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*Bluebells around The Buddha of Impermanence at The Place of Peace Dharma House*

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*Statue of the Buddha in the Abhaya (fearlessness) mudra in the morning light at the Order's newest Priory in Redding, California [\[see news\]](#)*

## Editors Introduction

This issue contains articles on training with depression, anxiety and fear, plus a personal perspective on the relationship between spiritual practice and psychology/therapy.

These writings reflect the views and training of the individual authors finding their way in their own practice; we hope this sharing of thoughts and experience will be of help.

This theme will be continued into the next issue, with a follow up to Rev. Master Oswin's article and we hope we may have one or more other pieces on related aspects of training.

In case it is of interest; the Journal featured three articles on depression in the Summer 2012 issue. If you wish to read these, they can be found here:

<https://journal.obcon.org/articles/three-articles-on-training-with-depression/>

*With good wishes*

*Editor*

## An Odyssey through Depression

*The means of training are thousandfold,  
and pure meditation must be done.*

Great Master Dōgen, *Rules for Meditation*

Rev. Master Oswin Hollenbeck

—*Shasta Abbey, Shasta, CA–USA*—

*When visiting one of our smaller temples last year, I was asked by the prior if I might talk about or answer any questions about training with depression. As they pointed out, most if not all of our temples or meditation groups seem to have at least one person who struggles with serious depression.*

*Here in Part 1 I address training with depression from a point of view of pure meditation (serene reflection meditation). In a follow-up Part 2 I will offer some adjunct practices consonant with our tradition which I personally have found helpful, along with a recent development in my own journey and some closing thoughts. My thanks go to the numerous people who kindly reviewed the article and offered feedback. I dedicate this article to all who have been less fortunate than I in walking through these dark places.<sup>1</sup>*

## Part 1—Pure Meditation

Depression can appear to be the supreme obstacle to meditation practice and Buddhist training. Serious depression distorts our perceptions, confuses our thinking, and impairs our memory and decision-making. Given the importance of mind in meditation, can we practice the Buddha's teaching if we can't see, think, remember, or act wisely? Depression is usually the nadir in self-worth. If we have no confidence in ourselves, the teaching, or the practice, let alone faith in the possibility of Something greater, can we actually do this? Is it true that all beings, even those of us who are depressed, have the Buddha nature?

The answer to all these questions is yes, in large part because Buddhist practice is about more than the mind—it is about the Mind (Heart, Buddha nature). Although these are probably universal questions which we all experience from time to time, for the depressed person these doubts can be persistent and continuous. They can lead to deep despair, hopelessness, and sometimes suicide.

Regardless of depression's cause(s), when it's experienced, it's there. Wishing it otherwise won't make it go away. Denial is common. Depression doesn't respond to self-criticism, and judging oneself as bad or broken entrenches it. Complaining, a common tendency, is not helpful. Trying too hard to make it go away is also usually

fruitless. Trying too hard is non-acceptance. As the Buddha taught, we must find the middle way.

\*

My qualifications? I am not an authority on depression. I speak only from the experience of twenty-five years of training with this particular illness/koan—often in mild chronic form, sometimes called dysthymia, but which has several times escalated to more serious episodes. My depression is mixed with chronic illness—which came first, the chicken or the egg? Some questions may not be answerable.

My experience is that any one cause of depression, including a ‘spiritual’ or karmic one, is often threaded together with others. However, the spiritual work seems to be the same. **Everything I write here is true about everyone’s practice to some degree.** The main difference could be that the intensity of serious depression does not lift after a few days or weeks. It can be present for much longer—months, even years. I don’t know if it has an end. I continue to learn about causes and conditions that play a role in my practice and how I can address them.

\*

**Regarding formal seated meditation, continue!** This article assumes that you have an established practice, no matter how tentative. Regardless of how many of the adjunct practices described in Part 2 you try, it is still good to do some formal seated meditation. We need to have faith that



there is merit and benefit in ‘just sitting’ while at the same time letting go of any expectation of receiving benefits. This is a paradox all meditators find to be true. Developing a relationship with a teacher you have confidence in is also an immense help. I can’t say how grateful I am for persevering with my meditation through dark times and for true spiritual friends who continually helped me and didn’t give up on me. And I regret when I have not been as assiduous as I might have been.

**Sitting still is the serenity aspect of ‘serene reflection meditation.’** The mind is often compared to a quiet lake or a mirror. Just as dirt muddies a mirror or a lake and ripples distort its reflective clarity, so the emotive aspects of depression create waves of fear, gloom, pessimism, doubt, dread, and fatalism. Cognitively, as described in the opening paragraph, depression affects how we think. All meditators train at times with confusion, indecisiveness, misperception, and forgetfulness, but with depression it can seem like the volume is turned up so loud that it drowns out any sense of peace, certainty, or deeper refuge. Yet we need to continue to make the effort to sit still so that the water or mirror can settle. Ironically, this can’t be done by force. One has to allow it to happen – by letting go, by weakening the repetition of these emotional and mental habits. Even tiny efforts have an effect; the smallest raindrops dripping from the eaves of a roof eventually wear holes in stone. We can do the same.

**Only through regular practice over time can our type of meditation yield fruit, so gently, kindly persevere!** The Buddha said that **patience** is the most difficult quality to cultivate, so this project may take a while, perhaps longer than we can even imagine. One of my favorite cartoons which is applicable to all of us on the path shows an aspirant standing before an old wizened guru at a trailhead winding up a mountain. The master's advice? "You'd better pack a sack lunch."

Persist! The depressed mind can persuade us easily that today we don't need to meditate because we woke up feeling good. Then on days when we wake up feeling terrible, it will quickly convince us that we don't really feel well enough to meditate today. So on which days do we meditate? It reminds me of the story related in an American folk music fiddle tune, "The Arkansaw Traveler." The fiddler was traveling on horseback through the Ozarks, a poverty-stricken mountainous region in Arkansas and Missouri with a culture similar to Appalachia. He came across an old man sitting in his rocking chair on the porch of his house with a big hole in the roof. The traveler asked him why he didn't mend the hole. The man replied that when it was raining, it was too wet, and when the sun was shining, he didn't need to! I think you get my point. We can always find an excuse.

The **length of time** you sit is not as important as simply doing it. One senior monk of our Order used to advocate '**the thirty second minimum.**' It's said that getting to the cushion is one half the practice. I don't know if either of

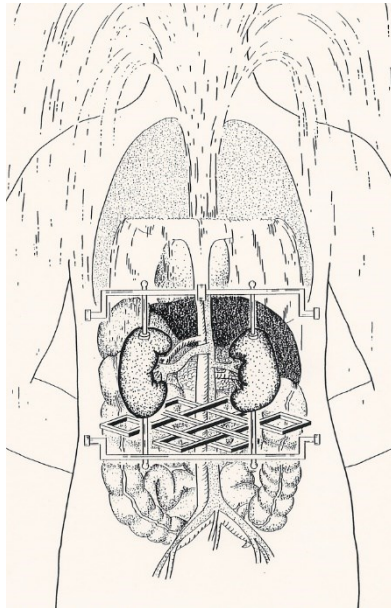
those measurements are precise, but making the effort to physically stop in our routine and literally sit down is fundamental to the practice. Find some way to keep up your meditation, regardless of how far it may seem from the ideal. Doing so is essential, and here's two other reasons why.

One, **the fruit of patience is worth it** and is usually twofold in itself. First, I have found that it often takes several years to understand the core intention behind an action that resulted in considerable suffering; and it has often taken me many years to uncover some of the root sources of my kōan, the reasons why the skandhas which make up 'me' are the way they are, why 'I' am depressed. If I had given up, I don't know that I would have had the retrospective insight to resolve some central issues of my life. Second, usually it is only as a result of this struggle to understand and patiently bear karmic consequence and realign my life that I begin to feel the peace of mind and heart that the Buddha promised in the Third Noble Truth.

Two, we need to develop **faith, willingness, and courage**, all of which are not overnight virtues. Quietly looking at a wall, in itself, is trusting that somehow there has to be an answer and that the world is bigger than our own suffering—that's faith. Doing it regularly helps undermine the pessimism often associated with depression. Training with depression also requires powerful will, the willingness simply to go on, regardless of our despair, no matter how bad it is or how long it takes. That's the great value of simply

getting to your seat. That alone mightily strengthens one's will.

In Buddhist teaching, the **seat of willingness** is considered to be connected with the kidneys. The accompanying Plate LXVI from *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom*<sup>2</sup> illustrates how the kidneys were likened by Rev. Master Jiyu to a great pump that keeps flowing the Water of the Spirit (*chi* or *qi*) or what one monk calls 'liquid compassion.'



She would often stress the importance of a soft, open-hearted, yet determined 'willingness'—like water, which ultimately cannot be stopped and always flows on—rather than a hard, brittle self-generated 'will.' The kidneys are not

only associated with despair, they are also the seat of fear. In continuing to be willing to both sit and move in the dark, we call on the help of Great Compassion, “*Of daring ones, the most joyous.*” This is courage: “*Om (Peace) to the One who leaps beyond all fear!*”<sup>3</sup>

\*

**The fundamental approach to training is compassionate all-acceptance.** Embrace yourself with the non-judgmental mind of compassion. The ‘all’ in ‘all-acceptance’ is big – it’s all-inclusive. If you’re the adventurous sort appreciating challenges, think of this training as radical all-acceptance.

**This all-acceptance is often described as ‘turning the stream of compassion within.’** It’s imperative to develop appreciation, faith, and confidence in and for oneself as a human being endowed with Buddha nature. Useful reminders for me, employed like mantras, (see Part 2) have been: “*All-acceptance is the gateless gate*” and “*In pure love there is no judgment.*” Another favorite is from the *Shurangama Sutra*: “*That which perceives the error is not itself in error.*” The fact that you recognize that you are depressed is evidence that there is ‘something else’ besides your pain and suffering. They are not all of you. You also have/are a mind/Mind that is enlightened, pure, and clear and that can see. Try as much as possible to take refuge in That. Sit still and be bright.

