Ashram, Virginia (Integral Yoga), where he completed the 3 week Intermediate Teacher Training Program and the 3 Week Raja Yoga (Yoga Sutras) Teacher Training. He has taught at the Ashram and at several yoga studios in Charlotte, NC and at the Charlotte Men's Homeless Shelter. His style of teaching is centered around Integral Yoga. This style of yoga is beneficial for all levels and is focused on living a peaceful and easeful life. In 2014 he graduated from the Barbara Brennan School of Healing and is in the process of starting a healing practice in Asheville.

He began his Zen practice in 2001. In 2006, he received the precepts from Rev Munnich in a Jukai ceremony at Great Tree Zen Temple and from 2006 to 2008 served on the Board of Directors of Great Tree.

JAN 28-29 MOTHER & CHILD RETREAT
—led by *Rev. Teijo Munnich*

Great Tree's annual Mother and Child retreat includes contemplative, creative, community sharing and fun time together! We are having the retreat the same weekend as Family Meditation hoping that fathers will come out on Sunday morning at 10:30 for sharing and the closing ceremony. This timing will also allow those families who may not be ready to spend the night away to join us on Sunday. Feel free to invite friends! Mark your calendars and let us know if you have any questions.



Rev Teijo Munnich recognizes the profound importance of spiritual community in our lives and that youth is our future. She has a deep devotion to the spiritual development of children and young adults.

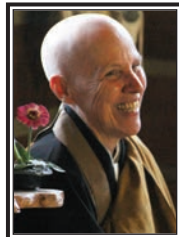
FEBRUARY 2017

**FEB 3-5 NEHAN SESSHIN : THE DHARMA IS ETERNAL,
THE LAST TEACHING OF THE BUDDHA**
—led by *Rev. Teijo Munnich*

Celebrate Buddha Shakyamuni's death and nirvana (Nehan) by spending a weekend in quiet reflection.

It is said that at the time of his death the Buddha was sleeping on a bed that had been prepared between two sala trees; his head to the north, his face to the west, and his right hand for a pillow. At that time, white flowers bloomed on the sala trees and fell continuously.

Many of his disciples, the king and his family, men and women of all ages, and even birds and animals gathered, sighing with sadness. The Buddha gave his last



discourse, expounding the fundamental truth – even though the physical body dies, the Dharma is eternal; in order to see the Buddha, it is necessary to see the Dharma. In this way, he taught his disciples the precepts and the way they should maintain the practice of Buddha's Way. This sermon is called the Yuikyogyo, the Last Teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Rev Teijo Munnich is a Dharma Heir of Dainin Katagiri Roshi and a certified Soto Zen Priest. She received formal training at Hokyoji in Minnesota, Tassajara Zen Mountain Center in California, and Hosshinji Sodo in Japan. She is the current abbess of Great Tree Zen Women's Temple, a residential practice center for women in western North Carolina. She also serves as teacher for the Zen Center of Asheville and the Charlotte Zen Meditation Society.

FEB 19 RESTORATIVE YOGA RETREAT
—led by *Paige Kanko Gilchrist*

Treat yourself to a winter afternoon sinking into the peaceful quiet of Great Tree and the profound relaxation of restorative yoga. We'll combine soothing movement sequences with deeply restful restorative poses supported by cushions, blankets, and other props. The poses will help you relieve stress, recover from illness or injury, balance energy, quiet your mind, and feel more at peace in your body. This special afternoon is welcoming to all levels of participants, regardless of strength, flexibility, age, or yoga experience.

Paige Kanko Gilchrist, a longtime student of Rev Munnich's, has been practicing yoga and meditation for nearly 20 years. She completed her teacher training at Asheville Yoga Center, is Yoga Alliance certified, and holds advanced certification in Therapeutic Yoga. She specializes in gentle and restorative styles, combining movement, mindfulness, and breathing to help students tap into their innate sense of well-being. Whether in special retreats and workshops, group classes, or one-on-one, Paige's warm and welcoming style will invite you to stretch, strengthen, balance, move energy, release stress and tension, breathe easy, and cultivate peace and joy you can take with you back into the world.



