

MOUNTAINS TALKING

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Great Faith, Great Doubt, Great Determination

Karin Ryuku Kempe

How Has Practice Changed Your Life?

Our Members

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GREAT FAITH, GREAT DOUBT, GREAT DETERMINATION

Karin Ryuku Kempe



I'm going to explore what are sometimes called the Three Pillars of Zen: great faith, great doubt and great determination. These three are the foundation for your investigation of the Buddha Way. No matter what your practice, these three will support you, and if you find yourself feeling dull and disengaged, usually there is a problem with at least one of these three. In the end, of course they are not at all separate, but are different aspects of what we call Bodhi-chitta, the Mind that seeks the Way, your own desire for awakening. This mind is present in each of us; it's your own unborn Buddha mind. You have always had it, but it can be easily clouded by our habit forces, especially if we neglect to practice – to practice sitting meditation and practice awareness in our daily lives.

In our usual way of talking, faith and doubt oppose each other. We say if faith is strong, there is little doubt, and if doubt is strong, faith is lacking. But in a Zen context they work together, support each other, and have a different shade of meaning. Faith usually refers to belief in the unseen, even the irrational, in what cannot be proven and even may go against the experience of our senses. In Zen, faith expresses trust, a sincere and whole-hearted confidence, a trust not only in this path but in yourself. It might seem that it's a quality that you either have inherently or not. But because Zen emphasizes our own personal experience, our trust, our faith, starts to grow as we practice, even if it's only been a short while, because pretty quickly we start to experience for ourselves a settling, a lessening of anguish, a sense of being more ourselves. So your faith, your confidence, is rooted in your own experience and grows over time.

Great doubt does not refer to the tendency to discount or negate your own experience. Great doubt is the willingness to open into the unknown, to engage in open inquiry, to let go of our preconceptions and ask your-

self, "Who am I?" "What is this?" – to engage the great matter of birth and death, the fundamental question of our human life. It's not easy to do because our minds are so conditioned to closing off all such questions with a facile answer. Even a quick "I don't know" can be a way to tune out and avoid that place. It's uncomfortable to let inquiry stay open and unresolved, to live without answers, without solid ground. And yet, there is no solid ground; that's reality. When we read the stories of deeply enlightened beings, there is always a willingness to engage this great doubt, a period sometimes called the dark night of the soul, the search for the truth of things. Self-inquiry is independent of religious affiliations and rejects all outer and inner identifications. Self-inquiry does not suppress thought and is not a form of concentration; it takes us beyond thought or awareness. Who are you? What are you?

The practice of Zen is the practice of living and dying, of being awake in living and dying, of being with what is real and being clear about that reality, so that we don't constantly manufacture unnecessary suffering and conflict for ourselves and for others. At the same time, it is to be willing to be uncomfortable in reality, recognizing that our anxiety, even our turmoil, is often simply the expression of the underlying truth of impermanence, of no solid ground.

Finally, great determination implies several things, I think. One is that when we hit the inevitable dry patches, we simply continue through the gray and dead times, keep going and not give up or tune out. And also that we bring some energy, some real engagement to our lives and to our sitting. Practice takes grit, the grit to let go of our preoccupations and turn into this moment without reservation. And just as with faith and doubt, you discover for yourselves your own determination, your own need, every time you come back to your practice as you sit, every time you come to sit at home or here, or go dokusan although you hold nothing in your hands.

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OFFERING PEACE

Peggy Metta Sheehan

From a sangha meeting talk, Nov. 13, 2016.

It is with a very heavy heart that I have pondered and practiced with the results of the election on Tuesday. No matter who you supported, your life has changed this week, as has the tenor and direction of our social, economic, environmental and political climate.

I find myself waking up at 2 or 3 a.m. – actually my body seems to wake up, and I notice within this body a deep unease. That’s just the truth of it for me. I don’t feed it with stories or with thinking; I just feel it and I feel my grief.

I realize that radical change is often needed for us to shift our collective and individual consciousness. This is a radical change. We really don’t know what will unfold and how things will unfold. In order to move through this shift with some degree of equanimity and clarity, we will need to practice. We must practice.

The Buddha said that “Hatred never ceases by hatred, but by love alone.” That is Truth. One Zen teacher this week said that we should love Donald Trump because Buddha is looking out his eyes. That is true, but we should not love blindly.

