

# MOUNTAINS TALKING

SUMMER 2021



## ONE-FINGER ZEN

PEGGY METTA SHEEHAN

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Editor: Joel Tagert

# ONE-FINGER ZEN

PEGGY METTA SHEEHAN



Case 3 in the *Wu-men Kuan*, “Chu-chih Raises One Finger”:

*Whenever he was asked about Zen, Master Chu-chih simply stuck up one finger.*

*One day a visitor asked Chu-chih's young attendant what his master preached. The boy raised a finger. Hearing of this, Chu-chih cut off the boy's finger with a knife. As the boy ran from the room, screaming with pain, Chu-chih called to him. When he turned his head, Chu-chih stuck up one finger. The boy was suddenly enlightened.*

*When Chu-chih was about to die, he said to his assembled monks, “I received this one-finger Zen from T'ien-lung. I used it all my life but could not exhaust it.” With this he entered into his eternal rest.*

Wu-men's commentary:

*The enlightenment of Chu-chih and the boy has nothing to do with a finger. If you can realize this, then T'ien-lung, Chu-chih, the boy and yourself, are all run through with a single skewer.*

Wu-men's verse:

*T'ien-lung made a fool of Chu-chih,  
Who cut the boy with a sharp knife,  
Just as the mountain deity raised his hand, and lo,  
without effort,  
The myriad-piled mountain was split into two.*

In our Zen tradition we often investigate a koan. It is a very rich aspect of our ancestry. Our koan collection is quite large and I enjoy the process of choosing a koan to explore. How it presents itself to be taken up or revisited for one of these talks is interesting. Often it's totally random; some teachers go in order, or use one book for a while, or follow an ancestor. My recollection of this case has been jogged lately in this way:

As most of you know, I'm a pediatrician. I see many well babies, which is quite a blessing. Lately I've been noticing nine-month- to one-year-olds in my office. One of the most important developmental milestones at this time is this [holding up pointer finger]. It just starts to show up, just this. Then over the next six to nine months comes pointing: pointing at themselves – their nose, their ears, their tummy, their toes – at mommy or daddy, at things around them, and then using it to get their parents to respond or get them something. It's really delightful to watch and quite a sophisticated progression of communication and social interaction.

Master Chu-chih is also inviting us to enter, to mature and grow, to communicate, participate, to see what's what, and to heal and to love, all in this [holding up a finger], this one teaching.

*Whenever he was asked about Zen, Master Chu-chi simply stuck up one finger.*

What is Zen? One finger. What is Buddha? One finger. What is your Original Face? One finger. What are we doing here? One finger. I wish I had his eloquence.

Yet we do come to practice together and listen to such a talk that we may intimately know this one finger. Not a finger that's pointing *at* something, but rather one that includes everything. Not a single thing is left out: not rioters, not anger, not fear or frustration or disappointment, not acts of courage or acts of cowardice, not old, young, happy or sad, wise or stupid. In fact it wipes out self and other, me and them, right and wrong, gain and loss, praise and blame. It is not a finger pointing at the moon. It is the moon itself and is the basis for compassion, right conduct, speech and thought.

Today is a full day of practice to really settle in, and wherever thoughts or feelings or imaginings may take you, return to this, to this sitting, to the fingers in your lap, the thumbs touching lightly. Mu. This.

It's not so different in your moment-to-moment activity when you are not sitting on the mat. Where is this

*Continued p. 11*



## SUMMER BLOOMS

We have been simply delighted with the abundance of flowers around the temple and in our Zen garden this spring and summer. Since the garden was only planted last year, this is really the first time we have seen it well established and in bloom, and it's a complete joy. Our special thanks to Desi Wood of Dobro

Design, who designed the garden, and to the crew of Phase One Landscapes, who installed it. If any are wondering, we do also expect in the fall to replace the bristlecone pines on the southeast corner that did not survive last season, and look forward to having the landscaping essentially complete at that point.



