

Monterey Bay Zen Center News

Fall 2017

GOOD MEDICINE

"I am sick because the world is sick." – Vimalakirti

"The whole world is medicine." – Yunmen

It has been said that Buddhism is good medicine and that Buddha was the ultimate physician. What, then, is good medicine? What is health? Health is not only the absence of symptoms, but also resiliency, fluidity, openness, and stability. Well-being includes the ability to take in our world – as oxygen, as nourishment, as relationship – and to then radiate ourselves back into the world with the wisdom to release what is no longer needed.

Looking to the body, we ask, is our digestive system effective? Do our vessels flow freely? Are our hearts whole and open? Our bodies intrinsically know how to perform. Unfortunately, our minds sometimes get in the way. How do we live our lives as "medicine," for ourselves and for the world?

Much of the attention in integrative medicine is now focused on healing the gut. There is a new understanding of the relationship of the digestive system's integrity and our emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being.

We now know that much of our immune and neurotransmitter systems are produced in the GI tract and that inhabiting the gut are trillions of non-human cells essential for the proper functioning of our bodies. Residing within our bodies are entire communities, all, hopefully, working synergistically. Arising from our gut is our intuition. Our "gut" feelings prove to be what we know to be true.

We now recognize the importance of digestive well-being. Regarding a world processed via the gut, digestive protocols are often referred to as the 3 Rs: *Remove, Repair, Replenish*.

We *Remove* – we limit our intake of foods that may be injurious. A hypoallergenic diet provides the body a respite. Before eating, we pause, giving our bodies a moment to shift out of the "fight or flight" of our sympathetic nervous system into our vegetative nervous system. We meditate. We open to the enlightenment inherent in every cell of our body. We cultivate the wisdom of recognizing what nourishes us and the wisdom of letting go. Suzuki Roshi reminds us that wisdom is not something we learn, but instead is a readiness born out of mindfulness.

We *Repair* – we heal the lining of the intestines, the semipermeable membrane that is designed to allow the release of only the most minute particles of our digested food into our bloodstream. In ad-

dition to recycling water and other reusable substances, the digestive system must break down toxins rendering them benign and excrete that which is dangerous or no longer needed.

In Leaky Gut Syndrome, it is believed, particles of food not adequately broken down escape into the bloodstream, and can be misidentified as "other" and attacked as an invader. This process is thought to be a factor responsible for the alarming increase in autoimmune illness, where the body attacks and damages its own tissues. Auto-immune illness seems to be a metaphor for these very troubled times in which we live.

Essential to good digestion is adequate chewing, breaking up our food into manageable pieces. Now is the time to thoroughly digest our lives, penetrating each moment completely. We must recognize our stories and know when we are hooked, when we are confused and deluded. Suzuki Roshi, in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, writes, "When you do something, you should burn yourself completely, like a good bonfire, leaving no trace of yourself. You should not be a smoky fire. If you do not burn yourself completely, a trace of yourself will be left in what you do. This is the goal of our practice."

We *Replenish* – we replace the beneficial organisms, we re-inoculate the gut. We trust that our body knows which foods nourish us. We invite an increasing awareness of our habitual stories and the ability to know when we are hooked, when we are confused and deluded, when we become a "smoky fire." We explore tools that help us open to our lives and penetrate each moment. We gather in community, we create sangha. We cultivate and water those seeds that deeply nourish us, that awaken our hearts. We allow transformation of our poisons. We bring compassionate curiosity as we find out for ourselves what *is* good medicine.

– Patricia Wolff



AWAKENING THE NON-ABIDING MIND

Okumura Roshi's Wide-Ranging Talk on Dogen's Poetry

Rev. Shohaku Okumura illuminated Dogen Zenji's waka poem "You Must Awaken the Non-Abiding Mind" in a Tuesday evening lecture in August. Waka poems are 31-syllable verse and a precursor to the more well-known haiku form of Japanese poetry. Similar to haiku, waka poems do not require rhyme and are meant to summon images of a single moment. Over the centuries, waka verse was written more to capture emotions than to explain or define them. Often lacking a narrator, both haiku and waka are suited to evoking the insights from meditation practice and realization.

Although Dogen did not use waka as part of his teaching, the 60 waka that have been discovered provide insight into his practice and stand as stellar poems in the tradition. The title “You Must Awaken the Non-Abiding Mind” refers to a line in the *Diamond Sutra*, one of the seminal sutras in the Mahayana tradition. Rev. Okumura’s process of translation provides the connection to the Buddhist tradition from both images and references in the poem. In his talk, Okumura Roshi traced the origin of suffering from dissatisfaction with things-as-they are to the attachment of a separate self.



Awakening non-abiding mind is the experience of the reality of emptiness which is the subject of the *Diamond Sutra*.

“You Must Awaken the Non-Abiding Mind”

The comings and going
Of the water fowl
Leave no trace.
Yet the paths it follows
Are never forgotten.

Compressed, rich and summoning a range of Buddhist teaching, Dogen’s waka evokes the Genjo Koan: “No trace of enlightenment remains, and this no-trace continues endlessly.”