The energy in our country right now is being fed quite strongly on both sides by delusion, the kleishas, greed, hatred and ignorance. These arise within all of us, and it is our responsibility to see them, to work with them, to not react from them, and ultimately to see through them. The more we can see them, the more we connect with ultimate truth, the more we can bear witness to suffering and open our hearts, the more we will be able to come forth, to act with clarity and compassion without adding confusion. This is what we must do.

So it is interesting that we, as a community, are in the position that we are in right now. When we moved out from our temple last year and became the wandering sangha, that was a healthy shift for us. We were energized as a community, but I have sensed of late a complacency, a lack of cohesiveness and purpose.

And just in time we have purchased a property, and we now have the opportunity to work together to create a vision for this property and our community. I think we

need to think bigger than we have and get outside of our box. The world just got shook up. Let’s take a cue from that and look deeply to what we want to offer to our world. What do we want to offer?

Well, we do want a home for genuine practice and realization. We need a home. There are some very important things that we are missing via our rental status. One of these is work practice, and the other is hard for me to articulate, but it has to do with caring for our practice space. When we do that, our practice is not just about us. I wonder if the sense of complacency that I feel is about this – “I think I’ll just go to RMMC and do my Zen practice tonight.” We’ve cocooned in ourselves, and that’s not so good. It’s interesting, because I think at first we blossomed out of the temple walls when we left the Highlands, but that energy has dissipated, and it’s time to reconnect with a purpose that is bigger than us and our individual practice.

We have the chance to build something that our founding teacher would be proud of. He wanted Zen to come out from the backyard garages. The temple in Highlands was a start, but in the end it did not really enable us to do that, because we were hidden by the structure and somewhat by our attitudes about Zen. This year has given us the opportunity to shift our perspective, and now I believe we are ready to be visible.

And at this time in the world, we have something to offer. We can build a place of refuge for the greater community, a place to offer peace and to practice the way of peace, a place of sanity. We need to think bigger than us, and we will need all of us, and more.

For we are not alone in our hopes and aspirations. I know that Zen is not for everyone. I know that it is a steep path. But I also know that people are longing for a place of refuge and peace. So can we offer both – authentic lay Zen training and a place of refuge and practice more available to the wider public? I think we can, and I think we must.

HOW HAS PRACTICE CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

During her talk last November, Peggy Sensei asked if the members there would be willing to write a short statement addressing the question above. In a way, this kind of statement is unusual in Zen; we do not practice to attain some reward, after all, and so we do not often speak of the fruits of practice except perhaps in a general sort of way.

However, practice does change us, often at the most profound level. In “dropping away body and mind,” we discover a new sense of clarity, peace and wonder. Perhaps the bonds of habit that once gripped us with such

power now loosen and dissolve. Perhaps we are suddenly struck by the scent of cherry blossoms, the color of the evening sky, or the embrace of a loved one, and know at last what is real and unreal.

And there comes a time, as Peggy Sensei reminds us, when we must step forward and share these truths, not just for our benefit, but for the benefit of all. When we see how others are changed, we sense the possibilities within ourselves, and in the larger world. Here are four such stories from our members; perhaps you may find that, like spring water, they invigorate your own spirit.

A SENSE OF SPACE

Judy Mazarin

How has Zen changed my life?

I don’t know how most people find their way to the practice of Zen. For me, the practice kind of snuck up from behind, grabbed me, took me by surprise, and then would not let go.

You might not be like me. Or maybe you are. A few years ago, I didn’t display my suffering on the outside, but oh boy, was it there with me on the inside. Constant anxiety, intermittent depression, frustration, intense loneliness, never feeling adequate to the demands of daily life, always behind, always struggling, never good enough, no matter how hard I tried. And I tried really hard. I finally got tired of trying. I was tired of trying to live. And almost gave up.

And then a meditation class appeared and was offered to me. “Come and sit for thirty minutes once a week,” it said. I was curious and accepted the offer. Turns out, though I didn’t know it by name, that Zen had come and found me. This practice of breath and silence and stillness grabbed me and shook me up and surprised me. Turns out, this mysterious something that has taken me utterly by surprise is joy.

So how has Zen changed my life? Much easier to ask how has it not changed my life, for it has penetrated most of my corners.