# A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM

DENNIS SIENKO

Case 25 in the Wu-men Kuan, “Yang-shan’s Sermon from the Third Seat”:

The case:

*Yang-shan dreamed he went to Maitreya’s realm and was led to the third seat. A senior monk struck the stand with a gavel and announced, “Today, the one in the third seat will preach.” Yang-shan rose, struck the stand with the gavel and said, “The truth of the Mahayana is beyond the Four Propositions and transcends the Hundred Negations. Listen, Listen.”*

Wu-men’s commentary:

*Tell me, did he preach or not? If you open your mouth, you are lost. If you cannot speak, then it seems you are stumped. If you neither open your mouth nor keep it closed, you are one hundred and eight thousand miles off.*

Wu-men’s verse:

*In broad daylight under the blue sky,  
He preached a dream in a dream.  
Absurd! Absurd!  
He deceived the entire assembly.*

For background, Yang-shan lived approximately 807-883 C.E. in China and was the cousin of Lin-chi. Lin-chi is reputed for attacking or ignoring cherished beliefs and long-held traditions. He usually led students to enlightenment by hitting and shouting. The ordinary models of thinking were unacceptable, and there was nothing left for students to hold onto. For centuries, Lin-chi’s followers were the leading Ch’an Buddhist masters of China. In the twelfth century, his teachings spread to Japan and formed the Rinzai school of Buddhism.

Meanwhile Yang-shan, along with his teacher, Kuei-shan, founded the Guiyang school of Zen. The Guiyang school was distinguished from the other Zen schools by its use of complex metaphors and images. In our story, Yang-shan finds himself in Maitreya’s realm. He is given the third seat, or the seat just below Maitreya and Shakyamuni. What a position of honor to be in! Then, within this image, the senior monk stands up, strikes the

stand with a gavel, and announces, “Today the monk in the third seat will preach.” What? Surely there must be some mistake! Talk about stage fright or public-speaking anxiety. It probably does not get much worse. However, with confidence bred by something beyond understanding, Yang-shan rises, strikes the stand with the gavel, and says, “The Dharma of the Mahayana is beyond the Four Propositions and transcends the Hundred Negations. Listen, Listen.”

Where does this confidence come from and what are these Four Propositions? The Four Propositions and the One Hundred Negations are terms used in ancient Indian philosophy and logic. The Four Propositions are the basic terms of one, many, being, and non-being. The One Hundred Negations are reached by saying that each of the basic four terms has four particular negations, making a total of sixteen. Then by introducing past, present and future, we have forty-eight. These forty-eight are then doubled, as having already arisen or being about to arise, which make ninety-six.

Is everyone keeping up with the math so far? My apologies; so much for turning off the mind-road. But that is what happens when we start speaking. Finally, by adding a negation of the original four, we end up with One Hundred Negations. In more lay or direct terms, to go beyond the Four Propositions and transcend the One Hundred Negations means that words, letters, ideas and thoughts are unable to reach or express it.

“Listen, listen!” Listen to what? Listen to the sound of the traffic? Listen to the sound of the bird singing? Listen to your stomach growling as lunch time approaches? Who or what is doing this listening?

Allow me to digress for a minute to talk of this sense we refer to as hearing. According to science, our ears are built for a quiet world. They are composed, first, of the outer ear, which does a great job of capturing sound and stereoscopically working out where it came from and whether it demands our attention. That is why you can hear someone across a room at a party speak your name and turn your head to identify the speaker with uncanny accuracy. Our forebears spent eons as prey to endow us

with this benefit. Yet each ear is uniquely built and is as distinctive as fingerprints.

Beyond the outer ear is the eardrum. The tiny quiverings of the eardrum are passed on to the three smallest bones of the body, known commonly as the hammer, anvil and stirrup. These bones, which were once part of our jaw – isn’t evolution wonderful? – amplify the sound and pass it on to the inner ear via small a snail-shaped structure filled with some 2,700 delicate hairlike filaments. These filaments then wave, like ocean grass, as sound waves pass across them. The brain then puts all the signals together and works out what was just heard in a micro-fraction of a second – almost instantaneously, but not quite.