FEB 25 9 am-4 pm INTRO TO ZEN ONE-DAY WORKSHOP

For those who are new to Great Tree and/or Soto Zen. The three elements of Soto Zen Practice are meditation, study and work practice. This is an opportunity for all to join into the spiritual practice we do at Great Tree Zen Temple.

MARCH 2017

MARCH 4-5 9 am Sat – 12 pm Sun. MEN'S RETREAT
Friday overnights welcome
—led by *Rev. Shogen Chris Sheehy and Foster Shugan de la Houssaye*

A special retreat for men only. This retreat is an opportunity for us men to "go quiet" in a safe environment, in the company of other men. We all have busy lives, with lots of inputs. This time will allow us to go inside, away from the distractions of our daily lives, and experience that which is underneath. We will have periods of silent meditation, gentle yoga, meals in silence with wholesome food, and an opportunity to share in a council of men.

Rev Shogen Chris Sheehy has been a student of Rev. Teijo Munnich since 1997. He took Bodhisattva vows with Teijo in 2001 and monk vows in 2013. He has lived in Paris, France, since 2005 where he sits and does sesshin with teachers in the lineage of Deshimaru and Maezumi. He has also done sesshin with Rev. Shohaku Okumura. Chris began meditation at age 16 when he was introduced to several forms of meditation including Ignatian prayer as a student in an all-male Jesuit high school. Chris was first exposed to Zen Buddhism when he lived in Japan in 1987 and traveled in Southeast Asia in 1988. He began searching for a Zen teacher in 1991 and began sitting with the Charlotte Zen Meditation Society in 1996 where he met Teijo.

(See Foster's more complete bio at Jan 15) Foster has also been very active in men's groups over the past 30 years. In July, 2015 and 2016 he served as a steward during the Men's Intensive weeklong retreat for the Hero's Journey in West Virginia.



MARCH 11-12 COMING OF AGE RETREAT—led by *Rev Teijo Munnich & Autumn Woodward*

Our spirituality gives us comfort, adds meaning, and provides direction when moving through transitions in life. Pre-teen and early teen years mark the first step in the transition from child to adult. Like all transitions in life, this journey can be confusing – and also transformative. It is the beginning of embracing and exploring our spiritual self. Just as we nourish the body and the mind during these fast-paced years, so can we nourish our spirituality. Spiritual mentors and activities are vital during these years to help teens towards a better understanding of and a deeper connection with their own spiritual self – a self that ultimately leads us home, where we are deeply connected and at peace with all beings.

Through sharing and deep listening, hands-on activities, and discussion, retreat participants will explore their own spiritual selves as a place of refuge, comfort, joy and connectedness.

I take refuge in the Buddha
I take refuge in the Dharma
I take refuge in the Sangha

Autumn Woodward has studied cultivation of happiness in Bhutan and France, directed a massage therapy program, and loves bugs and gardening. She is interested in regenerative design and experimental social change. Autumn specializes in massage for children and families in Asheville, NC. (See Teijo's bio at Feb 3)

MARCH 19 2-4 pm INTRODUCTION TO YOGA AS THERAPY—led by *Diane Saccone*

In this two hour session, you will learn yoga therapeutic applications to help manage chronic disease, daily stress and understand the concept of yoga as a daily practice to maintain balance in your life.

Diane Saccone has been practicing yoga nearly her entire life and was called to teach yoga practices in the late 90's. She received her formal advanced yoga certification through the Asheville Yoga Center in 2005 specializing in yoga therapeutic applications to wellness. Her many teachers include Doug Keller, Rod Stryker, Nischala Joy Devi and others. Diane is the Director of Healthy Aging Initiatives for the YMCA of Western North Carolina and is the co-founder of the Asheville Yoga Center's Therapeutic Yoga advanced studies 300 hour program. Diane has a bachelor's degree in Medical Technology from the Medical College of Virginia and is member of the International Association of Yoga Therapists.