I still get anxious, frustrated, fearful, and struggle in daily life. But now I also have times filled with simplicity

and ease, optimism and beauty, connection and friendship. I’m no longer at the mercy of anxiety and worries about the future. I know they are not me. I know (some of the time, anyway) that I’m good enough just as I am, and this moment is just right, just as it is. This knowing opens up a new kind of space in me, one that makes real, 3-D life, the life that is right here, available.

In this space, I hear car tires on wet pavement with fresh ears, like I did when I was a kid. In this space, I can feel the ground that my feet are walking on. In this space, the world sometimes shines. In this space I’ve found teachers, and companions, and friendship, and camaraderie. In this space I have found purpose – a purpose much bigger than me. In this space, I have found my home.

But most importantly, this space has begun to make me more available for others.

This space takes the hurry out of me, so that when I’m visiting my mother in the nursing home, and in her dementia she repeats the same little story twice in a row, I’m not aggravated at listening to it the third time, but instead welcome a moment to appreciate she who is the teller of the story.

This space takes the need to ‘fix’ things out of me. So maybe I tease her and say “Yeah, Mom...you just told me that a minute ago.” And she says, “Oh, did I forget...again?” And then she laughs at herself and I laugh with her.

FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE WORLD

Paige Noon

I began this practice of Zen about six years ago or so. It began slowly, with great curiosity and some trepidation. I was in awe of the stark simplicity of the practice and of the “nature” of a friend of mine who was a long-time practitioner.

I came for two reasons: first, to seek the truth about my human existence, and second, to help me navigate the difficulties of my personal life. At the time I was delving into the difficulties of my marriage and was in great personal turmoil. Sitting at home and at the temple were both helpful in easing my anxious, confused mind. But it was dokusan that tethered me to the practice. I remember driving the hour and a half drive home by myself after zazen and dokusan and feeling as free as a bird, when only two hours before I had been weighed down by confusion and fear. Many of those Tuesday nights I felt like driving until I reached the Pacific Ocean and until the sun came up.

So for me the benefits the Zen practice were almost immediate. I came to the temple like a wanderer in the desert seeking cool, clear water to quench my thirst, and my thirst was quenched.

As my practice continued, which included weekend zazenkai and sesshin, I had personal experiences of “knowing” the unknowable. These experiences have truly

changed how I live in the world. I have “company” with me at every moment. The world has come alive in an intimate way. Whatever my practice has been, whether my breath, a koan or Mu, there are moments when I am the sound of the bird and the sound of the bird is me. These moments are a lot like falling in love... falling in love with the world I live in.

In a more practical sense, I have also found that I hesitate to speak at times when I would have spoken out instantly before. Now there is a little voice that asks me: Is this necessary? How am I reacting to this situation? Why do I feel a need to express myself? How will what I want to say impact the person I am speaking to? These thoughts come together in a fraction of a silent second, and I settle down into a calmness. With this calmness in place, I then decide what to say or whether to say anything at all. As a result, there is more peace in my life.

Finally, I have experienced the power of the Sangha. The support that comes from sitting with others is palpable. The air in the zendo has a feeling of determination and good will that brushes against me and sustains my practice. The zendo itself, over time, becomes burnished with faith. To enter in is to enter a sacred space and safe place. Even more importantly, Zen has allowed me to find refuge outside, in this unpredictable world. And my journey has just begun!

ONE WITH THE PRACTICE

Billy Wynne

In our practice, we say that cause and effect are one. I believe that is true, but since I joined the Zen Center of Denver, my life has changed in ways that I cannot characterize as coincidental.

Since joining the Zen Center, the consulting practice I run decided we would contribute 5% of our profits to healthcare charities serving those in need. We gave to organizations supporting those battling cancer in Colorado, assisting refugees in Syria, and providing food for the indigent in Washington, DC. Those donations and my practice are one.

Since joining the Zen Center, my family led a holiday drive that collected hundreds of pounds of winter gear for the homeless. Our friends’ generosity and my

practice are one.

Since joining the Zen Center, my patience, which for me is equal to gratitude replacing grief, fear, and anger, has increased considerably. My gentle word to the stranger on the phone, my pause and nod to the driver at the intersection, my careful listening to my wife, my slow embrace of my child – all of these and my practice are one.

So now that it is time to build a new temple, a place of beauty and peace, there is no cause to my decision to contribute as much as I can. My practice and my financial support for the Zen Center, along with all of the good works, kindness, and compassion that emanate from it, are one.