There is nothing wrong with the ears and the brain and how it all functions, but as soon as the brain or thinking mind starts to analyze the sounds as pleasant or unpleasant or starts associating the sounds with memories or images, all is lost. Our hearing and brain function in the past and unfortunately can lead us away from our practice, especially as we start to contemplate instead of just feeling. What is the closest we can come to living in the present? It is simply this, or the sound of the gavel striking the stand.

What if we could separate ourselves from this thinking mind? What would we hear? In our Kannon ceremony last Sunday, Avalokiteshvara, the great Bodhisattva of Compassion, speaks of going beyond hearing. To quote from last week’s reading, “Since both that place and the entry were quiet, the two attributes of motion and stillness did not arise. After that, gradually advancing, the hearing and what was heard both disappeared. Once the hearing was ended, there was nothing to rely on, and both awareness and its objects became empty.” What is this place that Avalokiteshvara hints at where you and sound disappear? Is there a silence or an emptiness beyond the sound, but from which all sounds arise?

I am reminded of doing zazen in a mediation hall with a jackhammer blaring outside. People found it difficult to do zazen with this noise. However, why should it matter? We talk about going into the hustle and bustle of the world once we finish our meditation, but can’t we enter this hustle and bustle while we are on the mat? Can we accept the world as it is? Can we accept ourselves for who we are? Yes, we wish the noise would stop, we wish there would be less suffering in our lives, we wish we could concentrate more and be less distracted

by thoughts. We want to change things, make things and conditions more conducive to our meditation and lives. We have such difficulty accepting things as they are. Can we simply find that silence, beyond the jackhammer, a place where the jackhammer no longer disturbs? That is our practice.

We take a breath in our sitting practice and then we take the next breath. We take a step in our walking meditation, and then we take the next step. Can we let our thoughts go and throw ourselves away? Can we not cling to anything, all our ideas, good, bad, right and wrong, until we do not even know if we are sitting or standing? Can you be just in that moment, where both awareness and its object become empty? Can you experience just the sound of the stand being struck by the gavel?

Tell me, did Yang-shan preach or not? If you open your mouth you are lost. If you shut your mouth, you will also miss it. If you neither open your mouth nor keep it closed, you are one hundred and eight thousand miles off.

Tell me, did you eat your breakfast or not? In Zen, we need to forget the words being spoken as well as who is listening. We need to find that place where there is not one speck of separation. Whatever comes to us we become, and not a single hair can be inserted between self and other. Forgetting the self in the act of uniting with something: this is zazen. On your cushions, Mu breathes quietly, and there is no chasing about through the five senses. Hearing the bell to end the round, allow the forgotten self to come forth, allow it to stand and put one foot in front of the other as you do kinhin. Allow it to come forth when you unite with preparing your noon meal and taking a walk outside.

From the limitless past to the immediate present, we are never separated from each moment. However, we must live and experience this ourselves; for this is the Truth that liberates and transforms.

*In broad daylight under the blue sky,  
He preached a dream in a dream.  
Absurd! Absurd!  
He deceived the entire assembly.*

“In broad daylight under the blue sky.” Clear to everyone, Yang-shan leaves us with nothing to cling to. From that place of nothing at all, we encounter it directly. According to the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus said, “When

you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the upper like the lower... then you will enter the Kingdom.”

What is the dream in a dream? In everyday life our five senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell – work in combination to enable the mind to understand its surroundings. These five senses actually operate independently as five distinct modes, and as wonderful as they are, they are empty. Science has done numerous experiments to inform us that what our senses perceive as reality is not in fact reality. For example, people were given an orange-flavored drink, to which was added a flavorless red color. People seeing the red color all thought they were drinking a cherry-flavored drink. I did an experiment myself: closing my eyes and pinching my nose shut, I tasted a jellybean from a jar. I had no idea what flavor it was except that it was sweet. I then took a yellow jellybean, smelled it, and immediately “tasted” pineapple.

