

Monterey Bay Zen Center News

Winter 2016

NOT MOVING IS THE WAY

When I was younger in practice and would feel hopeless about being able to understand, I longed for someone to ‘just tell me what to do.’ I thought there was a ‘way’ and that I just couldn’t find it. Now years later, I know that practice is the process of realizing there is no ‘way.’ Therein lies the mystery.

In the Genjo Koan, Dogen Zengi says, “Here is the place, here the way unfolds. When you find your place where you are, practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point. When you find your way at this moment, practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point.” The precise moment of readiness is unknown. Finding your place where you are, settling deeply where you are is the heart of the path. Not moving is the way.

This may sound like a contradiction, but a teacher waits for a student to develop confidence in her self, to find what her self (judgments, attitudes) is. I had to discover and ‘confess’ (to myself) my own judgments and opinions before I could learn that discriminations are illusory. Sometimes we hesitate to name our opinions and values. I had to be willing to own a self before I could drop it.

My earliest aspiration was to be extraordinary; at the same time, I aspired to be ordinary. I came to practice with both aspirations; they co-existed. The vision of an ordinary simple human life, going to work every day, being a responsible citizen, maybe a parent, was deeply embedded. Simultaneously, the vision of an extraordinary me was also inside. Being extraordinary meant being better than others; being ordinary meant being one with others. It has taken a long time to realize that practice is not about proving one or the other, but about becoming whole, finding the integration of the two.

One of the extraordinary things about Suzuki Roshi was how ordinary he was. It takes time to be willing to be that ordinary. Uchiyama Roshi says, “The Bodhisattva is an ordinary person who is walking in the direction of Buddha.” This practice of sitting here — letting in our fears, our doubts, our resistances, or denial — is walking in the direction of becoming complete.

In addition to watching the contents of mind, we watch the nature of mind — our mind objects and their flowing, like the tide. A student recently said, “Now I understand why it’s important not to move. When you move you don’t find what you are moving away from. When you sit still you experience what you want to avoid.” When you sit still you experience the nature of mind as well as the objects of mind.

Daowu visited the assembly of Shitou and asked, “What is the fundamental meaning of buddha dharma?” Shitou said, “Not to attain. Not to know.” This is the practice of taking the backward step. Wanting to be extraordinary is signing up to do sesshin. That’s walking forward. Walking backward is sitting here for five days wondering why you came, taking refuge in that confused, restless mind. . . .

We don’t really know how to walk forward anymore than we know how to walk backward. We think we know how to make a certain kind of effort to accomplish our goal. But when our knee or back gives out or our spirits flag, that’s when real effort begins. In our parenting group, someone said that practice is when you can’t walk away from your crying child, no matter how frustrated you are. When you can’t get away from your difficulties, the deeper practice begins.

Once a teacher told me, “Do the job, but take yourself out of the situation.” How do you take care of your child and yourself at the same time? How do you carry the responsibility and take yourself out of the situation? . . . How do you do things in a way that makes space for everyone?

A number of people this sesshin have been dealing with doubt and resistance. How do you not resist either one? How do you not get taken in by either one? Can you practice letting those feelings roll in with the tide and roll out again?

Whatever arises invites our attention. We trust sitting because whatever has brought us here is something deeper than any of us knows. We sit together in fellowship and feel safe enough to become friends with ourselves. We make a big space in our mind and body so we can feel our heart deeply and not deny it. We hear our own mind clearly. If our mind is raising a ruckus, we listen to that too—allowing all of it in without reservation.

That may mean noticing that your heart is broken, that you can’t breathe in the lower part of your body, that your shoulders are crunched, that your lips are tight, that your jaw is jammed. The backward step listens deeply: we were hurt; we are scared; we feel betrayed. Let those energies in. Let them go. The nature of mind is movement. You have to let the thoughts in, in order for them to move. . . .