Geoff Keeton

ALL THE WAY TO HEAVEN

Melanie Ritter

I was introduced to Buddhism as a freshman in high school, studying world religions. It made an impact. Years later, when I was doing some spiritual shopping, I came back to Buddhism.

I tried a Tibetan temple first. The heavy concentration on karma and earning merit did not sit well with me. I wanted a philosophy that encouraged me to do the right thing without fear of punishment or the promise of rewards after death. I was struggling with alcohol and drug addiction and suffered from bipolar disorder and PTSD. I wanted a way to ease the racing thoughts and memories plaguing me.

So my next stop was the Fire Lotus Temple in NYC, part of Daido Looi’s school. I stayed with counting and following my breath for a few years. It took a while for me to finally ease the racing thoughts. Zen did not cure my issues with addiction. It took working AA’s Twelve Steps for that battle. However, the Twelve Steps strengthened my Zen beliefs and both programs worked well

together.

Zen did not cure my bipolar disorder or PTSD, but boy, did it ever make a difference! After many years of practice, I no longer need any medications to treat my bipolar disorder. The mindfulness and compassion I learned through my Zen practice, and it enabled me to put my past in a box. I am no longer tormented by violent memories.

Last year, after nine years on permanent disability through Social Security, I was able to return to full-time work in a new career where I could put my compassion and listening skills, learned through my Zen practice, into my new career of helping others with a psychiatric disability return to work.

Life is very different now. After many years of practice, I finally learned how to fully live, to live in this moment. I can now understand Daido Looi’s words, “All the way to Heaven is Heaven itself.”



ENVISIONING A TEMPLE

On Sunday, March 5, the sangha gathered to hear (and see) a presentation by our architects of two initial site plans for our proposed temple at Columbine and Buchtel. With vivid enthusiasm, members examined the plans and provided feedback on the relative strengths and weaknesses of each, along with possible improvements or alterations.

For some months now, the architecture and design committee has been meeting weekly with our architects from Semple Brown Design, considering and refining possible layouts. Now, with the approval of the sangha, we can move forward in selecting a single design and proceeding with the design process. We hope and expect that within a few months we will have detailed site plans and three-dimensional renderings, which we will then present to the city for approval.

Following the meeting, eight or nine members spontaneously drove to the Columbine property, to walk around and envision the building. With a palpable sense of wonder and excitement, we paced off measurements and stood at various vantages, seeing in our mind's eyes the refuge that would grow there, like a great tree from a small seed.

A Brief Guide to Finding the Pitch

Bill Hamaker

There are many forms of Buddhist chanting each with its own unique tradition: from Tibetan throat singing with its multiple overtones to the powerful, low-pitched single tone chanting heard in Japanese monasteries.

Chanting services at the Zen Center of Denver have evolved out of traditional Japanese Zen Buddhist chanting to encompass the sound of conventional Western harmonies. This means that for the two types of chants in our service, fast-paced chants and slow-paced chants, we utilize just a few different pitches.

For fast-paced chants such as the Maka Hannya Haramita Shin Gyo and the Ancestral Line, we primarily use unison (everyone singing the same pitch), octave (the same pitch sung an octave or eight notes higher or lower) coupled with the fifth of the chord (five notes above or four notes below the fundamental (or tonic) pitch which is set by the ino (chant leader).

For slow-paced chants such as the Kannon Sutra and the Return of Merit, we use the aforementioned pitches adding the major third, which is three whole scale steps above the fundamental pitch.

Now, if you understand music theory or have a lot of singing experience, this is no big deal. But for many of us, it is a struggle to make your voice “fit in” while chanting especially if your voice range is higher or lower than that of the ino.

So here are several recommendations to alleviate the discomfort of out-of-tune chanting!

First, familiarize yourself with the chants we use in the opening and closing ceremonies at sittings and Sunday dharma talks. Attend full chanting services when offered, listen to recordings of our chants and study the words in the sutra books. Pay careful attention to pronunciation, especially the ancestral names and Sino-Japanese words. Don't be afraid to ask the ino or a senior member if you have questions about any aspect of chanting.

When the chants are introduced, try to match or

hear the pitch set by the ino then find a pitch that is comfortable using the following “tricks:”

- Unison – easiest to find; match the pitch of the ino exactly.
- Octave up – go up to the higher octave. Trick: Sing first two notes of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” (the first note is the ino's note and the upper note is your note one octave higher).
- Octave down – “There's No Business Like Show Business” (notes 2-3) or “Willow Weep for Me” (notes 1-2).
- Fifth higher – “Star Wars!” (notes 1-2).
- Down to the fifth – “Born Free” or “I've Been Working on the Railroad” (notes 1-2).
- Up a major third – “Kum Bah Yah” or “Oh When the Saints Go Marching In” (notes 1-2).