MARCH 25 THOREAU & BUDDHISM: ONE-DAY RETREAT—led by *Randal Daigu Pride*

"Thoreau was pre-Buddhist in much the same way that the Chinese Taoists were. He forecast an American Buddhism by the nature of his contemplation, in the same way that a certain quality of transparent predawn forecasts a clear morning. He lost himself in nature as the Chinese painters did, by becoming one with nature. He was certainly not the only one of his generation to live a contemplative life, but he was, it seems, one of the few to live it in a Buddhist way. That is to say, he was perhaps the first American to explore the nontheistic mode of contemplation which is the distinguishing mark of Buddhism." —*How the Swans Came to the Lake*, by Rick Fields ©1981 Shambhala Publications.

The retreat will explore Thoreau's legacy in this light with periods of meditation, observation of nature, and select readings of his texts.

Randal Daigu Pride began meditation practice and informal study of Buddhism in the late 1960s. For 10 years in the '70s and 80s he lived with his family on the intentional spiritual community in Tennessee known as The Farm whose outreach organization Plenty shared in the first Right Livelihood Award. In 1998 he received the precepts and Bodhisattva vow from Rev. Teijo Munnich and lay investiture from her in 2015. He facilitates study and zazen practice at Zen Center of Asheville and Craggy Correctional Center in Woodfin, NC.

MARCH 29-APRIL 1 SESSHIN: THE SIXTEEN BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS—led by *Rev Chimyo Atkinson*

A bodhisattva is one who vows to save all beings and declines to enter nirvana until the vow is kept. The precepts are vows taken by a bodhisattva the aim of which is to be beneficial to all beings and avoid causing more suffering for oneself and other beings. The bodhisattva is defined by acceptance of the precepts and efforts to keep them.

Rev Chimyo Atkinson is a Soto Zen priest. Ordained in 2007, Chimyo trained at Great Tree Zen Women's Temple in North Carolina, Shogoji Monastery, Yokoji Monastery and Aichi Senmon Nisodo in Japan, and Ryumonji Monastery in Iowa. She currently lives and teaches at Great Tree Zen Women's Temple in Alexander NC.

APRIL 2017**APRIL 9 FLOWER FESTIVAL & BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY PARTY: HANAMATSURI**

This festival celebrates the birthday of the Prince Siddhartha Gautama who became known as Shakyamuni Buddha. On this day Zen temples are decorated with flowers and a statue of a newborn Buddha is placed on the altar. The Japanese pour amacha, a sweet tea prepared from a variety of hydrangea, on a small Buddha statue. The flowers decorating the altar are the symbol of Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha. And pouring tea on the statue symbolizes bathing the newborn. Festive processions are held in Japan's big cities. In some regions, people carry flower decorated palanquins holding a miniature statue of Buddha-child inside. Streets are decorated with white paper lanterns with painted black and red characters.

APRIL 23 9:30 -4:00 SPRING IKEBANA: MINDFULNESS AND THE ART OF JAPANESE FLOWER ARRANGING—led by *Norma Bradley*

Bathed in the beauty of the season, Norma shares her love and knowledge of Ikebana—mindful flower arranging from the Ichiyo School. Students will learn the history and principles of this thoughtful art form, observe demonstrations and select materials to create Ikebana arrangements. You are invited to create simple drawings of your arrangement, write about and share your experiences. Our day together will begin with a meditation to help bring us into the moment. All materials will be available to you. Bring your favorite shears.

Norma Bradley is an artist, educator, Buddhist practitioner and Master Ikebana Instructor of the Ichiyo School of Ikebana. She was ordained by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hahn in 2009. She teaches Ikebana as a mindfulness practice in her delightful Asheville garden studio. www.normabradley.com

MAY 2017**MAY 5-9 SESSHIN: FINDING THE MIDDLE WAY: THE FIRST TEACHING OF THE BUDDHA**—led by *Rev. Teijo Munnich*

"There are two extremes which should not be followed ... by someone who has gone forth: Devotion to pursuing sense pleasure ... and devotion to self-denial. Avoiding both these extremes ... the Middle Way ... leads to peace, profound understanding, full realization and to freedom." The first teaching of the Buddha helps us to understand the difficulty of our human condition and the way to freedom through the practice of the Middle Way. (See Teijo's bio at Feb 3)