I’m sitting here and can only see the room from this perspective. Those of you who are sitting there can’t see the room from here. It’s inevitable that we will all have partial views. That’s what we call being ‘a self.’ We experience according to a limited self. Our practice for [these] five days is to keep witnessing limited self. Gradually I learn

*We trust sitting
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(continued from page one)

that even though I can't see from any perspective but this one, I can include other perspectives, understand that others have their own perspectives, and each is just as true and real as mine, even if we're having a disagreement. That's a stretch of the heart muscle.

Practice is always on the fulcrum between wanting to get out of deluded self and seeing it arise more and more clearly. As I have quoted Uchiyama Roshi, "Practice is not to get out of the self but to study the delusions of the self."

Sitting here with difficulty we may learn more than sitting here in bliss. Anyway, we don't have a choice. That's what is called a good practice opportunity.

From a talk given and edited by Katherine Thanas Roshi, originally appearing in the January, 1996 Sangha Newsletter. Edited for the January, 2016 edition of MBZC Newsletter by Sara Hunsaker.

KATHY WHILDEN RETIRES FROM MBZC BOARD

Parking near Red's donut shop in Monterey I leave the car doors unlocked. I am living on the wild side. I buy the donuts and pick up the NY Times. My car is fine when I return. Nothing is stolen. I have to find more exciting activities to do.

— Kathy Whilden's blog,
Saturday, November 15, 2008

Although Rev. Kathy Whilden, the long-time flint and spark of Monterey Bay Zen administration, practice and activity, is stepping down from the board of directors, she remains very active as a Soto Zen priest, homeless advocate, habitual writer, organizer, mother, friend, teacher, blogger, chaplain, grandmother, debater, consummate administrator, scheduler, sewing instructor, combatant, emboldener, raconteur, retired social worker, custodian of cultural history, student, policy wonk, voracious reader, philanthropist, initiator and champion of conversant, accessible Zen.

Kathy Whilden began Soto Zen practice in 1989 with her teacher and founder of Monterey Bay Zen Center, Sobun Katherine Thanas, Roshi. She was ordained by Katherine in 1999 and received dharma transmission in 2011.

In her practice and teaching, Kathy emphasizes a broad, informal model of Soto Zen, eschewing Japanese robes and some of the more ceremonial Japanese trappings of practice. In addition to a number of other initiatives and programs (Fund for Homeless Women, writing classes), she established Brown Bag Zen, the unceremonious, lunch-time gathering at St. James church in Monterey that emphasizes Zen practice and personal narratives. Kathy moves easily across sectarian borders and continues to expand her practice.

Her relationships to her community, peers, students and friends remains both attentive and compassionate, revealing the interconnections between her social, religious and secular worlds. These qualities have given Kathy significant influence in the world. She puts that influence to admirable use.

— by Robert Reese

NEWS FROM THE TEACHING COUNCIL

We are pleased to announce that this past September, Sara Hunsaker became the fourth member of the MBZC Teaching Council, which also includes Susan McDonald, Robert Reese, and Patricia Wolff. Commencing in January 2016, one member of the Teaching Council will have primary responsibility for the planning and guiding of teaching for a six month period, on a rotating basis. The first to assume this position is Robert Reese. Each six month period will be shaped by the nature and teaching style of each of the members of the Council with the cooperation and participation of all. The Teaching Council will also assume responsibility for newsletter content, also on a rotating basis, presenting the dharma for the cover page, and additional articles of interest, art, poetry etc.

THE BODY OF PRACTICE RETREAT

Saturday, January 30, 10:30-12 noon, Carl Cherry Center, Carmel

This short retreat, presented by Kimberly Wolff, RYT, explores the relationship between yoga and Zen meditation. The participants will experience the symbiotic relationship of yoga and meditation through breath awareness and mindful movement during physical practice and then, in meditation, find the stillness. Kimberly sees yoga as a path to living a life of greater ease, compassion, wonder, and grace through an open heart, calm mind, and healthy body.

Kimberly offers a slow deep flow with focus on the breath and alignment followed by longer held floor poses that encourage this heart-mind-body connection. Although her style has been deeply influenced by her teachers Erich Schiffmann and Sarah Powers, she credits her students as her greatest teachers, taking yoga off the mat into everyday life.

Suggested donation \$20. No one will be turned away for lack of ability to pay. Call Robert Reese for information: (831) 920-8303.