Chant with your whole body, using the muscles surrounding the diaphragm, taking full breaths whenever needed (don't be concerned about dropping a syllable) and open the mouth and form the vowel sounds in an almost exaggerated manner.

Chanting, like zazen, is a core practice at the Zen Center of Denver. Do not be self-conscious; rather, throw body and mind away completely and just be the chanting!

Early Morning Sittings

The Zen Center of Denver offers a time and place for sangha zazen every Tuesday through Friday (and, of course, Sunday morning). Daily zazen at home is beneficial to our practice; daily zazen with our sangha sisters and brothers supports our practice even more. We have sittings scheduled Tuesdays through Fridays 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. at the Rocky Mountain Miracle Center, giving students of the Way the opportunity to practice in community and start the weekday with Right Mind. Like the Zen saying “just doing,” on Tuesdays and Thursdays it's “just zazen.” On Wednesdays and Fridays teachers also offer dokusan according to the calendar.

- George Mathews

From p. 1

Today I am going to talk a little about the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-neng. His life and his interaction with another monk, called Ming, is probably the stuff of myth; great faith, great doubt and great determination weave through their inspiring story.

Hui-neng had lost his father early, and was said to be illiterate and unschooled; he supported himself and his mother by selling firewood. They were very poor and he probably did not look like much, just a scrawny youth. One day, without ever having done any meditation practice or study, he happened to overhear a monk chanting a line from the Diamond Sutra, probably the phrase “dwell nowhere and bring forth that mind.” In an instant, the young man’s mind turned over and he experienced a great realization. His difficult life had opened him to question birth and death; still, to awaken spontaneously like this is the functioning of great faith as well as doubt. How many times, for some of us maybe every day, do we hear the dharma? But can we really recognize it and take it in? “This earth where we stand is the pure lotus land and this very body the body of Buddha.” This earth right here; this body, your own body. No... usually we hold ourselves apart, and the words slip off the surface. Can we really let them in, to our marrow?

In any case, after this experience Hui-neng arranged for his mother to be cared for by a neighbor and set off for the temple of the Fifth Ancestor, Hung-jen, which was far away in northern China and quite large, with about a thousand monks. After Hui-neng arrived there, he had an initial encounter with Hung-jen, who immediately recognized his worth, but felt it prudent to put him outside in the harvesting shed to husk the rice and watch him for a while.

Some time later, the master, wanting to name a successor, announced a contest asking any monk who felt they were worthy to write a poem demonstrating his realization. The senior monk, Shen-hsiu, was not quite

confident, so he wrote his verse on a wall anonymously during the night, thinking that if it was approved he could step forward and if not remain quiet. Meanwhile, all the others held back.

So in the morning this verse appeared:

*The body is the Bodhi Tree;
The mind is like a clear mirror;
Moment by moment, wipe the mirror carefully;
Let there be no dust on it.*

**While this practice
may be extraordinary,
we ourselves are ordinary
people, and we
are here not only for
ourselves but for all
beings.**

The Master praised this poem about the cultivation of the mind but did nothing else to recognize the author. But when Hui-neng heard the verse recited, he knew instantly that the author had not truly experienced the Great Death, the complete dropping of body and mind. It’s important to say, though, that this first poem, while incomplete, does express an important aspect of our practice; we do, minute

by minute, come back with patience and faithfulness to each moment. But it’s not enough. So Hui-neng asked a monk write Hui-neng’s own poem on the wall underneath:

*Bodhi really has no tree;
The mirror too has no stand;
From the beginning there is nothing at all;
Where can any dust alight?*

Can you appreciate the confidence and certainty of Hui-neng? Realization is independent of status, of training, and certainly is not related to sweeping the mind clean, no matter how pure white we may want it to be.

The next morning, everyone was impressed, but, instead of allowing this poem to awaken their own questioning spirit, they got distracted by the offensive rumor that the illiterate young man from the shed had dictated it. So the Master just rubbed it out without any fuss.