\*

**“Be bright.” We need both stillness and brightness in our practice.** The power and effectiveness of serene reflection meditation depend on the fundamental unity of these two qualities. How can one be bright when one feels awful and everything seems pitch black? It’s helpful first, to remember that there is a distinction between feeling and being. One of my favorite bumper stickers is “You don’t have to believe everything you think.” Thinking as a mental activity can include feeling, so perhaps we also need a sticker that reads, “You don’t have to believe everything you feel.”

**Being bright is different than feeling good. Feeling is a part of us, but not our entire identity.** It’s natural, it’s one of the five ‘skandhas’ which the Buddha presented as a cluster or aggregate of types of human experience that together make up what we identify as and label a ‘human being.’ And these aggregates are flowing, fluid, changing from one moment to the next. Our thinking is one skandha, our feelings are another, our actions are another—all are in flux and are interrelated. In particular, feeling is the consequence of our intentional past actions. Thinking and feeling both manifest in body, speech, and mind. If we choose to act (intention), we’re going to eventually feel the fruit or results. So we can’t help feeling—and not to feel would be to be inhuman. To avoid feeling would be like trying to stop a river with our hands.

However, in the midst of feeling, **we have a choice as to how we ‘are.’** Each moment is a choice, and those choices

are the creators of (future) consequence. Note that thinking is an intentional act. Feeling is not; however, **to indulge feeling is**. Even if we are in the most horrible ‘state of mind’ (feeling), we can choose to be positive. This choice is a mental act, but not exactly a ‘thought’ as we usually use that word; it is not thinking about something. It’s more an attitude or frame of mind that through our will, our intention, we choose to ‘turn on.’ To do this is not easy—an understatement—and often takes great effort and many repetitions. But it can be done. In any moment, we may ‘look down’ and act in a negative way – mentally, verbally or physically. But in the next moment we have another choice. What will we act-do-think now? In Japanese Zen, there is the saying, “Seven times down, eight times up.” I would multiply that by several thousand or million. This is simply the process of human activity: each of us is constantly making choices. That’s the wonder and great opportunity of human embodiment, and this is true of all conscious life.

Another aspect of being bright is to **not allow ourselves to get distracted** by the many other attractive and probably more pleasant options available to us, especially in our modern world where everything is just a click away. We keep bringing ourselves back to meditation, relinquishing looking for something else but also not rejecting where we are. When we notice we’ve drifted and become distracted, we return. While there may be simple karmic consequence, there’s no guilt. Nothing can tarnish our fundamental nature, that light within. Sometimes our practice is called ‘turning the light within.’

One of the direct teachings I heard Rev. Master Jiyu use frequently was “**Look up!**” She would illustrate this with a story from Marlowe’s play *Faust*, based on the German legend popularized by Goethe. Faust, a great intellectual and philosopher, made a deal with Mephistopheles, a servant of the Devil (Lucifer): if the Devil would grant him all his wishes in life, he could have his soul at death. Faust lived it up to the max: knowledge, power, sex, any and all of the sensual and mental pleasures of human life. When he came to die, the Devil showed up to collect on the bargain. Faust then went into despair as he saw the consequences of his foolishness. He looked down. He felt he was outside the grace and love of God. As he was descending into hell, he was surrounded by heavenly angels who offered him that grace and forgiveness. But he had to literally ‘look up’ to see the angels and hear the offering! Heaven was still an opportunity, if he had not judged himself as unworthy.

Sound familiar? We have the very same teachings in the exhortations to the dying:

“Do not, through feelings of unworthiness, try to flee because of your past actions, do not judge yourself before the Lord [Cosmic Buddha, the Unborn] for in Pure Love there is no judgement...Love is love; do not judge Love by your own standards of yourself...”<sup>4</sup>

As we live, so we die. Advice for death can be good for life! And simply physically looking up can make a difference.



**“Never give up.”**<sup>5</sup> These memorable words were often offered by Rev. Master Daizui, a senior of our Order. He taught us to not give up on each other or ourselves. This is an expression of the Bodhisattva vow to save all beings. I personally reflect on this teaching daily.

*To be continued in the next issue of this Journal*

#### *Notes*

1. I often address the reader as ‘you’ in order to avoid the impersonal ‘one,’ and I use ‘we’ for those who suffer from depression, especially the long-term type. Depression seems to be the same ‘animal,’ regardless of its length, cause, frequency, etc. From my reading, it seems to exist more as a spectrum of degrees rather than to consist of discrete types. On one end it includes the mild variety similar to other emotions such as anger, fear, or worry, but it can encompass longer periods of grief following a significant loss. What I offer here may be suitable for these other degrees or types. And I am not suggesting that any of these teachings are a substitute for other treatment and approaches, both of which I have found helpful at times. I am also not addressing bipolar illness.
2. Plate LXVI was first published in *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom*, 2nd ed., by Rev. Master P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett and is reprinted with permission of Shasta Abbey (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1993) p. 190.
3. *The Litany of the Great Compassionate One*, in Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, comp., *The Liturgy of the Order of Contemplatives for the Laity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1990) pp. 78-79.
4. From *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom* “The Visitation and Exhortation for the Dying and Dead I.” p. 119. A fellow monk recently mentioned to me that when Rev. Master Jiyu first introduced these teachings in the 1970s, she emphasized that they were for use in daily life and not just at the time of death.
5. Rev. Master Daizui MacPhillamy was a senior disciple of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett and succeeded her as Head of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives. He died in 2003.

## Training with Depression and Other Mental Health Issues

Rev. Master Leoma Hague

—Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory—UK—

*[This article](#) has grown out of several conversations that I've had with various members of the Sangha in recent years, which led to a Discussion Morning at the Priory in January 2018 (and my thanks go to those people who attended the discussion and made valuable contributions). This article, like the discussion, focusses mainly on depression, but most of what is mentioned could be applied to any mental health issue. It is offered in the hope that it may be helpful to a wider audience.*

When we have been training for some time and we find that we are still contending with a condition like depression, we may feel a sense of failure or inadequacy and doubts may arise, either about the practice or our ability to do it. “Meditation hasn’t solved my depression.” “I shouldn’t still be depressed after all this time – I must be a dreadful trainee.” “I can’t be doing it right – what else should I be doing?” These negative judgements add an extra layer of suffering. This can be compounded when we are encouraged to be bright-minded or to sit with a bright mind.

Meditation may not have an obvious immediate effect on depression. It's not a quick fix, although sometimes meditation can have a noticeable impact on our mood, perhaps helping us to be calmer and stiller. But that's actually not the most important thing. Doing meditation can be thought of more like following a healthy diet. When we take up such a diet, we are often looking to its long-term effects and trusting that it's doing some good, even if we're not necessarily aware of the benefits. In fact, for much of the time, the diet may be a slog, although sometimes we may be motivated to continue by an obvious improvement, such as weight loss.

With meditation in the context of depression, we are also in for the long haul. It's not that meditation necessarily solves or gets rid of the depression, but rather that there is an acceptance that depression is part of what is here now. By meditating, there is a softening, a loosening, an opening out, that brings us to this acceptance. Then the depression matters less; it's more in the background and we learn to live with it. Through meditation, there is a falling away of how much "how I feel" matters. Then, however we feel, however unpleasant it may be, we can cope with it, live with it. This is actually what it means to be bright-minded: to keep going, however we are feeling, because we know that there is something more important than how we are feeling.

In zazen, we keep coming back to being fully present here now. We ask "what is this here now?" and whatever we find, whatever is present, we accept it completely and sit

with it. There is just this here now, not what we think should be here now or what we would like to be here now. We acknowledge and accept it, without judgement. We let it be, let it pass through, let it go, let it fall away. The vital aspect of zazen is letting go of deliberate thinking, the trains of thought that we so readily get caught up in. When the thoughts start to ensnare us, we don't have to believe them, but instead we can question them and disengage from them. This is part of the exploration of "what is this?"

As we go on in practice and as we understand more what our mind is doing, we can do this more readily and let the thoughts go. Then we can be with the feelings that are present and often this means sitting with discomfort of varying degrees. But if we're not adding fuel to the feelings, not feeding them with the thoughts, we become aware that they too come and go. The feelings loosen up and no longer seem solid or fixed. Eventually they can be known to be flimsy, insubstantial, impermanent and they can dissolve and disperse. In this way, through zazen, the thoughts and the feelings come to disturb us less and they matter less. They are more like the passing scenery and they don't need to be the driving force in our life. There may still be plenty of times when we seem unable to completely let go of what arises. But then we can soften whatever is present, so that there are no hard edges. We can let it be, in open hands, and gently accept it. If we do this, eventually it will loosen and disperse.

An important aspect of sitting in this way is to have compassion and kindness for ourselves, along with much patience. When we sit in zazen and explore “what is this?” we may not like what we find. We come to realise how unpleasant it can be inside our heads, with all the judgements, opinions, criticism and complaining that goes on. Most uncomfortable of all can be the voice of self-blame and self-criticism, especially when we make mistakes and “get it wrong, yet again”. Then, we can have a tendency to beat ourselves up and give ourselves a hard time. Developing compassion for ourselves begins with noticing all of this, gently acknowledging it and not judging it. We can question the unkind and unhelpful thoughts and let them go. We can come to see how fear underlies so much of this and so we can have more sympathy for ourselves. We just sit in the middle of whatever feelings are present, such as fear, anger, or despair. We sit still and let zazen do its work, so that the compassion that is at the heart of our being can show itself.