VILLA ANGELICA SESSHIN

February 25 to February 28, 2016

The annual Monterey Bay Zen Center sesshin begins Thursday, February 25, 2016 at 4:30 pm. This will mark the first time sesshin will start on Thursday evening and continue for three days. We will gather together in silence, against the backdrop of Monastery Beach. A sesshin is residential period of intensive meditation and is an opportunity to deepen our practice, through periods of zazen, walking meditation, silent meals, dharma talks, practice discussions, work periods and rest.

Rev. Robert Reese, dharma heir of Katherine Thanas, will be leading the sesshin. Traditionally, the sesshin marks the beginning of our winter practice period. Residential space is limited. Early registration will be important. There are also opportunities for day-long non-residential practice. Scholarships are available. No one will be denied the opportunity to participate because of his or her financial situation. The sesshin will close at 3:00 pm, Sunday, February 28, 2016. Villa Angelica is located in Carmel, 1/2 mile south of Rio Rd.

Residential participation: Suggested donation \$90.00 per day.

Day long participation: Suggested donation \$75.00 per day. For more info and registration, please contact: Susan McDonald at soozmcdonald@gmail.com or (831) 601-7590.

WINTER PRACTICE PERIOD

February 25th through April 10th, 2016

One of the foundational teachings of the Buddha is that of renewing our focus and intensifying our commitment for a short, more intense interval of time. This enlivens our practice and clarifies our intention. *Ango*, or Practice Period, means "Peaceful Dwelling" and is a time when we are encouraged to take advantage of the singular opportunity to work with our life, supported by the community and practice leaders. While there are a number of events offered during this time, the *Ango* occurs within each one of us — exactly where we are. With this understanding, the Practice Period is created to sustain our efforts in the circumstances of our everyday life and work. To support this endeavor, we have created a series of options from which you can form an ongoing practice that cultivates and encourages you to go deeper into your life.

Robert Reese is leading the Practice Period. Call him for more information at (831) 920-8303. Applications will be available.

A FEW OF THE OFFERINGS:

- Creating a personal zazen schedule
- Work and family as practice
- Attending Tuesday night lectures
- Half-day sittings
- Villa Angelica Sesshin, February 25th - 28th
- Returning to Zazen, Classes; March 6th - April 10th
- Tea, check-in and support with companions on the Way
- Meetings with practice leaders
- Working with the precepts or perfections (paramitas)

PRESIDENTS REPORT: END OF YEAR REPORT

As President of the Board for Monterey Bay Zen Center, I feel it incumbent on me to provide an update each year on the status of finances and health of our community, our Sangha, the third of the Triple Treasures.

Our finances are stable. Having raised a little under \$16,000, we fell short of our budget goal of \$17,500; but as expenses came in under budget, we essentially broke even. We have maintained all of our basic practice opportunities, and continue to organize lots of other fun and special practice activities.

The board is growing and changing with two new members joining in 2014 (Diane Wells and Clare Nieto) and two additional this year (Ingrid Aquino and Edna Tichai). With this new influx, Kathy Whilden is taking the opportunity to resign as an MBZC Board member. Kathy's very active participation on the board includes many years of service as the Sangha Administrator. She previously held the position of President of the Board, is now Treasurer and chair of the

UPCOMING SANGHA EVENTS

Sangha Day on Saturday, January 9, 10:30-1pm at the Cherry Center. Call or text Clara at (949) 280-4632 for info.

Fearless Fathers begins January 2, to continue every other Saturday, 10:30 to noon at Cherry Center. Contact Shogen for info at (831) 659-5381 or fearless.fathers@gmail.com.

New Start for a New Year: An Introduction to Zen Buddhism, January 16 at the Cherry Center from 10:30 to noon. Call Sara with questions: (831) 915-4736.

Half-day Sitting, January 23, 8:30-noon. St. James Church, Monterey. Theme is "Mistakes are Not a Problem." Susan McDonald will be leading. Call Susan at (831) 601-7590.

Half-day Sitting/Oryoki Brunch, Saturday, February 13, 11am-3pm. A sesshin warm up led by Sara Hunsaker, (831) 915-4736 for information.