MAY 18-21 BEGINNER'S MIND RETREAT AT SOUTHERN DHARMA RETREAT CENTER—led by *Meredith Myoun McIntosh & Rev. Teijo Munnich*

This retreat will offer teaching and meditation practice from the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition—the simple practice of sitting quietly. Instruction will be drawn from the teachings of Zen Master Dogen and movement educator



2017 Great Tree Events, Sesshins & Retreats—cont.

F. M. Alexander, both of whom emphasized body awareness and ease. This retreat is offered for both experienced and beginning practitioners. It will be co-taught by Teijo Munnich and Meredith McIntosh in a supportive environment. It will include some gentle hands-on guidance, exercise, stretching, and discussion opportunities, as well as a flexible schedule that can be adjusted as needed. There will also be small group meetings offered with both teachers. To register or for more information contact: southernndharma.org 828 622-7112

Meredith Myoun McIntosh is a long-time student of Tengen Harada Roshi at Bukkokuji in Japan. She is a certified Alexander Technique teacher and massage therapist. Both her self-study and teaching are rooted in the common ground between Zen practice and awareness of body-mind and movement in daily activities.

JUNE 2017

JUNE 2-7 SESSHIN: EMPTINESS & DON'T KNOW—led by Rev. Teijo Munnich

When Emperor Wu asked "What is Truth?" Bodhidharma responded, "Emptiness, nothing is holy." Emperor Wu pushed further and Bodhidharma told him, "Don't know." What is meant by "emptiness" (sūnyatā)? How is this teaching relevant to life in the 21st century? (See Teijo's bio at Feb 3)

JUNE 12-14 4 pm Mon to 4 pm Wed ANNUAL YOUTH RETREAT—led by Rev. Teijo Munnich For children 7 and older.

This retreat includes meditation, chanting, study and working together and will have opportunities to learn how to participate and ring temple bells, serve tea and other gentle forms of meditation practice. Arts & crafts activities, outdoor activities, walks and friendship!



JULY 2017

JUNE 30-JULY 2 4th OF JULY SESSHIN—led by Rev Chimyo Atkinson

See November's sesshin description. See Chimyo's bio at March 29

JULY 23 10am - 4 pm RECOVERY RETREAT—led by Rev. Shogen Chris Sheehy

This workshop will provide basic instruction on some common forms of prayer and meditation to enable those participating in 12-step programs to access the 11th step: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him. The following meditation practices will be explored: silent sitting meditation (zazen), guided meditation, vipassana, body scanning, tonglen, mantra practice, yoga and centering prayer. A light vegetarian lunch will be served. Participants are invited but not required to bring a side dish to share. (see Shogen's bio at Mar 4)

JULY 31 11 am-2 pm ANNUAL GREAT TREE SANGHA PICNIC at WALNUT PARK

Our mid-summer party at the river. All sangha members and friends (including your 4-leggeds) are welcome to share a potluck by the French Broad River. Remember your blanket, your sunscreen and insect repellent.

AUGUST 2017

AUGUST 4-6 THE HIDDEN WORD: WRITING WITH KUAN YIN—led by Peggy Millin

In his last book, *Becoming Kuan Yin: The Evolution of Compassion*, Stephen Levine shares a teaching from Kuan Yin about the medicinal qualities of poetry that offer hidden healing, saying, "The right word at the right time is strong medicine." In this workshop we will use Peggy's Centered Writing Practice, meditation, and visualization to open our hearts and invite the words we need in the moment. This is an exploratory workshop to be entered into without expectation. To write medicine poetry, you only need a willing heart. We will do sitting and walking meditation and write to prompts; most of



the time outside the writing circle will be in silence. Peggy requests that you read Levine's book before attending. It tells the story of Kuan Yin's life—how she became known as the mother of compassion—and offers her teachings. Like many of Levine's books, it asks readers to release linear thinking and to understand with the heart instead of the head. A challenge to all of us!