— Mark Orrisch

TAKING THE GREAT LEAP: DEATH, DYING AND LIVING IN EVERY MOMENT

Taking the Great Leap, a workshop on the practice of life and death in the Buddhist tradition, will be held Saturday, October 7th at the Carl Cherry Center. Through talks, zazen, experiential exercises and discussions, Rev. Myogen Kathryn Stark will explore the capacity to meet the most profound moment of human experience and discover—by turning towards the truth of our mortality—the teachings inherent in death.



Rev. Stark’s workshop will guide us in investigating our relationship to our own mortality as well as in working with the dying. Highlighting the immediacy of death as an aspect of everyday life, the day will provide insight into our deepest concerns about mortality: What does it mean to die? How do we find meaning and courage in life when we come up against the end of life? Participants will examine questions such as these through the

lens of Buddhist perspectives, teachings and contemporary practices on end-of-life care.

Rev. Stark began Soto practice in 1990 and received priest ordination from Sobun Katherine Thanas and dharma transmission from Shosan Victoria Austin. She currently leads a sitting group in Sonoma and works as an interfaith hospice chaplain in the Sonoma and Napa areas. October 7th, 10:30 am to 4:00 pm. Fee: \$50-75, sliding scale; work scholarships available. Please bring your own lunch. For information: (831) 915-4736.

BOOKS BEHIND BARS: BUDDHIST BOOKS SOUGHT FOR PRISON PROJECT

Buddhist books can be a lifeline for inmates in jails and institutions in Monterey County. Monterey Bay Zen Center members and friends can support the effort to provide Buddhist study and practice by donating books to Shogen Danielson’s prison project. Rev. Danielson serves as volunteer chaplain at the Salinas Valley State Prison through the Buddhist Pathways Prison Project and has provided Zen practice and teaching in three of the four maximum security yards for the last 19 months. Paperback Buddhist books can be received on Friday, November 17th at Brown Bag Zen, 11:30 to 1:30 p.m. at Saint James Episcopal Church, High and Hellam Streets, Monterey. Information: 375-7826.

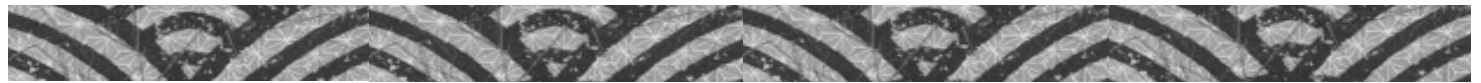
THE HUNGRY GHOST CEREMONY: ACKNOWLEDGING THE WORLD OF CRAVING

The Hungry Ghost Ceremony, the ritual feeding of “hungry ghosts,” will be held Tuesday, October 31st, at the Monterey Bay Zen Center. In Buddhist mythology, hungry ghosts are creatures who, because of their past actions, can never satisfy their hunger or thirst. Their mouths are so tiny they can’t fit any food in them, and when they try to drink, water turns to fire before they swallow it. The hungry ghost symbolizes our own unresolved karma and the tenacious quality of craving. The ceremony represents both our willingness to bring karma to resolution and the gentle accepting approach we need to achieve any resolution. The Hungry Ghost Ceremony is also a time to remember those who have died and to be thankful for their having lived. Costumes are encouraged! Children are welcome! Following the ceremony, refreshments will be served.

BRANCHING STREAMS FLOW IN CHICAGO 2017 CONFERENCE

I am grateful to have attended the 2017 Branching Streams Conference hosted by Ancient Dragon Zen Gate in Chicago, Illinois, in early September. Forty participants, representing 20 of the 75 Branching Streams Sanghas from around the world, attended the three-day meeting! Throughout the conference we sat zazen morning and evening, took meals together, explored the environs of Chicago’s Lincoln Park neighborhood and created a larger, provisional sangha.

Rev. Peg Syverson presented “Right Use of Power” as developed by Cedar Barstow. While one might imagine that “right use of power” pertains only to those with power, we learned that we all have power to influence, effect change and transform situations. We all have some degree of inherent personal power, influence attributed by our roles and the status power conferred by our culture.



Rev. Taigen Dan Leighton spoke on bodhisattva social action, highlighting issues of climate breakdown, racism (i.e. collective karma and white privilege), and endless wars. He provided several Dharma resources in Soto Zen and Mahayana teachings emphasizing our bodhisattva vows that include everyone. As an example, in Dharma Hall Discourse 434 in *The Extensive Record*, Dogen writes: “The family style of all buddhas and ancestors is to first arouse the vow to save all living beings by removing suffering and providing joy.”

We were blessed with a panel of four sangha representatives who shared examples of social action programming including “undoing whiteness,” “undoing patriarchy,” prison work, multi-faith engagement, and urban farming groups.

The final morning, Rev. Syverson presented an overview of “Appreciative Inquiry” as developed by David Cooperrider, Ph.D. She proposed that “Appreciative Inquiry” is the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. The model involves the art and practice of crafting and asking unconditional positive questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to “apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential.”

Branching Streams Elder Les Kaye spoke on the value of Suzuki Roshi/Soto Zen tradition of selflessness and authenticity. He reminded us that each of us is responsible for our own life and the community we live in. This is Zen practice.