Hidden Dharma: Buddhism and Film series, Thursdays, March 10, 17, 24, & 31 at Cherry Center, 7pm, moderated by Robert Reese. \$10 and open to the public. For more information, contact Robert Reese at (831) 920-8303 or (831) 624-7491

Returning to Zazen Classes: Sunday, March 6 to April 10, 10:00 to noon, in conjunction with winter practice period. Classes open to the public. Suggested donation \$10.00 per class.

Media and Programs Committees. She will continue as coordinating Teacher for Brown Bag Zen, and Morning Zazen. I want to thank Kathy for all of her years of service to MBZC and commend the four new board members who are stepping up to help fill Kathy's many areas of leadership and service to our community.

In the Triple Treasures, we honor and acknowledge the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. That Sangha is a Treasure is never more apparent than when we look back on the year and all of the people who came together to offer and share this practice. If you didn't make it to the "Under One Roof" event, you missed an unforgettable performance of "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" by Anne Muraski and Mark Orrisch. If you would like to find out what you can do to help organize the 2016 event, please contact June Poe. Over 50 community members participated in "Breakfast with Poetry" in July, including Elliot Roberts, Ernie Stromberg, and Mark Orrisch. Contact Mark if you'd like to help on this great event in 2016. In September of this year, MBZC and the Santa Cruz Zen Center commenced publishing separate newsletters. Many thanks to Lisa Luscombe for her dedicated efforts in the design of the newsletters over the years. There are many more vital volunteers, and I offer my gratitude to all of you who participate in any way, with time, skills and financial support.

If you have ideas or want to know how you can help with Sangha practice and building of community, please feel free to contact me at mbzc.pres@prodigy.net. As always, the most important contribution is to just show up. I look forward to practicing with you in the coming year.

-- Jana Clark, President
Monterey Bay Zen Center Board of Directors



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MBZC AND SCZC ARE
ON FACEBOOK: you can
"like" the two Zen Centers

Facebook pages for current
information on what's happening
there, photos of events, and more.

MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTER

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE

We meet at the Cherry Center,
4th and Guadalupe in Carmel,
unless otherwise indicated.

Tuesday Evening Service:

Zazen 6:30

Service 7:20

Lecture/discussion 7:30-8:30

Monday, Thursday mornings:

Zazen 7am

(followed by service and soji)

Zazen instruction

First Tuesdays, 5:30pm

Ordinary Recovery

Saturdays 9-10am

Brown Bag Zen

Fridays 12:15-1:15

St. James Church,

High and Hellam Sts, Mntry

Mountains and Rivers Meditation

2nd and 4th Wednesdays 7-8:30pm

Carmel Valley. Call Patricia 659-3042

Super Soji Saturday

Sat, Jan. 9

10:30-noon Cherry Cntr

Introduction to Zen

Sat, Jan. 16

10:30-noon, Cherry Cntr

Half Day sitting

Sat, Jan 23

8:30-noon St. James Church,
Monterey

The Body of Practice

Sat, Jan 30

10:30-noon, Cherry Cntr

Buddha's Parinirvana

Tues, Feb. 9

6:30-8:30pm, Cherry Cntr

Half Day Sitting

Sat, Feb. 13

11:00am-3:00pm, Carmel
Valley Zendo

Katherine Thanas Mem.

Tues, Feb. 23

6:30-8:30pm, Cherry Cntr

Sesshin

Thurs-Sun, Feb. 25-28

Villa Angelica, Carmel
Highlands

Practice Period

Feb.25-April 10

Apply with Rev. Robert Reese

Returning to Zazen Class

Sun, Mar. 6-April 10

10:00-noon, Location tba

Acharya Mahapajapati Mem.

Tues, March 8

6:30-8:30pm, Cherry Cntr

Buddhism and Film series

Thurs. Mar. 10, 17, 24, 31

7:00 pm, Cherry Cntr
Theater

Introduction to Zen

Sat, Mar 19

10:30-noon, Cherry Cntr

Front page illustration by Issho Fujita