Peggy Tabor Millin is the author of *Women, Writing, and Soul-Making* and *Mary's Way* and editor of the anthology, *Writing in Circles*. She led writing circles for women for 20 years in Asheville where she was known as "the midwife of women's writing." She currently lives in Durham. Learn more at clarityworksonline.com.

SEPTEMBER 2017

SEPTEMBER 3 11TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION & ANNUAL SANGHA MEETING

Our anniversary party celebrates 12 years of sangha practice in Alexander! Join us for waffles and potluck goodies. Teijo will lead us in a short ceremony followed by a meeting of the sangha and introductions of our new and continuing board members. Annual Board Meeting will follow to which all are invited.

SEPTEMBER 9-11 WOMEN'S RETREAT

In lives filled with the demands of family, work, and managing a home, we may struggle to develop a meaningful practice. The Women's Retreat provides a weekend of quiet reflection that allows our relationship with our practice to surface and be explored. This gentle weekend blends zazen, yoga, discussion, and self-selected creative expression to deepen our practice as Buddhist women.



OCTOBER 2017

OCTOBER 1 9:30 -4:00 IKEBANA IN AUTUMN—led by Norma Bradley

See April 23 retreat description & Norma's bio.

OCTOBER 6-8 BEGINNER'S MIND SESSHIN AT GREAT TREE—led by Meredith Myoun McIntosh & Rev. Teijo Munnich

Teaching and meditation practice in the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition by Rev. Teijo Munnich. Instruction and gentle hands-on work with meditation posture to develop body awareness and ease by Meredith Myoun McIntosh using the Alexander Technique in a supportive environment. Both her self-study and teaching are rooted in the common ground between Zen practice and awareness of body-mind and movement in daily activities. Includes gentle hands-on guidance, exercise, stretching and discussion opportunities, as well as a flexible schedule that can be adjusted as needed. There will also be small group meetings offered by both teachers. (See Myoun's bio at May 18)

OCTOBER 19-22 LET THE WORLD TAKE CARE OF ITSELF—led by Nancy Sujata Spence

Anattasatti Magga means "let the world take care of itself." This retreat will offer participants the rare opportunity to absorb Great Tree's silence and stillness, with no formal Dharma topic. The daily schedule includes sitting, walking and working meditation, Dharma classes and study periods and meals. In silence except for lectures.

Nancy Sujata Spence, is teacher and guide of Anattasatti Magga, a Soto Zen sangha for the laity. In 1977, Nancy received her Zen Training at Vichara Bodhiyana Monastery in California. She leads monthly Buddhist services, offers individual spiritual guidance, and leads meditation retreats in both North Carolina and California.



NOVEMBER 2017

NOVEMBER 4-9 SESSHIN—led by Rev Chimyo Atkinson

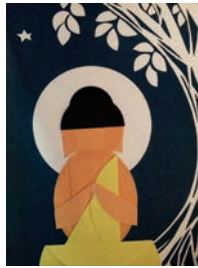
A sesshin (Japanese for “collecting the heart-mind”) is an intensive meditation retreat. A sesshin typically lasts from two to seven days. During sesshin, most of the time is devoted to meditation, and distraction is reduced. Participants are asked to keep silence, as much as possible, throughout the sesshin and to maintain a meditative focus throughout. We follow a semi-monastic schedule during sesshin based on Soto traditions dating back to the time of Dogen Zenji, the founder of this school of Zen.

DECEMBER 2017

DECEMBER 1-7 ROHATSU SESSHIN:WHAT DID THE BUDDHA AWAKEN TO?

—led by Rev. Teijo Munnich

Rohatsu is Japanese for “eighth day of the twelfth month.” December 8 has come to be the day Japanese Zen Buddhists observe the enlightenment of the historical Buddha.



This annual retreat commemorates Buddha's Enlightenment. In Japanese Zen monasteries, Rohatsu is the last day of a week-long sesshin, a meditation retreat in which one's waking time is dedicated to meditation. Even when not in the meditation hall, participants endeavor to maintain meditation awareness at all times -- eating, washing, doing chores.