That night, however, he had Hui-neng come to his quarters, taught him the Diamond Sutra and examined him. Satisfied that he had found his successor, he secretly



gave the young man the robe and bowl of Bodhidharma as symbols of his transmission and also helped him to leave immediately to return south, advising him to practice for some time in solitude to refine his understanding. The Master was worried, and as it turns out rightly, that his jealous monks would not accept this young man but would try to harm him. Indeed, the next morning, when Hung-jen told the monks what had happened, they were infuriated and, certain that the Master had made a mistake in authorizing such an inexperienced layman, some several hundred set off in hot pursuit.

The head monk, Hui-ming, a former general, rough and quick to anger, was in top physical condition and soon outstripped the others. Up and down hills, stumbling through rough terrain, he ran and ran. As head monk, he must have had some insight, and yet he was carried away by his need to defend and protect the monastery and the lost treasure of the Dharma. He ran and ran and time blurred. He continued to run and his anger drained away; his mind was emptied of all his preconceptions, empty even of his own personality, his position and story. He was not even aware of his own determina-

tion or its root, and yet he did not give up but kept on running, following Hui-neng. No longer even knowing why, he kept going, for some two months, losing the way, finding the path again and starting over. The past felt like a dream, the present only the running.

Isn’t this the spiritual search, your search? Starting in with enthusiasm, getting discouraged, falling away, starting again, uncertain and unsure. It is in the coming back, the starting again, that we recognize and nourish our innate determination. Insufficient, inconsistent practice is our experience, and yet it is in the midst of this inconsistency, this always imperfect practice, that we realize the way.

It is this next section of the story that is taken up as a koan:

Hui-neng, seeing Ming coming, laid the robe and bowl on a rock, and said, “This robe and bowl represent the Dharma. Are they to be fought for? You may take them back with you.”

Ming tried to lift them, but they were as immovable

as a mountain. Shivering and trembling, he hesitated and said, "I came for the Dharma, not for the robe. I beg you, lay brother, please open the Way for me."

Can you see the complete transformation of this old general, monk Ming? In running and running, he had become intimate with his own deepest desire to awaken, his own Deep Faith, his desire to pierce through the pain of separation. His suffering had become so intimate to him that it no longer had a name or shape. The whole world had faded as one foot lifted and then the next. Until that moment, he had not known his own heart until it spoke: "Please, please teach me, help me."

Master Hakuin described his own great doubt in these terms:

Suddenly a great doubt manifested itself before me. It was as though I were frozen solid in the midst of an ice sheet extending tens of thousands of miles. A purity filled my breast and I could neither go forward nor retreat.

Everything else had disappeared for monk Ming; the words "I came for the Dharma" were spoken with a mind and heart pure and open, unified and free of any hesitation.

Hui Neng recognized this and said, "Don't think good; don't think evil. At this very moment, what is the original face of monk Ming, the head monk?"

What are you? What is this original face, your original face?

What is the place of no good, no evil, that place of complete harmony, no division? Right now, is there right or wrong, man or woman, large or small, important or trivial? Without any distinction whatsoever, having shed even your mind and body, what is there? With this question, everything came to a complete stop. The world of Ming crumbled as completely as a temple bell shattered the frozen world of Hakuin. No Hakuin, no Ming, no Hui-neng.

From the beginning, nothing, nothing at all. The road is wide and free of dust; not a word can be spoken.

In an instant, Ming had a great awakening, sweat poured over his body, and he found himself bowing in tears.

For some, like Ming, a dramatic, whole-body experience; for others, maybe just a quiet shift, like an image coming into sharp focus.

No matter what the circumstances, awakening is complete intimacy, perfect trust. Ming said, "I am like one who drinks water and knows personally whether it is cold or warm." Yes, now I know it for myself.

When we realize the Way, we know it for ourselves... the way we know the cry of our own baby, the smell of rain, the taste of salt. We know it personally, before thought, before words. Our doubt dissolves.

Even so, Ming could not help himself, and he fell back by habit for a moment and asked, "Besides the secret words and secret meanings, is there anything else deeper still?" Is this really it? Could it really be so simple?

Hui-neng told him, "What I have just conveyed to you is not secret. If you reflect on your own face, whatever is secret will be right there with you." Truly, there is nothing secret. The sun is bright, the air brisk, this morning you are here in this room. Look at your own face; it is always with you. Can we live without ideas of good and evil, holding close to the most important thing, each minute, each day?