In zazen, there is the bit that we can do something about: we work on being as still as we can with whatever arises, so that we can explore “what is this?” There is also a bit that is outside our control. An analogy that I’ve found helpful recently is to think of zazen as a bowl of water. We work to keep the water as still as possible. Thoughts can arise and pass through without affecting the water, like a needle being dropped into the bowl. But more often, what arises is like a pebble thrown into the bowl, with plenty of ripples. If we just sit as still as we can, the pebble can settle at the bottom of the bowl and we can accept the pebble’s presence,

let it be. We can trust zazen to do its work and eventually the pebble will dissolve. If our job is to be as still as we can, sometimes we may need to employ skilful means to help us. If we're very agitated, for example, we may choose to do some walking meditation before we go and sit. In the case of depression and anxiety, there may be a role for counselling or psychotherapy and/or medication, to help us become still enough to sit with what is arising.

As human beings, we want to understand why. "Why am I like this?" "Why am I having to deal with this?" We think that when we know why, the problem will be solved and it will go away. But something more is needed: the letting go that is found in the depths of zazen. Understanding certainly helps and so counselling and psychotherapy can play an important part in managing depression or anxiety. Understanding can bring us more rapidly to acceptance and to having compassion for ourselves and for what we are having to deal with. That understanding can enable us to sit still with what arises, so that we can explore "what is this?" Then we can be with what is and we can let zazen do its job. It is in the heart of zazen that the necessary transformation and falling away takes place.

So, it is fine to consider taking any external help that may be available. Any of us may need such help at some stage of our life. It may be that we just need a friend to talk with. Or we may need to try professional counselling or psychotherapy or another of the talking therapies. Or perhaps we require medication to help us, at least for a while.

Antidepressants are part of the help that is available. Only we can know whether the benefits outweigh the side effects in our own specific case; only we are sitting in the middle of the particular conditions that make up our life. It's the same process when deciding whether or not to take any other medication, e.g. painkillers. Quality of life is an important consideration: what is my quality of life when I'm not on the antidepressant and how might this be different on medication? To start taking medication may seem like conceding defeat or admitting failure, but from another perspective, it may actually be a means of having compassion for ourselves. We do our best to sit still with "what is it good to do?" and we make a decision. Whatever skilful means we may employ, it's for the time being, not necessarily a lifetime's commitment – we can continue to check from time to time whether it's still good to carry on with it.

If depression is part of our koan, what we are training with, then it is also our gateway to the truth. One of our Sangha expressed this very well when they wrote that training "opens up the contracted state of depression into one of hope and potential and a bigger perspective. I tend to say to myself nowadays 'these feelings are there for a reason, let me just sit with them and listen if there is something they are trying to tell me'." In zazen, we sit with what is and explore the sense of "me". We come to see that whatever arises or whatever seems to make up "me" in this moment is not as substantial as we thought. It's not nothing, but it's not something either; it is ungraspable. We continue to explore

this, not by analysing, in a subject/object way, but by direct experiencing, without separation, without division. Whatever this is here now, however unpleasant, we can come to know that it is the truth, it is not separate from the truth, and so it becomes our gateway. This takes time, but with patience and persistence, we can know that this here now is enough, however unsatisfactory or inadequate our “self” seems to be. Whatever we are experiencing right now is our gateway; there is no other. We can only dwell where we are, be where we are. As we continue the exploration of zazen, the questioning of “what is this?” becomes second nature. We may still experience feelings of depression or anxiety, but we can live with them. By sitting with these feelings, in the heart of zazen, there is an immediacy that helps us to go beyond the churning of the mind. This, as it is, is enough.



## The Most Imperfect Ring-down

Teresa Dorey

—*Jersey-Channel Islands*—

Anyone who has experienced intense anxiety in the form of panic attacks will know how this manifests: the racing heartbeat, hands shaking, difficulty breathing and speaking. As a lay trainee I train with a meditation practice; it is private and personal. Ceremonial practice is a different dimension of training – letting go of the ego as self-consciousness is a challenge intrinsic to this form of training. This may come easily to musicians and those comfortable or familiar with performing, but for individuals who experience high levels of anxiety, the ceremonial dimension is often a ‘no go’ area.

We can witness beauty and stillness in the ceremonial offerings of sangha, but in particular in our local groups, we can also see awkwardness, a series of mistakes; this is the offering. I know that as precentor I am shaky and prone to making mistakes – this is the form my offering takes. It can take years for people to feel able to volunteer to participate in this way, to trust their peers to see them struggle. It took

years of training with my anxiety before I overcame severe anxiety and felt I could shakily offer incense.

As trainees sometimes we are asked to take on a ceremonial role. Letting go of fear, being willing to make mistakes, being prepared to do something badly, is difficult. Singing some wrong notes, sounding erratic ring-downs; I feel disappointed. But I have wholeheartedly offered the best my body can do, and I know fellow sangha members understand this; there is a collective empathy. Ceremonial practice affirms and celebrates our Sōtō Zen training, but is also a deeply interconnecting domain of training that we are told points away from self and other. As a trainee, taking on a role is an opportunity to go beyond ‘self’ defence mechanisms in a trusting environment. In stepping outside of defending my ‘self’, I am trusting the practice and treading new territory that in simple terms goes beyond what I am comfortable with. By working with both respect for the ceremony and with the edge of my resistance, I feel can go deeper spiritually; this is where I am in my journey.

Reflections on Practice  
While on Retreat in the US.

Rev. Kyōsei Kempinsky

—*Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey, Northumberland-UK*—

In the winter of 2016 I arrived in the US and stayed with the Shasta Abbey community for nine months. During my stay I was offered the opportunity to spend some time at one of the hermitages, to explore and reflect on living amongst the wild life there: bears, rattlesnakes, mountain lions, deer, coyote, squirrels and with the nearest neighbours living some distance away. I found it a very different environment to living at Throssel with the gentle rolling hills and less dangerous wild animals.

When I arrived and settled in at the hermitage, the forest seemed to be tranquil. It had been mentioned that if I hear twigs breaking, to walk quietly in the other direction as it might be a bear (although they are mostly nocturnal.) So the first day I ventured out for a walk, when I heard a few twigs break in the distance, the thought came up, what animal was approaching? ...and tied in with the thought was uneasiness.

When we are willing to let thoughts and emotions surface without trying to change how they appear in our mind and to let them pass through, we are not driven by our fabricated stories; this is to sit still without being moved by them. Emotions of being worried or concerned, fearful or uneasy and so forth can drive us when we follow our old tendencies – or we can discover how to work with them without avoiding or being engulfed by our conditioning. I have seen when not grounded in this moment how tension in the body or memories of the past are triggered and mingle with imagination, creating an impression of something to be concerned about or something to fear.

One of the days as I returned from a walk with relief, I saw a large stag with beautiful antlers come around the corner of the hermitage. He walked slowly and we both stopped in our tracks; he was in no hurry and turned around to walk down towards the forest and disappeared into the rugged landscape.

On another occasion while walking in the distance I saw someone with two dogs walking amongst the trees. The first thought that came to mind was to greet them but I was caught up with being cautious and saw how I allowed those thoughts to get in the way of perhaps a friendly conversation.

Then there were other occasions where I learned much from the wild life. While sitting outside on the raised decking under an umbrella as the sun was high in the sky, I looked up from reading a book and saw a deer and a stag.

The deer was below the decking and she came so close, about a foot away, and we looked at each other. My mind was not excited by the encounter, fear in all its forms did not arise; it was calm, uncluttered and so natural. I remained silent as there was no need to speak; we were on equal terms. Eventually the deer turned away and went to rest under a wooden structure.

I find fear in its various guises is generated by past thoughts, experiences and by imagination; a way of running from the past to the future and being enmeshed or entangled in the scenario, rather than the ability to let it be. Investigating how the mind tries to create something out of fear is to see how debilitating it is, as if one is constricted or confined. On closer investigation, the simple practice to let the fear be rather than being carried off by it shows how momentary it is and it does subside. An old wise monk once explained fear to be as if we are in a self-made cage within our mind; all we need to do is let go of the illusion and come out of the cage; we can see how transient the fear is.

A number of years ago I heard how monks in Asia live in the forest for a while so that they can work with their fears; to me it felt the same as my living in this forest. Although fear can be a help in the right context living in the wildness; I would not walk out at dusk or dawn when animals go hunting for food; I would not put myself at unnecessary risk. It was also quite clear that to venture out for a walk rather than not venturing out was the best way to break the cycle. Letting things be, what became apparent was how I projected

thoughts intermingled with images which got the emotions going. For me the process of thoroughly investigating how fear projects mental images within our minds, whether in pictorial or word form, is delving a little deeper into the fathomlessness of Being.

There are ways which are helpful to work with fear rather than letting it be in control of us; numerous stories and explanations show how to deal with fear. There are many images of the Buddha holding up his right hand showing fearlessness and protection. One saying I came across is “The Enlightened Mind has no fear” and other descriptions are: “Not to be so engrossed in me or mine and worried about future events” and in the *Invocation of Achalanatha*, “By our own wills and vigilance may we our fetters cut away”. It is not about waiting for someone or something to come and take away our fears, we have to do the inner work.

Another skilful way is to think of sending loving kindness to ourselves and other beings, whether two or four-footed, rather than being caught up with my story line. What I find of use is to breathe deeply; gently the air comes and goes out, a softening around the mouth, as well as the shoulders and stomach; coming into the body, pausing, listening attentively to what my heart’s direction is pointing to. I do not possess it and it guides me, with reverence, gladness and well-being, not only for me but for everything.

Towards the end of my stay, which passed by so quickly, it was heart-warming to hear the music of the forest;

leaves rustling in the gentle wind, thunder rolling in the distance which brought a gentle rain to a parched land. The air was fresh and the earth turned a deep terracotta as the sun set and the cicadas began their melody.

