

Mt. Equity Zendo Zephyr-

April 2011

Japan Earthquake Relief

We are very grateful to the many people who have contributed to the Japan Earthquake Relief Fund. If you have not and still wish to do so, please send a check made out to “Association of Soto Zen Buddhists” specifying “Japan Earthquake Relief” to the following address:

Japan Earthquake Disaster Fund
Soto Zen Buddhism North American Office
123 S. Hewitt Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

A [local site](#) through Bucknell University and the Susquehanna Japanese community shows a quake map of the ongoing earthquakes. This map vividly displays over 800 earthquakes in the same area of Japan since the 9.0 earthquake hit on March 11th. We hope and pray that aid in the form of water, food, clothing, shelter, heating, and mental ease come their way as soon as possible.



March Sesshin

Our meal ceremony is an important part of a weekend of deep zazen practice. We learn how to eat in mindfulness with ease and joy. All food eaten with mindfulness becomes spiritual food. We can practice seeing our inter-connection with all of life simply in eating a bowl of soup. We remember those less lucky than we are, people throughout the world who, because of circumstances beyond their control, will not be eating their daily bread.

Gratitude to the following people for making offerings of food and other offerings during the month of March: Nanshin, Tomei, Tokuen, Shudo, Koen, I'en, Eido, Misho, Dan Washington, Annie Deighton, Daijun, Fujiko and Franklin Robbins, Dendo, Diane Hollis, Meigetsu, Esho, and all others we may have inadvertently missed. Our heartfelt gratitude.

Our deepest sympathies to Dendo and Tom Brocht for the untimely death of his niece Tory Minnick.

Up-Coming Events

Half Days of Mindfulness - 1:30-4:30pm
Sunday April 3rd, Saturday April 30th, Saturday June 4th

Full Days of Mindfulness - 10am-4pm
Saturday May 7th, Sunday June 5th**

MEZ 20th Anniversary Sesshin
April 15th - 17th

Buddha's Birthday Celebration***
Sunday May 1st 10:30am-2:30pm

Flowers on the Water Ceremony
Susquehanna River Blessing
Sunday May 15th - Time and Place TBA (see page 3)

*****Buddha's Birthday Bash** is a potluck event. We begin this joyous celebration by lading water over a figure of the Baby Buddha. Bring posies from your garden. This is a fun event for all our families and friends. Below is a scene from last year.



Registration for
Events:

daishin@mtequity.org

or (570) 546-2784

The **May 7th Full Day of Mindfulness is in gratitude and in honor of mothers everywhere - including the Buddha's mother. Maha Prajna Paramita, the "Mother of All Buddhas" is a recently donated artwork by Mayumi Oda, an artist known to many as the "Matisse of Japan". We are grateful for the beautiful framing donated by Nanso Cleaver and Deb Slade (see photo on page 1).

All communities and congregations

are invited to participate in a

Flowers on the Water Ceremony

along the length of the rivers and streams

of our

Susquehanna River Watershed

Each person offers two flowers to the water, from bridge, boat, bottom or bank:

One in gratitude

One in commitment to protect our resource

Sunday May 15, 2011 from dawn to noon

Visit the [Flowers on the Water](#) Facebook page to send news of your location and group, and share photos and videos.

Visit www.artandawareness.com for more resources.

For information contact: nanso@dejazzd.com

“We all live downstream.”

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Long Summer Sesshin and Precepts Ceremony
June 18th, 1:30pm to June 25th, 11am
Guest Teachers Rev. Issho Fujita and Rev. Taihaku Priest

Rev. Issho Fujita, former head priest at Pioneer Valley Zendo, MA, and the International Director for Soto Zen, is a disciple of Uchiyama Kosho Roshi. He is one of Soto Zen's most original teachers on Shikantaza. He has a rich background in child psychology.

Rev. Gretchen Taihaku Priest will bring several members from her temple, Shao Shan in VT. Rev. Taihaku Priest trained at SFZC and at Hokyoji in Japan.

Karma: The Fruits of Our Actions

Newton's 3rd law of motion states that all actions have an equal and opposite reaction. If Buddha had studied Newtonian physics he would have agreed with Newton's 3rd Law. Regarding karma the Buddha said that our actions follow us just as a cart follows a horse. Our own actions, both personal (body, speech and mind) and collectively as a society and as a world, eventually return to us. The Zen circle or "Enso" symbolizes this law. The fact that our planet Earth is round rather than flat also points to the circular nature of our actions. Whatever we put "out there" comes back around.

We don't often recognize the law of cause and effect unless something really awful happens to us or to someone close to us. Even when something really bad happens, this is no guarantee that we will notice the workings of karma. This is because accepting personal responsibility for one's actions goes hand-in-hand with recognizing karma. In other words, nobody likes to say, "I'm sorry. It was my fault."

Taking responsibility for our actions, then, leads to the spiritual quest. "If I am responsible for what happens to me," we might say, "then how can I live in such a way to change this bad situation that I got myself into?"

The old Indian sage, Shantideva, replies in verse,

"Where is there enough leather to cover the whole world? If I only have leather on the soles of my feet, it is the same as

covering the whole world. In the same way, it is not possible to control all external circumstances. But if I only control my mind, what need is there to control other things?"

We all, at times, become frustrated with our present situation. We want to leave it or try to manipulate it so that things go our way or, rather, the way our ego wants them to go. It may be the case that we think that the best thing for us to do is to leave a situation. However, if our exit strategy is based in ego, then our karma will follow us wherever we go.

Spiritual disciplines such as zazen act like a drain plug in a bath full of water. If water is symbolic of our karma, and we are in the tub, zazen closes all the escape hatches to our present predicament. In this way the Zen practitioner is graciously permitted to look at both their beautiful and ugly karma without turning away from it. Zazen is a practice that requires courage because it is often not easy to deal with the cards we've been dealt without wanting to throw in our hand. In zazen, our ego deflates and we return to our real size. In other words, we more easily identify with the rest of humanity. We see that what is happening now in Japan or Libya, Syria or Iraq is also happening to ourself.

Actions that proceed from a deep sense that self and other are "not two" are far more likely to be affective in resolving whatever conflicts we find ourselves in in the present moment.