— Rev. Shogen Danielson

JUKAI: THE ENDEAVOR TO LIVE A WIDER LIFE

Jukai is the bodhisattva initiation ceremony in which Zen practitioners openly receive and acknowledge the 16 precepts as an ongoing path in their lives. The Jukai ceremony is, in the broadest sense, a deeply personal and public acknowledgment to take up the bodhisattva way and live a wider life.



On August 29th, three members of Monterey Bay Zen Center received “serene names,” lineage papers, and Buddha’s robe and took up the endeavor to align themselves with the Buddha Way. Ingrid Aquino, Guy Riina and Dina Stansbury received the precepts from Rev. Robert Reese. Also seated at the preceptor’s table were Rev. Sara Hunsaker, who led the Winter Practice Period and was the group’s principal sewing teacher, and Diane Wells, who provided invaluable support in sewing assistance and instruction. Both Sara and Diane have generously and skillfully guided the three initiates over the past ten months.

Ingrid Aquino received the Dharma name Joho Taikan (Constant Walk/Truth Insight); Guy Riina’s Dharma name is Choan Tetsugen (Morning Hermitage/Penetrated Source); and Dina Stansbury’s is Yakushin Seido (Medicine Heart/Clear Way).

Ingrid Aquino reflected on the process of becoming lay ordained:

Amazing what happens when one decides to really LIVE the precepts. I found myself questioning my actions, even to the point of not taking succulent cuttings in public. What I like about the precepts is that they are not black or white. There were many situations where I came to observe myself and realized I needed to be more understanding/compassionate toward this person/situation. Studying the precepts gave me a chance to discern myself and make changes as soon as I realized I was wrong.

Dina Stansbury wrote:

The precepts have a way of sneaking up on me. I will be saying something, thinking or involved in some activity, when suddenly I’m jolted into the awareness that there could be another way – one I never realized. Diane Eshin Rizzetto’s idea about the “dead spot,” the moment of not knowing, when anything is possible; the idea of “darkness,” or approaching situations without preconceptions – are ideas, activities and practices that have opened my mind. With these insights, strengthened by the notion that “there is no shame in thoughts,” comes the realization that without the need for defenses, there is the possibility to simply see myself as I am. With gratitude to all of my teachers and to our sangha for their generosity.

Guy Riina offered a poem:

Jukai, in real time:
Bathe regularly,
this body and mind
alone only sometimes
take forever

Karma twists been baking
too many cooks to recall
mistakes burns fantasies
we fully avow, repeat
as needed now

Rakusu sewing bits and pieces
learning to play the needle and thread
from teachers who love to play
in the skillful harmony of love
and patient attention

Refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha
Oh dear preceptor and sangha of healing
tenderness, wisdom, generosity
tears of gratitude flow sweetened
with love.

Thank you for taking us across.



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MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTER

PO Box 3173, Monterey, CA 93942

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE

We meet Tuesday evenings, Monday and
Thursday mornings at the Cherry Center,
4th and Guadalupe in Carmel.

Tuesday evening schedule:

Zazen 6:30
Kinhin (walking) 7:10
Service 7:20
Lecture/discussion 7:30-8:30

Monday, Thursday mornings:

Zazen 7am
(followed by service and soji)

Zazen instruction first Tuesday of
each month at 5:30pm

Ordinary Recovery, Sats, 9-10am
Cherry Center, Carmel

Fearless Fathers, Tuesdays, 5:30
p.m. (415) 531-2090

Brown Bag Zen, Fridays 12:15-1:15
St. James Church, Monterey

**Mountains and Rivers Medita-
tion**, Oct 25, Nov 22, Dec 13, 27
7-8:30pm

Patricia 659-3042

Chicken Coop Zendo, Thursdays
5:30-7:00pm - 659-2365

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| Vasubandhu's Yogacara | Sun, Oct. 1, 9:45-11:45 am | CV Park, Activity House |
| Taking the Great Leap | Sat, Oct. 7, 10:30-4 pm | Carl Cherry Center |
| Vasubandhu's Yogacara | Sun, Oct. 15, 8:30 to 10:00 am | CV Park, Activity House |
| Training in Zen Forms | Tues, Oct. 17, 5:30 pm | Carl Cherry Center |
| Compassionate Communication | Sat, Oct. 28th, 6:00 pm | St.James Church, Mty |
| Vasubandhu's Yogacara | Sun, Oct. 29, 9:45 to 11:45 am | CV Park, Activity House |
| Hungry Ghost Ceremony | Tues, Oct. 31st, 6:30 pm | Carl Cherry Center |
| Compassionate Communication | Sat, Nov 11, 6:00 pm | St.James Church |
| Vasubandhu's Yogacara | Sun, Nov.12, 9:45 to 11:45 am | CV Park, Activity House |
| Suzuki Roshi Memorial | Tues, Dec. 4, 6:30 pm | Carl Cherry Center |
| Nonviolent Communication | Sat, Dec. 9, 12:30 to 5:00 pm | Carl Cherry Center |