## Departure and Integrated Return?

### A personal investigation of the relationship between Zen practice and psychology

Rev. Master Leandra Robertshaw

—*Throssel hole Buddhist Abbey, Northumberland—UK—*

I came to monastic training after 20 years working in the British National Health Service as a clinical psychologist/psychotherapist. During half this time I was also practicing within our tradition of Sōtō Zen and often found myself contemplating the seeming overlap between the spiritual path and psychology. From some perspectives there were similarities but from others the differences were stark and important not to gloss over in an “it’s all the same really” sort of stance. I was aware of tendencies both to exaggerate similarities or to deny any resonance. I no longer remember with any clarity what conclusions, if any, I came to earlier but here are some of my current thoughts.

Both psychotherapy and following a Buddhist practice can unearth patterns of behaviour that lead to suffering. However, becoming cognisant of our deeply rooted habitual tendencies is only the starting point for then we need to work



with not continuing these patterns, not being pushed around by them. In psychotherapy or counselling, people may be encouraged to find strategies to change their behaviour and, some, if they succeed in making real differences in how they relate to others and to the world, which lessen everybody's suffering, may find themselves drawn to contemplating how to live a preceptual life and thus look to a religious practice that invites us to cease from evil.

In our tradition of Sōtō Zen, as handed down to us by Great Master Dōgen, the core of our practice is to awaken, that is to say to find enlightenment within delusion. Enlightenment is not about replacing delusion with enlightenment but in coming to “know” that we are enlightened from the first; however, we still need to deal with, or negotiate, our delusions in a manner that is constantly illuminated and clarified by enlightenment. This is an ongoing process of practice which continues ad infinitum. We can come to realise that delusion and enlightenment are insubstantial, in the sense of not having independent self-natures; rather, they are dependent on each other – working companions that benefit one another. Delusion and enlightenment are not two, and coming to realise this is a movement towards understanding what non-duality really means.

We can begin to see how thoughts and their concomitant emotions, if they are not penetrated and therefore allowed to be seen as insubstantial and passing things, can bring about the expression of greed, hatred and

delusion. Through spiritual practice and behaviour change we begin to learn to respond in ways that do not lead to further suffering for self and others. This is training in the Vinaya (methods for “becoming tame”) and requires a profound level of commitment to the process of taking self-understanding to a very deep level where we are no longer constructing a substantial self; rather, we begin to find the courage to let go of the psychological strategies we have been using to protect our frightened, small selves.

Karen Horney, the psychoanalyst, had some interesting thoughts about the neurotic self, the self with a small “s” and the real Self, the Self with a large “S”. She describes the real Self as moving towards self-realisation, whereas, the small neurotic self vacillates between a “depleted” self, which is forever striving for glory, and an “ideal” self, which is ruled by the tyranny of “should”. The neurotic self is alienated from its true core and thus is prevented from actualising its potential.<sup>1</sup>

It takes courage to let go of our sense of both a competent self, and/or an incompetent self. We learn to do this as we come to realise that we are the ones constructing these labels of how we see ourselves, or we are taking on the labels we imagine others are assigning to us. This is a difficult area to negotiate because in one sense we do have a self, we do have an individual body and mind, and in another sense we are not isolated individuals separated from other beings and from the universe. If we give credence to the possibility that we could be mistaken and that our past

karma/conditioning has resulted in us constructing unreal selves in an unreal world, we begin to see that any substantial sense of self is not as solid and immutable as we thought. With such acceptance the landscape can become wide-open which then enables us to live our lives from a different perspective. A consequence of this is that we are less reactive in our response to situations. We are, in fact, learning not to turn pain into suffering. We are learning not to reinforce past ways of being that have led to suffering for ourselves and others.

Psychological theories, such as Karen Horney's theory of neurosis, can reveal the strategies we use to defend ourselves, but I wonder if they go as far as leading us to question whether there is more to being human than single physical bodies and minds unconnected to other bodies and minds. It is important to keep questioning whether the self is illusory or not, because having a settled conviction on one side or the other can be problematic. In meditation we begin to learn to let go of self-concern and consequently discover that our horizon expands, because it is no longer limited by our sense of a small self – an isolated self, separate from other selves. A pitfall of psychotherapy can be that it may become addictive and never-ending because the extremely complex networks of cause and effect are inconceivable, beyond the level of conceptual dialogue. Also, psychotherapy has the potential of encouraging a quest for what turns out to be an unconnected, substantial me that will always need defending against the world. People can get lost down dark alleys, losing the point of the endeavour, which

is to find an end to suffering. Instead, they find themselves constructing a more intricate and highly constellated, solid self. However, this can also happen in the context of a religious practice, when a fragmented self is overlaid with a “religious self” which hides the unresolved issues.

There are pragmatic psychological approaches, for example, cognitive-behavioural therapy, that suggest techniques for dealing with panic attacks but do not necessarily address why a person is prone to having them. If panic attacks then become a thing of the past that is to be welcomed but can hardly claim to be the transformation that ends all suffering for self and other. Sōtō Zen, on the other hand, is not about fixing ourselves or unearthing in minute detail why we are as we are. It is better described as, in each and every moment, clearly seeing and accepting ourselves within the greater context of the willingness to keep training. By the time we reach adulthood we all will have developed sophisticated psychological strategies to deal with the uncertainty and unpredictability of life. For example, somebody who has a tendency to assume they are in danger, when this is not the case, may rush to appease other people. This might have been a strategy adopted by a child in the face of a critical, even violent, parent. Or, if, for instance, we have been brought up within a family with a strong work ethic, we may feel that if we are not constantly pushing ourselves to do more, we are useless. Doing may become so habitual that we do not appreciate how it has, in increasingly limiting and rigid ways, distorted and shaped who we are.

We learn to blame ourselves for being who we are, when fundamentally there is nothing wrong or bad about us.

Although taking into account our past can allow it to fall into place in the present – on the other hand, stories about oneself can become self-fulfilling prophecies given our mind’s vulnerability to the “narrative fallacy” a phrase coined by the Nobel prizewinning psychologist Daniel Kahneman<sup>2</sup>. He provides compelling evidence of how flawed stories of the past shape our views of the world and our expectation for the future. We humans constantly fool ourselves by constructing flimsy accounts of the past and then believe them to be true. Memory is far less reliable than we choose to believe it is. We believe, for example, when reminiscing about a past event, that it is our friend’s memory that is faulty, not ours. We’re certain we are right because the picture is so clear to us. However, memories are not unchanging physical traces in the brain; rather they are malleable constructs that may be rebuilt every time they are recalled. The slightly changed memory is now embedded as “real”, only to be reconstructed with the next recall. To each retelling emotional details are attached, so when the story is altered, feelings are also reshaped.

Buddhism has pointed me to a core of existential insecurity and anxiety that is beyond the content of any individual story, mine included. By seeing through our fears and desires we all can find the pathway to liberation, which opens up through the power of zazen. The grace of Buddhist meditation helps us to become more aware of the habitual

patterns of conditioning that create suffering for ourselves and others; we learn to look fears and desires in the face; to be still enough to tolerate our inherent uncertainty and the dread of annihilation of the sense of a solid, unassailable self. Perhaps, this is too tall an order for some people if they do not come to meditation with a healthy sense of ego, rather, they may be better served by some form of therapy or counselling.

Both psychotherapy and Buddhist meditation can help us to more clearly discern our own frailties and limitations so that the possibility of not acting from them is cracked open. Being human is complex and oftentimes problematic, so how best can we help ourselves negotiate the Way in any specific daily situation? All humans are profoundly ambiguous and complex beings, both Buddhas and demons. Buddha Nature is expressed differently for each and every one of us. On occasion at particular phases of our Buddhist practice, therapy could be of great value in helping us to see the patterns of behaviour that cause suffering to ourselves and to others. What therapy can offer, depending on the skill and integrity of the therapist, is, in a manner of speaking, a huge sympathetic, listening ear that reflects back to us our struggles and, in compassionately doing so, is trusting us to work out how to be with our demons in a way that enables a natural letting go, a falling away of longstanding distress. The listening ear is the listening ear of the entire world, the compassionate offering of the entire universe.

Therapy's value is not ultimately merely about two people side by side: the greater the letting go of self by the therapist, the more the interaction can be a catalyst to deepening understanding for both parties. What is of enormous value is not about the client being told what to do, but is in two people working together to find a path to the end of suffering. One offers their life experience, and the other offers their knowledge gained through training and experience as a therapist. Working together in this way requires much patience but has great benefit for both parties, for then one person is not positioning themselves as the expert on another's life and lived experience. This must surely also apply to spiritual guidance in a religious tradition. In offering spiritual guidance it behooves us to remember we can never know all the intricate complexities of another person's experience. However, we can assist them to be open and honest about what is transpiring in their hearts and minds. Then seemingly miraculously they find their own way to advise themselves about their next steps.

Psychology led me to Zen and, in part, Zen practice led to me beginning to feel ill at ease with restrictive changes in what type of therapy the National Health Service felt could be offered and how time-limited it should be. It was not only the institutional changes that disillusioned me, but also that many of the clients were simply looking for a quick fix to emotional pain. Until I became a monk my interest in whether psychology and spiritual training are mutually beneficial came from the standpoint of being a psychotherapist, I had given little thought to how

psychology might be viewed within the monastic context. I felt encouraged to contribute what I knew of human relationships and the challenges they offer to a life of Buddhist practice. Nowadays, I do not feel able to say categorically that psychology is or is not of any relevance to our religious practice. This is because it seems to depend on the individual. I know of practitioners who have been greatly helped by seeing a therapist and others who have never embarked on therapy but maybe could derive benefit from it. Yet again, others for whom it is clearly unnecessary. It is indeed very individual.