We live in a dream state, clinging to bushes and grasses. To paraphrase Descartes, “We think, therefore we think we are.”

At the same time, this sense-filled world is beautiful. It is filled with color, sounds and smells. When we unite with this world, and experience the intimacy that surrounds us, then we come to realize who and what we are.

# RIGHT MINDFULNESS

PEGGY CURRY

“Our life is shaped by our mind, for we become what we think.” This is the opening line of the Dhammapada. Eknath Easwaran, translator and scholar of the Dhammapada, asserts that “To the Buddha everything is a dharma, a mental event. We don’t really experience the world ... we experience constructs in the mind made up of information from the senses. This information is already a kind of code.”

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall sees “culture” as the program made from code that directs our way of thinking, penetrates our language, and is only partially conscious. The duality he describes is internal culture (which is unconscious and difficult to change) and external

“Absurd! Absurd!” What is this koan Mu some of us are working on? Who is Mu? Who is hearing these words even now? Yang-shan, Maitreya and Shakyamuni walk outside and see the clouds in the sky with the same eyes and smell with the same nose the newly bloomed flowers as you. Yang-shan, Maitreya and Shakyamuni hear with the same ears the rain falling. They feel the itch on your cheek and the pain in your knees.

Tell me, does the sound go to the ear or the ear go to the sound? Who is it that hears? Feel into this question, drop your whole body into this question. Drop your whole body into Mu or whatever koan you are working on. Drop into it now, from that essence of holding on to nothing whatsoever, from a gavel striking to a bird singing.

If we make nothing, if we simply sit, not resting in being or resting in non-being, everything is exactly as it is. This is hearing. This is true freedom, a freedom that allows us to live wholeheartedly during the noise and hustle and bustle of our lives, a freedom that provides us the courage to get through everything that life throws at us and gives us confidence bred by something beyond understanding to be who we are: lovely, wonderful beings endowed with the seed and light of Buddha. ❀

culture (which is conscious and easily changed). He convincingly contrasts Western culture with its low-context preference for logic and rationality with Eastern culture with its high-context preference for relationships. Is it any wonder that communication between these cultures is fraught with misunderstandings? Hall insists we go to another culture to discover how our own works, because when we bump up against another culture we can begin to see the “highly selective screen our culture has in place between us and the ‘outside’ world.” This screen designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore, according to Hall.

Should we add to that first statement from the

Dhammapada: “Our life is shaped by our mind, for we become what our culture thinks”? How can we break through this powerful influence when we are only half aware of it as a cause for many of our actions?

What about the biochemistry of the brain—would understanding the order in which the brain processes information received through the senses help us get at how to control the mind?

Easwaran notes, “We don’t actually see things ... we interpret as separate objects a mass of electrochemical impulses received by the brain ... This is necessarily a limited view of things. Yet from it we make our world.” The brain has a set of filters that follow a 1-2-3 pattern. The first filtering system, the reticular activating system, sorts first for survival, then novelty, and then power of choice. The second filtering system is the thalamus, which filters all incoming sensory information and relays it to the proper area of each lobe. The third stop is the amygdala and the hippocampus. The amygdala catalogs emotional content information and the hippocampus processes factual information. You may have heard of an “amygdala hijack.” A message from the hippocampus tells the amygdala that it is a fight, flight or freeze situation. This triggers the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and hijacks the rational brain, possibly leading to irrational and destructive behavior. All this occurs in seconds. What are our chances of controlling our mind in situations like this?

“Hard it is to train the mind, which goes where it likes and does what it wants,” states the Buddha in the Dhammapada. Yes. It’s really hard.