DECEMBER 9-10 BUDDHA'S ENLIGHTENMENT CELEBRATION & CRAFTS SALE

GREAT TREE'S ANNUAL CELEBRATION AND CRAFTS SALE. Join us for a Buddha's Enlightenment ceremony and word from Rev. Teijo Munnich. Browse our crafts sale for unusual handmade gifts to give this season. *Location etc TBA*

DECEMBER 17 2 pm-4 pm YOGA AS A LIFESTYLE WORKSHOP

—led by Diane Saccone

For most, yoga is seen as a physical form of exercise. In this workshop we will learn about the Koshas, the 5 layers of the body system to understand how each layer works to harmonize the body, mind and emotions by removing blockages on all levels of our system and for the body to function at optimum level.

DECEMBER 28-31 NEW YEAR'S SESSHIN: WHAT'S NEXT?

Close out the year with a few days of quiet reflection, looking toward a new year.

DECEMBER 31 NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION

Join us for 108 bells and chanting followed by the traditional soba feast, music and togetherness as we welcome the new year.



Our annual retreat schedule is intended to widen understanding of practice and provide opportunities to engage in activities at the temple. Teachers who lead retreats and classes at Great Tree are not compensated in any way by Great Tree. They depend on your generosity (dana) for sharing their wisdom and guidance. Please give what you can to support their work. See our website's Registration Page for more information on how to sign up. Check our calendar for dates and times and updates.

For more information or to register for retreats and sesshins go to www.greattreetemple.org

2017 Great Tree Ongoing Practice

Morning Zazen: 6 - 7:30 am – Tues, Thurs, Sat – zazen / kinhin / zazen / service.

Evening Zazen: 6 - 7:30 pm – Thursdays – zazen / kinhin / zazen.

Tuesday Afternoon Study Group: 3:30 - 5:30 pm Meditation followed by reading, writing, discussion and tea. Attend at any time and participate as much as you like. SPRING: March 14 – May 30 FALL: October 3 – December 12

Wednesday Vegan Potluck: 5:30 - 7 pm Informal get together (includes clean-up). Let us know if you're coming and what food you plan to bring.

Attending the Moon: Meditation & Dharma Discussion for Women

4 - 5:30 pm – 3rd Saturday of each month:

January 21, February 18, March 18, April 15, May 20, June 17, July 8, August 19, September 16, October 14, November 18, December 16

Thursday Morning Practice: 6 - 11:30 am – Come for all or part. - Zazen 6 - 7:30 am; Breakfast (oryoki) 8:15 – Study (chosan) & Work Practice (samu)

Saturday Practice: 6 am - 4 pm – Meditation, Study, Work. Come for all or part: Zazen 6-7:30 am; Breakfast 8:15; Zazen and Dharma discussion 9:30-11:30 am; Work Practice 11:30- 3:30 pm (with Lunch at 12:30 pm). RSVP if you would like to join us for lunch. Every Saturday except during sesshins or retreats.

Sangha Sundays: 9 am - 12 noon 3rd Sunday of each month – Yoga, Meditation & Study – Come for all or part: 9:00 -10:00 am Restorative Yoga; 10:30-11:30 am Zazen and Dharma discussion. – January 15, February 19, March 19, April 16, May 21, June 18, July 16,, August 20, September 17, October 15, November 19, December 17

Family Meditation: 10:30 am - 12:30 pm Last Sunday of each month: for parents, children, friends and neighbors. Includes a short period of meditation and Dharma teaching followed by optional informal social time for all with snacky foods. Let us know if you want to be on our email list for receiving notices about Family Meditation. Dates: January 29, February 26, March 26, April 30, May 28, June 25, July 30 – Sangha Picnic, September 24, October 28 Poetry & Pie & Segaki/Hungry Ghost Ceremony, November 26. In December families are invited to Ringing in the New Year on December 31.

Practice Period: An opportunity to renew our commitment to this spiritual practice and look more deeply within.