To sum up where I am currently with the debate between the paradigms of psychology and Buddhism: it seems that, although awakening is beyond anything psychotherapy/counselling can offer, therapy can have its place as a very helpful building block in the endeavour to let go of the delusion of a separate, substantial self that suffers. What a wise and compassionate therapist can offer is a non-judgemental, sympathetic ear which is attentive to the nuances of what the client says, and does not get into feeling advice must necessarily be offered. Even good advice can be unhelpful because, in the end, we all need to find our own, individual way through our suffering. The more the therapist can simply hear what is said rather than making the meeting into an encounter between two people, one the wise therapist and the other the distressed client, the more encouraging the outcome is allowed to be.



The arising of negative tendencies is not the issue; what is at issue is whether we are aware of them. It is helpful for all of us to consider whether the aspects of others that we find disturbing may be those very aspects of ourselves we dare not acknowledge. It is worth holding in mind something Carl Jung said, “Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves”<sup>3</sup>. Though each individual human journey is unique we share similar susceptibilities. So may the goal of practice be the ability to see uncomfortable things about ourselves and accept our human frailty, rather than deciding we are failed practitioners because we still have psychological problems?

It is worth considering the question: can one be enlightened and still have psychological problems? Or, to put it differently, is enlightenment about becoming a perfect human being, or is it more realistically about accepting our human frailties and doing the best we can in living with them in ways that do not harm ourselves or others? From my perspective, it is the acknowledging our suffering, and accepting of who we are, that allows to us to continue to deepen our understanding of Buddhist practice and how to lead a good life.

### **Joining the community**

Once I joined the community as a postulant I did begin to wonder if what I had learnt as a practicing psychotherapist was of any value in monastic life. I felt stripped of a way of life that had been a comfortable nest, lined with the reassurances of being competent, but perhaps it was I who

did the stripping away in my eagerness to fit in and be accepted, knowing from experience that groups tend to reject individuals, attitudes, circumstances that do not conform to the group norm. I was hesitant to own what I now think I mistakenly felt I was expected to disown, rather than temporarily set it aside; by this I mean what I had learnt of human nature as a practicing psychotherapist responding to many clients and their life problems. So I turned away from psychology with a confused sense that on becoming a monk I was expected to set aside all aspects of my previous life: wife, mother, clinical psychologist, South African by birth and so on. With hindsight I think I oversimplified the advice to postulants and novices to get on with their own training and let the past be, not understanding that we were not being asked to deny who we were and the circumstances that led us to be as we were. Rather, we were offered something of great value: the encouragement to let go, for the time being, of previous areas of competence which we might have used to bolster a sense of a separate self that feels it needs building up, defending, wrapping up in a comfort blanket view of self-worth. We were offered the opportunity to allow to disintegrate the brittle shell of personality that we had constructed since childhood in order to survive and feel safe in this puzzling world. The difficulty seems to be not to grasp after the illusion of a competent, clearly defined, self that gains its sense of who we are from what we say and do.

The novice life of following: listening and doing what one is asked to do without quibbling or complaint; being willing to let go of how one thinks things should be done and

fitting into the culture of the monastery without criticism is a rare opportunity in a human life. It helped me to see beyond my former roles to the essence of being human without the accumulated, self-protecting, suffocating layers of who I thought I was and how I expected to be treated. I began to drop preconceptions about relationships as I saw more clearly how they fluctuate in different circumstances. They are actually never exactly the same. We tend to assume they are the same because it is easier and less troublesome, but this assumption can lead to some unwelcome surprises. We want our world to be stable and predictable, so find acknowledging its fluidity and instability very disconcerting. This is, as far as I can tell, maybe in the mix of why building a sense of a solid self, as much for others as for ourselves, casts such a spell.

It helped to be one among a bunch of other raw novices rumbling around together, supporting and hating both, as we learnt to live in community with people we might not have chosen as friends. We needed to learn how to live in a new family where we were not yet sure of the family script. In living in the milieu of the community I came to accept that the universe is not just and fair, nor is it unjust or unfair. At times I found myself jealous of the favours someone else seemed to accrue, or aghast at the temerity of another who persistently, and seemingly wilfully, stepped out of line. I was seeing previously hidden aspects of my personality brought to light by the unfamiliar circumstances. However, these aspects of being human had always been hidden in plain view and there was relief in seeing them so vividly.

The remedy is not to redouble our efforts, feeling we have not gone deeply enough; instead we can become intimate with our past, with our conditioning and its originating factors. We can delve into delusion, realising it is not separate from enlightenment. There are not two things here. Sōtō Zen points to the essential non-duality of the universe. We can turn towards the painful, disfiguring, disowned aspects of ourselves and cultivate acceptance of them. It does not work to try to force ourselves to accept them but if we truly look into the heart of anything, it changes of itself and we realise we were never apart from the Truth. If looking this deeply and asking ‘Who is this?’ seems to break our hearts, we are on the right path. Perhaps a very, very few spiritual practitioners really have gone beyond the imperative of self; the rest of us are only walking in that direction, a little further, one hopes, every day.

Since those early days as a novice, patience, non-judgemental love and appreciation for the whole community has taken root as I see with kinder, less self-protective eyes that we all are truly doing the very best we can in each particular circumstance, at each particular moment, given our individual karmic baggage. Diversity of opinions is difficult when the Truth is seen as objective and in a transcendent realm separated from the mundane realm of human endeavour where our experience of the Truth is naturally coloured by our own individual experience. As I write this, these words from *The Scripture of Great Wisdom* keep singing in my head “not stained nor yet immaculate”. Of course, if I expected that all monks would be outstanding

exemplars, this over-simplistic idea would inevitably lead to an unnecessarily extreme response to anybody apparently not living up to my impossibly high standards. It was humbling to see that I myself was making similar mistakes and probably what most upset me were those behaviours I dreaded to see in myself and so was primed to see in others. This classically is how projection works. Perhaps to be a trainee of psychological and spiritual maturity, whether lay or monastic, requires a withdrawing of projections. Even an acknowledgment that one could be projecting will make for a softer lens.

Looking back to those early years I realise that at the time I was no longer overly engaged with questions about whether psychology and spirituality have anything to offer each other. I was too engrossed with simply getting on with life as a novice monk within the regular challenges of a hierarchical system. There were rebellious moments when my thoughts strayed to “catching the market bus” and getting out of the monastery. However, even during intense emotional flare-ups I never really doubted that I would stay. I know that I have both a facet of personality that responds fiercely and precipitously to the African freedom cry of “Amandala!” but fortunately it is tempered by another facet that is biddable and willing to accept whatever circumstances I find myself in – your “chameleon” propensity a friend once called it. Like the chameleon I can take on the coloration of the environment around me. Increasingly, there was a joy in letting go of what I thought I wanted or deserved, and simply doing what was in front of

me. Nowadays, there is a deep, deep gratitude flowing forth; gratitude to have stumbled into our tradition of Sōtō Zen.

To bring things up-to-date, I realise I am coming back to considering the debate about psychology and spirituality and whether the two paradigms have anything to offer each other. My past seems to have caught up with me. I find, however, there is a certain reluctance to engage with this. Why? Perhaps it is laziness but also a dread of the cognitive and emotional challenge. It has been an effort in overcoming inertia to think about this issue again. Also, there is a niggling concern that I may be jumping on a current bandwagon rather than getting on with finding the Truth through our simple, yet challenging, practice of zazen. Though keeping abreast of developments in psychology need not stand in opposition to zazen, wise discernment is called for. There are more and more books appearing written by spiritual practitioners, some of whom are also psychologists and/or therapists. After reading them, I have found myself wondering if this was really useful. Old age does make one consider how best to use the remaining time for the good of all.

*I wish to acknowledge Asha George's generous and thoughtful assistance in reviewing this article. Asha has trained with the OBC for 16 years and has been a licensed clinical psychologist for the last 19 years. After 22 years of public service in mental health work, she now works for a private mental health agency, managing three psychiatric hospitals in northern California.*

### *Notes*

- [1.](#) Horney, Karen. *Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Towards Self-realisation* (W.W. Norton and Company, London 1991)
- [2.](#) Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Allen Lane, 2011)
- [3.](#) Jung, Carl. *The Psychology of Transference* (1969, reprinted Routledge 1998.)

## Dukkha of Anxiety

Anonymous trainee

Working with the dukkha of intense anxiety and panic attacks led me to meditation. At University I was offered CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) to help with this but declined this as it seemed too much like being clinically reprogrammed. At the time I had a boyfriend who was studying Philosophy and he introduced me to Buddhism and Zen. Working in London, I began my own journey within Buddhism. Tibetan visualisation practice appealed, but the basic Hinayana practices of the Mindfulness of Breathing and *Mettabhavana* (loving kindness) provided more relief, and the latter helped with building self-esteem.

I was working in the Civil Service at the time and started going to a lunchtime meditation one day a week. This sowed the first seeds of faith in the jewel of meditation; I noticed the difference in my mental state in the afternoons. Weekend and weeklong retreats touched on a deeper sense of calm. I also explored forms of psychotherapy. I wondered if it was ok to mix the two, so I consulted the head of the Buddhist order that I practised with at the time. As long as you have a regular daily meditation practice this will take



you far beyond the realm of psychotherapy, I was advised. He also added the proviso that it depends on the severity of psychological problems as to whether meditation is appropriate.

I hasten to add that I still always carried backup medication to deal with escalating levels of anxiety, in particular to cope with challenges of my working environment. Along with the regular daily practice, I found a Buddhist therapist with whom I felt a deep sense of trust and this work took me on the path that eventually led to understanding that preceptual practice goes hand in hand with meditation.