Great faith, great doubt and great determination. This story of Hui-neng and monk Ming may seem like a story of two heroes, one a slight young man, another a grizzled old one, heroes of another time. But Dogen tells us that "there is no gap between practice and enlightenment or zazen and daily life, and a person who advances in the Way is an ordinary person." While this practice may be extraordinary, we ourselves are ordinary people, and we are here not only for ourselves but for all beings.

The person who advances in the Way is you; the Great Way is no other than your own life, which does not lack anything. An American roshi (John Daido Looi) used to say that great faith, that's entering the zendo; great doubt, that's just taking your seat; and great determination, that's engaging your practice, breath by breath – the stuff of right now, right here. It is in each moment, as you choose to be aware and awake, again and again. No big deal, and yet it makes all the difference; it's the liberation of all beings.

Together with all beings, we realize the Way. ☸

Gassho Corner

Our special thanks to Todd Afflerbaugh, Rusty Brown and Chris Wineman of Semple Brown Design for making time on a Sunday morning to present their initial site plans for our planned temple at Columbine. Everyone present enjoyed the thoroughly professional presentation, and we left with a clearer vision of where we're headed.

Thanks also to those members who submitted testimonials for this issue.

Zazenkai at Willow Farm

This spring we will return to Willow Farm Contemplative Center in Hygiene for zazenkai on April 15 with Karin Sensei offering teisho and dokusan, as well as May 20 with Ken Sensei, and June 24 with Peggy Sensei. Hygiene is an agricultural crossroads community about five miles west of Longmont. Visit the Willow Farm website (<http://willowfarmcolorado.org/>) for more details about their location and programs.

The Saturday zazenkai hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and full attendance is required; partial attendance is not optional for this zazenkai. Capacity is limited to twenty ZCD participants, as about five outside guests from the Willow Farm community are anticipated. The fee is \$30, with a reduced rate for students and financial hardship. A homemade midday vegan meal with gluten-free options is offered for \$8.00, or participants can choose to bring their own lunches. The zendo is wheelchair accessible with minor assistance required; however, access to the dokusan room, bathroom and other areas of the house currently requires navigating one large step.

The schedule may include a samu period in the garden or on the grounds, and participants should bring their own work gloves, hats and clothing as needed for working outside.

As usual we will appreciate assistance with loading and transporting items from the Rocky Mountain Miracle Center; please indicate your availability to help when registering.

Because of advance planning requirements, registration deadlines are one week in advance of the zazenkai date. Please sign up via Signupgenius.com or, if you have difficulty there, contact the office.

Entering the Gate

Two people joined the sangha in recent months:

- David Peterson, who works as an attorney and enjoys cooking, handiwork and hanging out with his wife and two sons.
- Corbin Shouse, who moved to Denver six months ago after graduating with his bachelor's degree in accounting from Arizona State University. He enjoys photography, reading, and camping in the mountains.

Welcome both, and we look forward to sitting with you and getting to know you better!

In the Marketplace

In the Marketplace allows ZCD members to reach fellow sangha members with business, for-sale or want ads. If you would like to place an ad in our next issue, email office@zencenterofdenver.org.

Beautiful rocker glider with ottoman, \$75. Contact Bill Wright, 303-808-1736.

Zabutons for sale: 36x36, memory-foam core surrounded by cotton batting and a removable, washable black cover that is zippered. \$70 each. Contact becky_wethington@icloud.com.

Photography by Geoff Keeton: Family pictures and portraits, picture editing, or if you wanted to combine a picture and Zen saying or koan together I can do that as well. Contact gkeeoft@gmail.com or 720-227-2997.

What Remains by Jacqueline St. Joan, from Turkey Buzzard Press: "What Remains, with its dramatic, gorgeous cover enfolding a tour de force of memory, openness, linguistic dexterity, human pain and inextinguishable love, is a triumph of heightened perception over brutal reality, of human spirit over human degradation." Email jackiestjoan@earthlink.net or see <http://jacquelinestjoan.com>.

Synergy Photographics: Commercial Photography, Graphic and Web Site Design, Full Color Printed Products from Postcards to Posters. Low minimum quantities available at very competitive rates. Contact Jeff Black at 303-757-1866, synergyphotographics@gmail.com.

Jason Polk, LCSW, LAC. Helping couples and individuals get along better. Couple therapy & individual therapy. See Paramitacounseling.com or email jason@paramitacounseling.com.



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