SPRING: March 31-May 27 SUMMER: June 1-July 2 FALL: October 5-December 7

Please note that this is a general description of practice opportunities at Great Tree. For specific dates and more information about our ongoing weekly and monthly programs and calendar updates, please go to www.greattreetemple.org, or call us at 828-645-2085.

I did as I was told, and went to sleep in the simple yet elegant “abbot’s quarters.” The next morning, I was ready well ahead of time and sitting seiza, in the dark, in my full robes as if at the starting line of a race. For me, even in winter, the layers of clothing are stifling. My collar and my handkerchief were already wet with sweat when the knock came.

The knock came and the world seemed to have disappeared. I arose and I moved and, from all accounts, performed the ceremonies in all the different

halls satisfactorily. Apparently, all the trainings I have received from my teachers at home at and at angos over the years kicked in and I did what I needed to do. There were glitches, a slip on a platform, a wayward slipper. Drop the handkerchief, pick it up, keep moving. Hesitation upon a minor detail, clockwise in this hall, counter-clockwise in another. Until, suddenly and abruptly, the moment fell away and there were the faces of my zuisse companions, our attending monks and my friends discussing lunch. The abbot’s day was complete and in the past.

The experience brings to mind a story of Guishan as recounted in Dogen Zenji’s Eihei Shingi:

The great Guishan one day called for the director. The director came and Guishan said, “I called for the director. Why did you come?” The director did not respond. Also Guishan had the jisha call for the head monk. The head monk came, and Guishan said, “I called for the head monk. Why did you come?” The head monk did not respond.

Caoshan later answered on behalf of the director, “I know the teacher did not call me.” On behalf of the head monk he answered, “I just heard the jisha call.” Fayen answered differently, “I just heard the jisha call.” Turning over this single circumstance [of this story], you must directly investigate the bloodline of temple administrators and monastic department heads. (Dogen’s Pure Standards for the Zen Community, trans. Shohaku Okumura, pg. 131)

I studied this excerpt from the Eihei Shingi with Shoken Winecoff Roshi during summer angō a year before my Dharma Transmission. As the only resident monk at Great Tree I essentially serve in all the temple positions, tenzo, head monk, jisha, etc., every day. So, Guishan’s call resonates for me. When my teacher calls, who answers? When the sangha calls, who shows up? During the aforementioned angō, Winecoff Roshi shared with us some of his notes taken when he himself studied the Shingi at Shogoji. He wrote:

The director must be one who penetrates the way with whole body/mind. There is no “director” i.e.; no ego-self. In this sense director and [the monk serving as the director] are not the same... Second part of this story is that you cannot separate the director and the person. So for the person to be director [the person] must have the mind of shin jin daturaku, body and mind dropped off. This is 24-hour zazen — no discrimination about carrying out function. (Winecoff, unpublished).



The abbot is a temple position. The abbot of a temple has many important, special and singular duties that come with that position but the essential spirit with which she carries out those duties is the same for all members of the community. Zuisse is a reminder of that. To get through those zuisse mornings one must access all the training she’s had throughout the years. It’s not simply knowing how to perform a ceremony (an everyday occurrence, nothing special), but dropping off body and mind and just being abbot. Respond to the knock with no discrimination, wholeheartedly, despite the heat.

Zuisse is a common occurrence. In Japan, I think, every monk who runs a temple in the Soto tradition is expected to do zuisse. While it is a special honor to perform the zuisse ceremony, to wear the red slippers and bow in the great Founder’s Hall, the movements are not so different from

those you would perform in the zendo of your own temple back home. Zuisse is not the point, the ritual is not the point. Zuisse places you in those gigantic halls loaded with history and tradition yet pulls you in and through the needle’s eye of ritual right back to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. This is the direct investigation of the bloodline – are you present or busy making a memory? The abbot was called. Who answered the knock at the door?

The monk Chimyo was excited about returning to Japan, visiting Eiheiji and Sojiji, seeing old friends. She was nervous and excited about being “abbot-for-a-day.” She carried a camera to record the memory.

In the end the clearest images that remain with me are these: a pure white trail of smoke rising from the koro (incense burner), a drop of sweat spreading across the crease in my zagu as I bow.