Props such as smoking and alcohol gradually had less of a hold, but emotional needs meant that I remained drawn to damaging relationships. The demands of supporting a young family resulted in very sporadic meditation – the luxury of a regular early morning meditation practice no longer available. This resulted in the re-emergence of more fluctuations in mood, anger, struggle, depression and more reliance on the props, in particular wine to take the edge off a testing day at work.

Years on and once the children were older, more opportunity for regular meditation re-emerged, and going deeper with sustained regular practice, this time within a Sōtō Zen group. An Achalanatha festival attracted me to Throssel; this was about facing and relinquishing the flames of desire. Letting go of the relationship habit was a big step

out of emotional dependence to independence. Experiencing a sense of belonging to a group and being accepted, forged the strength to let go of this habit.

Strength and equilibrium resurfaced. Having meditated for more than 20 years at this point, I felt that I could treat bouts of low mood with more intense practice; to a certain extent I could regulate my mental state using meditation. Sōtō Zen meditation took me beyond following the anchor of the breath; by this point in my journey through Buddhism I felt able to do without this, to let my mind settle naturally. I re-entered psychotherapy with a different Buddhist psychotherapist who introduced me to an ancient practice which is really about owning and facing your hungry ghosts with acceptance and compassion, and listening to them. The outcome of that period of linking training and psychotherapy resulted in turning my life around to reflect my preceptual practice. I left a well-paid job in Finance and from then on vowed not to be coerced into compromising my spiritual integrity.

Swinging backwards and forwards in the rocking chair in the seniors lounge in the Abbot's House waiting for a meditation interview, I remember the sense of feeling really alive, the exhilaration of being so present; just for a fleeting moment the anxiety had gone.

Now the hum of background anxiety is quieter, but I know it can and will escalate at times. I still have the medication in a drawer.

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## [News from Europe](#)

### Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey

—Northumberland, England—UK—

***Jukai:*** We had a wintry setting for *Jukai* this year, with snowfall on several days. It was a joy to support the seventeen people who came to take the Precepts and receive lay ordination as Buddhists. We congratulate Mike, Ciaran, Liz, Geoff, Lucas, Andrei, Lynne, Alex, Simon, Jonathan, Melissa, Terence, Felicity, Mandy, David, Ken and Junkō on taking this important step in training. Our thanks also to the experienced trainees who joined us for the week and helped in many ways; we appreciated having all of you with us.

The photo below shows the *Ketchimyaku* procession – during one of the ceremonies in this significant week-long retreat.



***Garden Weekend:*** We held a gardening weekend in April, organized by Julia Langley. Five came for the weekend to help and another eight people joined on Saturday; a largely work based

schedule with tea and biscuits mid-morning and afternoon and an informal buffet lunch. Many hands were able to complete a variety of jobs including refurbishing a path and an early spring clearing for the lawns and flowerbed. Fortunately the foggy, damp weather of previous days broke just in time and we had lots of warm sunshine. The weekend was a success and we hope to schedule one again next year around the same time.



***Friends and family weekend:*** This year we welcomed a good number of families with children to stay at the monastery or nearby for this joyful informal weekend. Rev. Master Mugō came to join us for the celebrations too. The weather was kind to us, warm, sunny and with blue skies. We thank Chris, one of our sangha from Birmingham, who offered a variety of activities for the youngsters on Saturday. We all enjoyed and learned from a wildlife walk and quiz in our grounds, as Chris pointed out some of our quite rare trees – and some ordinary plants – drawing out ecological aspects.



*Assembling for the wildlife walk*

After tea he presented a puppet show about the rainforest and involved the children in a display of magic. Later in the afternoon, Rev. Master Hugh supervised our now annual game of Frisbee golf amongst the trees. Rev. Lambert cooked some delicious kebabs, burgers and sausages on a large barbecue by the lawn. The day ended with two groups playing the Training and Enlightenment Game, led by Rev. Master Hugh and Rev. Sanshin and enjoyed by parents, monks and children alike. (The game was invented by Rev. Master Jiyu.)



*Playing the Training and Enlightenment game*

Next morning other guests joined us to fill the Ceremony Hall for the *Wesak* festival celebration. Rev. Master Leandra was celebrant and Rev. Master Berwyn gave a talk afterwards on the gesture of the baby Buddha; pointing to the heavens and to the earth.



*The circumambulation during the festival*

Thanks to Nicola who helped Rev. Kyōsei with Dharma activities for the youngsters during the Dharma Talk: Rev. Kyōsei explained why we celebrate *Wesak* and the children offered a tealight before sitting quietly for a few minutes. Then Nicola read the story of The Life of the Buddha and the children formed into groups to give their interpretation of the story, using drawing, ink block patterns and pictures to make collages.

We enjoyed a buffet lunch, talking together in the sunshine into the afternoon. Thank you to all who came; it was lovely to spend the weekend together.

***Monks' Sesshin:*** We were glad to have Rev. Leoma from Norwich join us for our spring monks retreat; 6 days focussed on silent meditation. We closed for two weeks, having a few quiet days before and after. At a tea, Rev. Master Daishin named Rev. Leoma as a master. We congratulate Rev. Master Leoma on this recognition.

***Green Mountain walk:*** At the beginning of May, we enjoyed a delightful day out in the Lakes on a walk organised by our local walking sangha group. Eric and Gill with her three dogs joined us on the trip to Buttermere to see the famous bluebells covering the lower levels of the hills and to walk up Rannerdale Knotts. We sat in the sunshine for a picnic and enjoyed the view. After the walk Gill, who lives nearby, offered us tea and cake in the garden of her house nearby.



*Picnic with a view from the top of Rannerdale Knotts*

—Rev. Alina

## Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald

—*Gutach (Black Forest)–Germany—*

In the last few months, we had the great joy of welcoming a variety of monastic friends and lay trainees for various lengths of time: Earlier on in the year, while the weather was still cold, Rev. Master Mokugen stayed with us for almost a month and a half. In May, Rev. Master Jishō came from Shasta Abbey to stay for a little over a month. Rev. Master Leandra, who came with Jenny Rookes, as well as Rev. Master Mugō, came from England for shorter periods. We were so grateful to have all these dear fellow monks and Jenny stay with us. We celebrated Rev. Master Jishō’s 47<sup>th</sup> and Rev. Master Mugō’s 37<sup>th</sup> Ordination anniversaries while they were here. In March, Rev. Master Fuden celebrated his 40<sup>th</sup> Ordination anniversary.

In early spring, Rev. Clementia spent about five weeks at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in England. It was a good and helpful stay for her, and we are very grateful to the Throssel community for their warm welcome.



During our weeklong spring retreat for the congregation towards the end of May, Rev. Master Jishō gave daily Dharma-talks on the *Surangama Sutra*. It was a very enriching week and we are deeply grateful to Rev. Master Jishō for his inspiring teachings on this profound sutra.

Lay Ministers Andreas Koerner, Susan Sting and Benjamin Britz, as well as another lay congregation member, attended the week-retreat. At the end of it, Lay Ministers Barbara and Stefan Lang joined us, in order to spend some time with Rev. Master Jishō before he travelled back to the US. They have known him for many years.

Andreas, who works as a psychiatrist in a clinic in Switzerland, took a sabbatical time from his work and spent the months of April and May with us. It was very beneficial for us to have him here for this length of time.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> May, we celebrated Wesak, the Buddha's birth. Ute Heim from Munich, who has been a congregation member ever since Rev. Master Fuden came to Germany, received her Lay minister rakkshu and robe in the presence of Rev. Master Mugō. Ute's 12 year old daughter, Lotte, was there to witness the event. Warm congratulations to Ute!





In May, we were invited to participate in a burial ceremony for a woman who had died of cancer. Her husband – who gave up his career to look after his very ill wife for more than three years – and his eldest daughter had previously come to the temple to invite us to come to the funeral and recite scriptures.

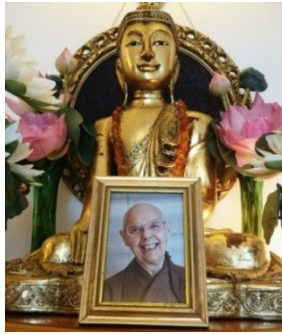
Lately we have been having more young people come and stay at the temple than was the case in the past, which is a nice development. We warmly invite anyone who is already familiar with our practise to come and train alongside us, even outside of the scheduled retreat-times.

—*Rev. Master Fuden and Rev. Clementia*

## Great Ocean Dharma Refuge

—*Pembrokeshire, Wales-UK—*

Spring has been late in coming this year, yet the birds and creatures all continue with their work of nest-building and caring for young, come rain, snow or shine! It is a joy to see seedlings sprouting in the vegetable garden, and to see our resident robin – who boldly feeds from the hand – now rearing chicks; and at the same time it brings home the fragility of life, with nothing guaranteed, and everything to be thankful for.



This spring we celebrated a memorial service for Reverend Master Meiten of Vancouver Island Zen Sangha, in gratitude for the bright example of her life and training. Our good Dharma friend will be missed. In March, we marked Reverend Master Mokugen's fortieth ordination anniversary, with joy and gratitude for her long years of devoted training and teaching. At the following Wednesday morning meeting, we were joined by local congregation for a ceremony, followed by a Dharma talk by Reverend Master. She offered some reflections on what seems foremost in training in later life: the cherishing of the vital essence of the Dharma, the embracing of seeming paradoxes, and a simpler living – in the 'Fullest Emptiness'. We concluded with an enjoyable 'potluck meal'.



A few weeks later we were blessed with sunshine when local Sangha members joined us to celebrate the Festival of the Buddha's Birth with a ceremony and Dharma talk.

Earlier in the year, Reverend Master Mokugen was

grateful to be able to spend some much needed rest and retreat time with Reverend Master Fuden and Reverend Clementia at Dharmazuflucht, Schwarzwald. She was also glad to enjoy brief visits with the community at Throssel Hole and with Reverend Master Peter. We offer our grateful thanks to all who have shared their company and extended a kind welcome to us in recent months.