Right Mindfulness is the seventh tenet of the Eightfold Noble Path. To follow this path is to end suffering; and the cause of suffering is ego-delusion. Words, words, words. One definition found online (of indefinite attribution) says that “Right mindfulness is the controlled and perfected faculty of cognition. It is the mental ability to see things as they are, with clear consciousness.” But how does one control the mind?

Another online article says, “We must learn to actively observe, then control the way our thoughts go. Buddha accounted for this as the four foundations of mindfulness: 1. Contemplation of the body, 2. contemplation of feeling (repulsive, attractive, or neutral), 3. contemplation of the state of mind, and 4. contemplation of the phenomena.”

To put this in practice, you might ask yourself questions like: What is my aim? How am I in my body – tight neck, arms folded across chest, breathless? What emotions do I have on this? Am I resisting, trying to hide or defend myself? Am I shutting down or getting angry? What am I thinking? What actions will I take? Fight, flight, freeze? Do something, do nothing, wait to decide?

I have not been able to put these foundations to work effectively – perhaps because of too much thinking and not enough contemplating. But I have found three strategies that are working for me:

1. Zazen practice: As much as you can, sustain a strong practice. You know why, too: by leaving thoughts behind, you open to the limitless universe beyond thoughts, feelings and physical limitations. By doing this, I find that I gain the “bigger container” that Charlotte Joko Beck talks about in *Everyday Zen*, with a greater capacity for tolerance, compassion, and love in daily life.

2. Mindfulness exercises: With guidance from my teacher and ZCD discussion leaders, I have found these exercises so helpful in my life. Jan Chozen Bays’ book *How to Train a Wild Elephant (& Other Adventures in Mindfulness)* is a great resource. Here are a few samples of exercises that help you pay attention: a) simply looking at your hands when you brush your teeth or hair, b) pausing at the door before entering a room and really seeing what’s in the room, c) just doing what is before you with causeless awareness. Chozen Bays offers deeper diving exercises as well, as in her chapter on anxiety. I still tighten up when I hear or see the word. The exercise increases your awareness of the body when anxiety rises, which can be a helpful cue that deep breathing is in order.

3. Reversing samsaric logic: Chogyam Trungpa gets credit for this strategy. Here’s how it works. Take a statement you strongly believe is correct, for example: “There is a right way things should be.” Now reverse it: “There is no right way things should be. Things are as they are.” He suggests that what usually happens when you do this is that you become a gentle person. I have found this to be true.

I’ll leave you with a final quote from the Dhammapada: “All the effort must be made by you.” ❀

**For Baling's Hair-Blown Sword**

Deep inside  
Something that  
Cuts diamonds  
Cuts ore  
Cuts iron  
Cuts thoughts...  
Even Baling is split in two.

(The music, always playing in the background,  
has stopped mid-theme.)

Deeper  
*Tick.*  
The subtle drip of the humidifier  
Cuts the world thought open,  
And even the sword has disappeared.

- Geoff Keeton





*I open to all that is,  
Releasing my hold on all things.  
And vow to speak the truth of this moment.*

*- Madeline Ray*

*Continued from p. 3*

one finger *now*, and *now*, as you drink your tea, brush your teeth, talk on the phone or type an e-mail? Where is it during showering, walking, lovemaking, arguing? Can you see it, hear it, smell it, taste it and touch it?

Don't underestimate the opportunity always presenting itself. Don't allow habit-force to color or intrude; invite or allow that to recede, and the whole world, the universe of one finger rushes in. Stay with just One, this breath, Mu, just sitting, and you present this one finger in your upright spine, in your breath filling up and letting go, in just listening, sitting.

Shishin Wick writes:

*Don't think that that finger represents something. That finger penetrates the depths of the ocean, and beyond the Milky Way. It penetrates to your best-kept secrets, and yet it hides nothing. It reveals Tenryu's guts, and Gutei's guts, and the boy-attendant's guts and your guts! So tell me: How do you present that one finger?* (The Book of Equanimity: Illuminating Classic Zen Koans, p. 266).