With many thanks to my teacher Reverend Teijo Munnich and everyone who made this possible. Deep bows of gratitude.



The Eightfold Path is the “how to” of the Buddha Way. It is a structure that encompasses the Buddhist teaching and shows us how to live those teachings. The core of the Eightfold Path includes wisdom, concentration, and ethics. These three essential practices comprise the most important teachings for twenty-first century Buddhism. If we understand the entirety of the Eightfold Path we can correct many of the problems of imbalance in our communities and in our personal lives. The purpose of a spiritual life is to align our action with our understanding. If we have the steadfastness to remember the three core practices of wisdom, concentration, and ethics, we can stop the swirling world of suffering and find freedom, we can find the universal perspective in the particulars of our ordinary lives and be free. We can move from a mind of complaint to a mind of gratitude. The Eightfold Path teaches us how to create a spiritual life and how to fully live it.

Taken together, all aspects of the Eightfold Path teach us how to create a spiritual life. We can construct a balanced vehicle for practice/realization.

– Rev. Byakuren Judith Ragir

This is the third in a series of Buddhist teaching anthologies offered by Soto Zen women from Temple Ground Press. In her introduction to the first book, *Receiving the Marrow*, editor and publisher Eido Frances Carney writes:

Our concern in publishing women’s voices is so future Zen students may be able to trace the history and articulation of women teachers of this century ... Since we ourselves are disappointed by limited evidence in researching our own lost sisters, we feel an obligation to care for the future by offering our voices now so we do not create an absence on which future claims of exclusion may be based ... In the history of the world’s religions, we have a mere cupful of spiritual texts written by, or about women.

The Eightfold Path, edited by Jikyo Cheryl Wolfer with Introduction by Byakuren Judith Ragir and with teachings by Myoan Grace Schireson, Zenki Mary Mocine, Tonen O’Connor, Shodo Spring, Misha Shungen Merrill, Teijo Munnich, Hoko Karnation, and Pat Enkyo O’Hara. The book is now available online or through your local bookstore.

Also available from Great Tree—\$20.

Check mailed to: Great Tree Temple BOOKS, 679 Lower Flat Creek, Alexander, NC 28701

Great Tree Zen Women's Temple
679 Lower Flat Creek Road, Alexander, NC 28701

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Great Tree Temple's 2016 Annual Craft Sale & Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony at Urban Dharma--downtown Asheville



Fri, Dec 9, 3-7 pm & Sat, Dec 10, 10 am – 4 pm

Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony, Sat 2 pm

At: Urban Dharma, 29 Page Ave. Asheville, NC
next to the Captain's Bookshelf

*If you think you are too small to make a difference,
try sleeping with a mosquito. – Dalai Lama*

We are in our 11th year looking out at the Appalachian ridgetops, some of the oldest mountains in the world. Great Tree is so very young. Our needs are modest, and our community is vibrant. Small things DO make a difference, and a monthly pledge or commitment of time and shared work will go a long way to help meet our obligations and operating expenses.

We can help you set up a monthly pledge via PayPal or with your bank. If you need help doing this, please contact office@greentree temple.org.

Annual Craft Sale / Buddha's Enlightenment

We satisfied the hungry ghosts at Poetry and Pie and are ready to celebrate Buddha's Enlightenment at our Annual Buddha's Enlightenment Party and Craft Sale.

Please donate any unique, beautiful, unusual, local, art for this sale. Contact us at 828 645-2085. We will arrange for pickup. Items may include, but are not limited to, pottery, Jewelry, and fiber arts.

Great Tree would not be here without the kind support from so many of you.

Our Individual Pledge Wish List for 2017

- GARDEN SUPPLIES \$5.
- INCENSE FOR THE ZENDO \$10.
- CANDLES \$15.
- OFFICE SUPPLIES, PAPER AND INK \$20.
- NEWSLETTER AND PRINT COSTS \$25.
- KITCHEN AND SUPPLIES \$25.
- ROAD -DRIVEWAY MAINTENANCE \$35.



2016 Great Tree Temple's Annual Celebration