Throughout this time we have continued to welcome lay retreatants and local congregation joining with the life of the temple for morning meetings and longer retreats, and as always you are most welcome to write or phone regarding visit and retreat opportunities.

—Rev. Caitlin

## Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory

—Norwich—UK—

**Recent events:** In January, we held a Discussion Morning on training with depression and other mental health issues. This was an interesting and worthwhile morning, as we explored how meditation and Buddhist practice can help in this area. People shared their experiences and talked about what had been helpful for them. Inspired by this, I wrote an article, which can be found on our website [\[and within this Journal\]](#).

In February, we held a memorial ceremony for Renato Busatto's stepfather, José Carlos Rodrigues de Sousa, who had died suddenly a few days earlier. The ceremony was streamed to Renato's home in Fortaleza, Brazil, where his mother and other family and friends were able to follow the ceremony as it happened. They had set up an altar which was very similar to how the Priory's altar was prepared for the memorial, even with the same food and drink on it. (The photos below show the memorial altar at the Priory and the memorial altar in Brazil). Renato had also translated the scriptures into Portuguese, so that they could be understood by the Brazilian audience. It was a privilege to be

able to offer this ceremony to help Renato and his family in their bereavement.



*Altar in Brazil on left and in Norwich on right*

The day retreat in Wymondham in April was well attended by Sangha members from Norwich and Cambridge. The Dharma talk focussed on exploring how this here now is our gateway. It was good to come together as a Sangha to sit and share our experience of practice, especially in the lovely setting of the Fairland Church Centre. These day retreats always feel like a precious opportunity.

**Thanks:** I am very grateful for all sorts of help that I've received in recent weeks: providing a place for me to have a week of retreat time; garden maintenance; producing the Priory's Wesak cards; ongoing work on the Priory's book-keeping and accounts; and help with cleaning and housework.

—Rev. Master Leoma

## The Place of Peace Dharma House

—Aberystwyth, Wales—UK—

Every day in a small temple, is both different, and the same. Although there is not always much to report as ‘news’, within the steady, day in day out, life of faith, that is the heart of the temple, there is never a time when nothing is happening.



*Offering water at The Birth of the Buddha Ceremony.*

In May we celebrated The Buddha’s Birth, showing our gratitude for the potential that comes with every human life, and for the Buddhist Way, which gives us the means to realise that potential. Afterwards a talk was offered on the meaning of pouring water over the Buddha’s head.



*Bluebells around The Buddha of Impermanence*

The bluebells were out, in joyful swathes, for the festival day. Our small garden statue is beginning to show the signs of age, but then, so are we all. Rather than retire him, he is now our Buddha of Impermanence, sitting serenely in the midst of change, as Spring flowers blossom around him. We will look for a new, larger statue, to place in a different part of the garden.

Offering food to a temple is a lovely, and traditional, thing to do, and these gifts are appreciated. As some foods cannot be used for medical reasons, we appreciate if you check before bringing anything. Thank you. Reverend Master Myōhō had a short visit to The Great Ocean Dharma Refuge, and the pleasure of spending some time with the monks there, who always offer a warm and generous hearted welcome.

Thank you to all who continue to offer support to the temple, these include Catherine Artindale, for her invaluable help with our accounts and Gordon and Ceri Jones, who are always willing to step in, at a moment's notice, and do what is needed. Having such reliable local support is greatly appreciated.

—Rev. Master Myōhō

## Telford Buddhist Priory

—Telford, Shropshire-UK—

In the last couple of months, the meditation hall has had quite a makeover, partly due to an unexpected and generous donation. It had the same dark curtains and a carpet with a complex traditional pattern ever since we moved to the house, 21 years ago. Now the curtains are replaced by blinds and the carpet by a new plain one. Also, the lights have been updated with modern fade-able LED fittings, and the room has been painted. The arrangement of the shrines on the altar has been simplified, too. Overall, the impression is of greater light and space.



Spring 2018 has brought Rev. Master Willard to stay at Telford Priory for a few weeks and he has very actively helped with the maintenance of the Priory buildings. His presence here is much appreciated. The outside white gates have been carefully painted (the inner one blue to match the garage) and there has been redecoration in the kitchen with the ceiling and cupboards painted. The bathrooms and common room are next on the list. While all this has been going on, the normal Priory activities have been continuing, including weekly meditation evenings on



Wednesdays and Fridays, monthly day retreats on a Saturday, and various Sunday activities including the Manjusri and Wesak festivals. There was also an Avalokiteshvara festival scheduled for early March – but it had to be postponed due to the snow!



*Clematis in bloom at the Priory at Wesak*

—Rev. Master Saido

## Wolk-en-Water Hermitage

—Langelille–The Netherlands—

Wolk-en-Water Hermitage is slowly becoming more known here and we now have several local activities. Besides the meditation evenings and mornings we offer a two-month “course” in spring and again in the Autumn in the center of Yogasjoukje in Lemmer. The Spring course was about Meditation and Compassion; the Autumn course will be about Living in Harmony with the Universe.

We are grateful for the garden help that Lies and Wilma offered in April.



In April we also had a “deepening our practice” retreat in which we addressed some core questions in participants’ lives of

practice and we are looking forward to the follow-up retreat in October.

Several residential retreats were planned for the summer; there is still some space, so please feel free to apply (also English speakers).



*Statue in the garden at Wolk-en-Water Hermitage*

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## [NEWS from USA and Canada](#)

### Shasta Abbey

—Mt. Shasta, California—USA—

**Dharma Transmission and new Teacher of Buddhism:** On the night of April 20, Rev. Master Meian Elbert gave Dharma Transmission to Rev. Dilys Cromack.

Rev. Master Jishō Perry presented his disciple, Rev. Veronica Snedaker, with a Teacher of Buddhism certificate along with a purple Kesa and small Kesa after morning service on April 24. We offer our congratulations and best wishes to these monks as they continue their lives of training.



*Rev. Master Meian and Rev. Dilys*

**Head Novice's Ceremonies:** Rev. Vera Giordano, who led trainees as Head Novice for the Spring Term, successfully completed the Head Novice's Dharma Ceremony by answering monks' questions from her chosen text from Great Master Dōgen's *Shoji*:

*The Way to Buddhahood is easy. They who do not perpetrate evil, they who do not try to grasp at life and death but work for the good of all living things with utter compassion, giving respect to those older, and loving understanding to those younger, than themselves, they who do not reject, search for, think on or worry about anything have the name of Buddha: you must look for nothing more.*

That same morning she gave a talk in the Meditation Hall, *On Bowing*, for the Head Novice's Presentation of a Fundamental Doctrine. Our congratulations and thanks to Rev. Vera for her training during this term.



*Rev. Vera and her assistant, Rev. Ona Jones, with Rev. Masters Meian, Kōdō and Andō*

**The Keeping of the Ten Precepts Retreat (Jukai):** Sixteen new lay Buddhists took the Precepts during the week-long retreat in March. Ceremonies, Dharma talks and discussions pointed to the meaning of various aspects of the commitment to our practice. Our congratulations to: Adam Cone, Janet Cowan, Keenan Cox, Matthew Gilmore, Renee Hollomon, Jeremy Kennett, Joshua Kennett, Christopher Adam Metzger, Michele Muir, Esteban Nevarez, Enid Richey, Michael Summers, James West, Shane

Wilson, Rhiannon Xaypanya and Ramin Zolfagari. We were also happy to welcome a number of trainees who had taken the Precepts in years past and who came to renew that commitment, and we're grateful for the help they offered during the retreat as well as their steadfast training.



*Lay trainees follow Rev. Master Meian during the Ketchimyaku procession*



*Monastic community with Jukai guests*

**Redding Zen Buddhist Priory Blessing:** Several monks from the Abbey community joined Rev. Master Meian on May 5 for a blessing and joyous potluck lunch at the new OBC temple opened by Rev. Helen Cummings. We were glad to witness the support given to Rev. Helen by congregation members, and we offer our best wishes to all in their continuing training at the Priory.

**Lay Ordination:** Rev. Master Andō Mueller gave the Precepts to Lourdes (Lori) Gautier during a Lay Ordination ceremony via Skype on April 15. Lori, who was terminally ill, expressed deep gratitude for the ceremony. She died several days later, and Rev. Master Andō was the celebrant for a private memorial at the Abbey on May 10.

**Visitors from Duc Vien Buddhist Pagoda:** We enjoyed a two-day visit with Venerable Dam Nhat, Abbess and over forty lay trainees and female monks from Duc Vien Buddhist Pagoda, who traveled here from San Jose, California in early March. One purpose of their visit was to introduce nuns from Vietnam to an example of Buddhist monastic practice in the West. In addition to many other generous offerings of flowers and gifts, our visitors also prepared delicious meals. Along with our usual daily schedule, we spent time talking about training in monastic life. We're grateful to the members of the Duc Vien community and congregation for their offering of monastic friendship as well as their many other offerings.



*Shasta Abbey monks and lay residents with visitors from Duc Vien Buddhist Pagoda*

**Earth Day:** Rev. Masters Kōdō Kay and Andō Mueller took part in a multi-faith presentation of teaching and information during an Earth Day celebration organized by a local Baha’i member in Mt. Shasta. They sat at a table with representatives of other religions, offering faith statements on care of the planet from religious groups including Catholic, Episcopalian, and Baha’i. Rev. Masters Kōdō and Andō offered a statement of some of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett’s teachings and our practices regarding respect and care for the environment. We’ll be posting this statement on our website. In the meantime, a discussion of Rev. Master Jiyu’s teachings can be found at this link [www.shastaabbey.org/pdf/RMJiyuConservePreserveRespectRevere](http://www.shastaabbey.org/pdf/RMJiyuConservePreserveRespectRevere).