*One day a visitor asked Chu-chih's young attendant what his master preached. The boy raised a finger. Hearing of this, Chu-chih cut off the boy's finger with a knife. As the boy ran from the room screaming with pain, Chu-chih called to him. When he turned his head, Chu-chih stuck up one finger. The boy was suddenly enlightened.*

Who might you relate to in this part of the story? The visitor wondering about the master and what he teaches, just wondering about this tradition, perhaps interested to know if it would resonate for him or her? I've been there. Perhaps you are sitting here today, new to practice and wondering, "What the heck is the teaching here?" Well, it's this [holding up one finger].

How about the boy attendant, who rather innocently demonstrates what he has seen. Can we relate to him? Did he really go so wrong? Was it that offensive? To be like his teacher? Not that we don't see the problem with imitation. It is a problem. A big problem these days, on a whole new level, imitating what we see or hear.

It breaks my heart to see young people comparing, imitating, only wanting to be like someone on YouTube or Snapchat rather than being themselves, knowing themselves, and investing in the true journey of a human being.

There is a kind of imitation, or shall we say inspiration, from others that is not unhealthy. There are a lot of teachers that I admire, some I'd even like to be like. It's good to have role models. It's important. We are receiving this inspiration today from one another.

But let's not miss the point. An imitation of food will not satisfy hunger, and here comes the real challenge. Can you relate to Chu-chih? Can you?

Can you cut it off? Cut off the boy's finger? Start with cutting off the mind-road. Cut it off and find out. Try it right now. Do it again and again. There's no need to make it an act of violence. You can wield Manjusri's sword at any moment. Cut it, cut through and through, and at such a moment you might run from the room, screaming. Or laughing.

Just this breath, only Mu, whole-body sitting: the sharpest knife.

Once, as the tenzo for a sesshin, I cut off the tip of my finger with a sharp knife. I remember getting the jisha to help me finish the meal. I remember going to dokusan with a bloody bandage because it wouldn't stop bleeding, and I'd love to say I went into the room holding my finger up in delight: here it is, here it is! Alas, not yet, but you just never know, if you give yourself completely to whatever is right in front of you.

*When Chu-chih was about to die, he said to his assembled monks, "I received this one-finger Zen from T'ien-lung. I used it all my life but couldn't exhaust it." With this he entered into his eternal rest.*

I take my two dogs on a walk every morning, pretty much the same walk. My old dog, almost fourteen years old, is very gimp, and has one, maybe two legs that work well enough. She can only make it about six or seven blocks, and we do that same walk every day. I cannot tell you how excited she is to go out in the mornings. That walk has never been, will never be exhausted. How could it be? Only the habitual, conditioned mind of sameness would miss it.

This case also appears in *The Blue Cliff Record*, and here is the pointer:

*When one speck of dust arises, the great earth is contained therein; when a single flower blooms, the world arises. But before the speck of dust is raised, before the flower opens, how will you set eyes on it? Therefore it is said, "It's like*

*cutting a skein of thread: when one strand is cut, all are cut. It's like dyeing a skein of thread: when one strand is dyed, all are dyed."*

*This very moment you should take all complications and cut them off. Bring out your own family jewels and respond everywhere, high and low, before and after, without missing. Each and every one will be fully manifest. If you are not like this, look into [this case].* (The Blue Cliff Record, trans. by Thomas Cleary and J.C. Cleary, p. 123)

Wu-men's commentary:

*The enlightenment of Chu-chih and the boy has nothing to do with a finger. If you can realize this, then T'ien-lung, Chu-chih, the boy and yourself, are all run through with a single skewer.*

Robert Aitken Roshi made this comment: "Actually you are already run through, but you must know that steel for yourself."

Yes, we must. That is why we give ourselves to a day such as this, and why we stay oriented and honest in the way of practice. The truth, the way, is not an idea or an ideal. It is visceral, and it is as tangible as the blade of a knife, a skewer.

That steel can feel cold and sharp: the crisp morning breeze on your face as a warm tear drips from your eye and burns down your cheek, the backward screech of the dump truck piercing your ears, the searing head pain of a migraine, the gut-punching images of anger and strife, guns and bombing and children starving. It might feel soft and warm: the blood oozing from the wound, the sweet touch of your puppy or kitten's fur or the cooing infant's soft bald head, the sunlight passing in gentle beams through your window revealing the dancing particles. It might be dark: the wrenching heaviness of grief or loss, a sadness so deep one can barely move. It might be bright and shimmering: the knife blade chopping red peppers, yellow daisies, falling snow, dripping rain or a crystal-clear swimming pool. Each and all invite nothing less than total commitment, jumping in, the whole body-mind skewered.

You can be, you will be, you are skewered, and together we are all run through.

Wu-men's verse:

*T'ien-lung made a fool of Chu-chih,*

*Who cut the boy with a sharp knife,  
Just as the mountain deity raised his hand, and lo,  
without effort,  
The myriad-piled mountain was split into two.*

So I didn't tell you the story of T'ien-lung and Chu-chih. Chu-chih lived around the ninth century and was doing solitary hermitage practice, not uncommon for the time. He was visited by a nun who challenged him, asking him to give a true phrase, with no imitation. And he couldn't. Distraught, he determined to set out to find a teacher, but had a dream that one was coming to him. Within a few days T'ien-lung arrived. Chu-chih relayed the story of his visitor, and T'ien-lung held up his finger. And lo, the myriad-piled mountain of master Chu-Chih was split into two, or one, or just split, completely split.

This is the kind of fool we'd all like to be. And now, truly though, isn't this whole story quite ridiculous! And yet, and yet. The mountain deity, Chu-chih, the boy are closer than your nose, your ears, tummy or toes.

Together with all beings we realize the Way. ☸

# NOTES ON THE MAT

## Live and In Person

We have been thrilled in the last month to at last return to in-person events for vaccinated members only. Seeing so many old friends face to face has been a joy, as has practicing again in our beautiful temple space.

With that said, right now the delta variant, along with other factors, is fueling an uptick in Covid-19 cases, and so we continue to be cautious as we navigate the pandemic. Currently we plan to offer our introductory seminar Aug. 21 in person, with proof of vaccination required and a 15-person attendance limit. We also plan to offer our weekend sesshin Sept. 24-26 in a hybrid format, with the option for residential participation (i.e. staying and sleeping at the Center).

However, following comments at our sangha circle meeting July 18, we are asking all those participating in chanting to bring and put on masks for that activity, including leaders taking the ino and tanto roles. This will apply to the opening and closing ceremonies during our daily zazen and to chanting at any other time, such as during our Kannon ceremony. Those who do not want to mask are asked not to chant out loud but speak quietly to themselves. This shift reflects our care for each other's well being, the risk noted by public health advisors for this activity, and the issues related to the delta variant and rising cases in Denver.

## New Web Features

We have recently introduced a host of new features to our website, including member accounts, event registration, dokusan appointment scheduling (for online dokusan only), and discussion forums. Our hope is that these new tools will greatly simplify a variety of functions for our members and more smoothly facilitate our activities in the years to come.

Along these lines, we will no longer be using Signupgenius.com to sign up for events or dokusan; these signups can now be found on our website calendar (just click the event). An account will be required to sign up for members-only events such as zazenkai and sesshin,

and to make online dokusan appointments. Of course, as our teachers are again offering in-person dokusan, members are encouraged to attend in person if possible and in keeping with your health and safety. Mountain Staff members should note that for now at least we will continue using Signupgenius for those signups.

All current members are encouraged to make an account; if you are a member and did not receive an invite, please contact the office.



*Martin Johnson took jukai with Karin Ryuku Roshi June 26, receiving his rakusu in a beautiful ceremony in our Zen garden.*





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