—Rev. Margaret



## Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

—Lytton, British Columbia—Canada—

We had a long, cold winter this year with about a metre of snow accumulation. Spring was slow to arrive, but now the warm weather is here, with green grass and trees, songbirds returning and a profusion of wildflowers.

On March 17, Rev. Valeria and Tracy Kitigawa of Edmonton attended a large public memorial in Victoria for Rev. Master Meiten McGuire, who died peacefully on January 2 of this year. Rev. Valeria was Chaplain at the ceremony, and Rev. Master Meidō of Wallowa Buddhist Priory was Celebrant.

On January 21, we attended the annual World Religion Day activities at the Parish Hall in Lytton. This is the twelfth time the celebration has been held in the village. About 17 people attended, representing many different faith traditions. We shared prayers and songs, and everyone enjoyed a potluck lunch together.

In early January, Tara Dog passed away here at the Priory. Supriti Bharna had brought Tara to the Priory a few days earlier. She was a sweet-natured dog who had come down with lymphoma in the fall. We held a brief funeral ceremony for her in Prajnatara Hall. Supriti and Rev. Master attended her cremation in Abbotsford a few days later.

In February our little dog Bobi was attacked by two large neighbour-dogs. He sustained severe and extensive injuries to both rear flanks and his right front shoulder, including a broken bone and had to undergo three surgeries. For a while we weren't sure if he would survive. John, his person, attended to him night and day. Over time, he began to eat and drink more regularly and move about. He's now back to his old enthusiastic and slightly mischievous self. We thank the veterinarians at Merritt Veterinary Hospital who provided such excellent care, and everyone who offered financial support for his care, and for all the merit and prayers offered for our friend during his long recovery.

In early April, we held a funeral ceremony for seven tiny newborn kittens. They belonged to Heidi, a friend from the village of Lytton, whose cat gave birth to them a few days earlier. Some were stillborn and some died shortly after birth. Rev. Valeria was the celebrant for the ceremony, and they were buried on the Priory property.

In mid-May we held our annual week-long Wesak Retreat, the first retreat of the year. We were happy to welcome several guests. The retreat ended with our Wesak Ceremony held at Prajnatarā Hall, followed by a festive meal that everyone thoroughly enjoyed.

**Building Project:** As a result of a kind and generous donation, we will be constructing a building on Fearlessness Peak, where the large Kwan Yin is located. The building is designed and sold as a kit by Skeetchestn Natural Resources LLP, which is owned and operated by the Skeetchestn Indian Band (of the Secwemepc First Nation) based near Savona BC. The unique design, a 12-sided post-and-beam building kit, is based on a modified version of the traditional pithouses of the Interior First Nations peoples.

We first became aware of these buildings when we stopped at the Big Sky gas station near Savona on the way to Kamloops, where several of them are used as band offices. We were given a tour of the show-home while it was being constructed, and we were really taken by the design and the obvious care and enthusiasm of the local band members who were participating in its construction. The building is made of pre-cut, kiln-dried, locally sourced timbers and structurally insulated panels. It has high ceilings rising to a skylit dome, and has a real feeling of light, airiness, and “lifting the spirits.” The building has a high R-factor (good insulation), and due to its design and method of construction it is much more energy efficient than conventional frame buildings.

We will use the building for ceremonies, meditation, and guest accommodation, and, if things work out. It could be a useful prototype for future monastic buildings on Great Wisdom Park.

—Rev. Master Aurelian

## Redding Zen Buddhist Priory

*Redding, California–USA—*

Redding Zen Buddhist Priory is now established as a place quiet sitting in downtown Redding, CA. Since February, 2018, it has offered regular daily meditation schedule for a growing congregation.



*Festive Priory*

Rev. Helen's broken leg in early February provided the opportunity for her to settle in gently and for the congregation to provide generous help and support to the Priory and to her. (By the way, Rev. Helen's leg has healed nicely!)

As the life of the Priory has unfolded with meditation instruction and meditation “tune-ups”, Dharma talks and classes, and working meditation mornings, the congregation is growing and connections with Redding community strengthening.

On May 5th, monks from Shasta Abbey and friends from near and far came together to bless the Priory and to offer gratitude to all who brought this temple to life. Rev. Master Meian was celebrant for the Priory Blessing Ceremony. She invoked the blessings of the Buddhas and Ancestors on the Priory and its offering of the Dharma and led the more than 50 attendees through the Priory rooms and yard chanting the traditional dharani for the protection of the temple; *Om Kembaya, Kembaya, Un Ba, Ta Sowaka*. At its conclusion, members of the Redding Zen Sangha sang an Offering of Gratitude that invokes blessings and merit for all who encouraged and supported the Priory. Following the ceremonial all enjoyed a delicious and abundant potluck lunch. A good day was had by all.



*Rev. Master Meian at the Blessing Ceremony at the altar*

*(with Patty Donahue and Adam Metzger assisting)*

Members of the Redding Zen Sangha attended the Sikh Festival in Anderson, CA, on May 12. It was a festive celebration of Sikh religious and cultural traditions, as well as presentations in support of cross-cultural appreciation of non-violence. Rev. Helen was asked to give one of those presentations and she offered the Buddha's Words on Loving Kindness (*The Metta Sutra*) as well as the *Dedication of Merit*.

On May 24, the Priory Sangha held a Sangha Conversation to review the first four months of the Priory's existence.



*The main altar Buddha statue in the morning light*

*—Rev. Helen Cummings*

## Wallowa Buddhist Temple

—Joseph, Oregon—USA—

***Trip to Victoria:*** In March, Rev. Master Meidō and Rev. Clairissa flew to Canada to take part in the large public memorial service held for Rev. Master Meiten McGuire on March 17th in Victoria, B.C. The beautiful multi-faceted service, organized with exquisite care by members of the Vancouver Island Zen Sangha, and participated in by so many, provided a wonderful glimpse of the far-reaching effects of Rev. Master Meiten's life of training and her years of offering teaching and spiritual guidance. While the monks were away, Mary Gray kindly looked after the Wallowa Buddhist Temple and kept it open for services.

***Trip to Montana:*** Rev. Meidō travelled to Montana in May to be with the Brant family as they gathered at Scott and Barb's home for the burial of Silver Brant Sundeen, the baby son of Cedar and her husband Mark. The ceremonies held at that time were deeply moving.

***Retreat Guests:*** In early May, lay ministers Mary Gray from El Cerrito, California, and Laurie Ottens from Mt. Shasta, California, travelled together to the temple for a few days' retreat. At Rev. Meidō's invitation, they spoke to our local congregation on Sunday morning about Precepts and the value of Sangha friendship, each drawing on their many years of training in this tradition, as well as their experiences of being Sangha friends within that context. It was a joy to have them with us, and to get to know better and train with Laurie, who was visiting for the first time. A lovely Kuan Yin scroll donated by Laurie has been hung

in the temple's entry room and can be seen from the loft area, as well.



*Close up of the Kuan Yin offered by Laurie and a photo of her and Mary Gray outside the Guest house*

Also in May, we welcomed three other guests who came for individual retreats – a local congregation member, a woman from Victoria, and Clyde Chamberlain from Kaslo, B.C.

***Meditation Hall Remodel Update:*** Slowly but surely, work on the project to reinsulate and remodel the meditation hall is getting completed. In April, Rev. Clairissa cut and installed baseboards to match the pine trim around the windows, and created a sloping threshold for the entrance to the hall from an extra-wide 120-year-old pine board donated for that purpose. A neighbor helped devise a sturdy rolling base for the new (and very heavy) Kuan Yin statue in the hall. In May Rev. Clairissa built high corner shelves for the two speakers of our sound system. We are grateful for many good-quality woodworking tools and hardware recently offered to the temple by Helmut Schatz, making the carpentry so straightforward.

***Three New Birch Trees:*** Three birch trees (each about 15-20 feet or about 5 metres in height) were purchased with vouchers offered



by the power company to replace the two pines they cut down under power lines. Delivered by our local nurseryman in late April, we planted them with his help just up the hill from the temple buildings next to a hedgerow. Nearly a month later they are doing well, thanks to plenty of spring rains interspersed with warm sunshine. They can be expected to grow three to four times their present height.

*The three North American birch trees*

***Individual Retreats:*** One of the Wallowa Buddhist Temple's main purposes is to offer a place where both monks and congregation from our wider Sangha can come for individual retreats. Those interested in arranging such a retreat are welcome to call or write for more information.

—Rev. Master Meidō and Rev. Clairissa



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### **Affiliated Meditation Groups**

**CA:** Auburn, Chico, Fresno,  
Morro Bay, Ventura, San Jose

**ID:** Sandpoint

**MT:** Whitefish

### **CANADA:**

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Lytton BC  
Vancouver BC

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Jersey, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester,  
London, Matlock, Milton Keynes,  
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*Affiliated Meditation Groups:*

### **The Netherlands:**

Eefde, Groningen, Utrecht.

*For details of meditation groups in Europe, please contact your nearest priory, or the Guestmaster at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey.*

*For details of meditation groups in the US and Canada, please contact your nearest priory, or the Guestmaster at Shasta Abbey*

## Further Information

This Journal is published quarterly by the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, which was founded by the late Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. The Order is dedicated to following the tradition of Serene Reflection Meditation. The main offices of the OBC are at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in England and Shasta Abbey in the US.

As Buddhism grows in the West, we wish to share the Buddha's Teaching through our Journal; we also share our experience of practicing the Buddha's Way, thus encouraging and supporting each other's training. Lastly, the Journal helps to keep friends and members informed of activities and events.

The views expressed in these pages are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Order as a whole.

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