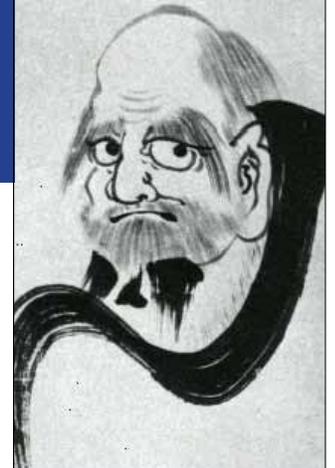


Walking Mountains

“The green mountains are always walking” — *Daokai*



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Dear Sangha and Friends,

Funny how we never really lose that back-to-school inspiration. But there you have it—when September rolls around, it feels like everyone is doing just that—buckling down, whether it's getting more serious with a work project, or bringing in the harvest, storing and canning vegetables, or taking the screens off the windows and other chores to get ready for winter. Or making decisions about the **Term Student Program** at the Center that begins the end of the month. What stands out is how neighbors, families, and Dharma sisters and brothers support one another to make ensure each other's success in attaining whatever goal is set. It's a time when getting back to work, or school, or increasing daily Zen practice is especially joyful and gratifying.

And there is lots of other activities over the next couple of months when opportunities to support one another abound. **Sangha Garden Weekend** is filled with camaraderie, fun, and work as we enjoy each other's company while getting the gardens ready for the winter. The **World Peace Ceremony** in September and the **Oxfam Ceremony** in October are opportunities to bring our practice into the world at a time when it is so needed. **Bodhidharma Day** fills us with gratitude for the founder of our sect and practice. Then we move into the **Jataka sesshin** with stories of the Buddha and his care for all sentient beings. And lastly the **Hungry Ghost Ceremony**, again filled with fun, but also remembering those who have passed from this life to the next. All of this we do together, and it reminds us that Sangha too is perfect, whole, and complete. Please join us.

—*Joan White*

Thanks and Thanks Forever



by **Eric Berger**

When my wife, Jan, underwent surgery for her knee this month the support and kindness directed to us was incredibly uplifting. At times, it felt like a tsunami of goodwill and yet the “smaller” gestures of connection and friendliness were no less helpful. Even before the operation, many Dharma

(continued on page 2)

The Vermont Zen Center's mission is to create a peaceful and inviting environment to support those who seek wisdom, compassion, joy, and equanimity within a Buddhist context. The two-fold practice of the Center is to overcome the causes of suffering through spiritual development and to alleviate the world's suffering through outreach activities and the cultivation of a caring attitude to the earth.

(continued from page 1)

brothers and sisters offered their love, well-wishes, and support, including offers of meals, flowers, and visits. There's no price one can pay for such kindness.

We were deeply grateful and moved by the support of the Sangha and our teacher, who chanted for Jan and sent Metta. Many in the Sangha have spoken about the beneficial effects of Metta and loving support in their practices. When Jan was still quite groggy after the surgery and I told her about the many calls and emails of goodwill and support she said, "I can feel it." At that point, she couldn't even have a conversation and would fall asleep after speaking a few words, yet the buoyancy and love from the Sangha was clear in her mind.

Friends and family contributed immense support, as well. Even folks we know on a more casual level offered help, food, and friendship. It's no small thing. Just the simple gesture of an open hand, literally and figuratively, lifts the heart and relaxes the mind. Our first night home, a friend called and said she had made soup and was bringing it over. We hadn't asked and, in fact, Jan thought it would be easier to not have visitors or food deliveries so soon. I'm no cook, but it was clear this delicious vegetarian soup took a lot of time to prepare. But even if it was made from an instant mix, that would have been beautiful too. The point is how grateful we are for the

thoughtfulness, effort, and kind intentions of everyone who reached out to help.

At the hospital, too, busy nurses, physical therapists, and others offered their support and kindness. Having worked in the field of medicine, Jan and I know the system and the challenges many face to maintain real contact with patients. For all its many wonders, modern medicine in this country has also become something of a processing industry, where many patients are treated but not necessarily healed. There's a difference. This is not a judgment about individuals who often feel like they have to be doing five things at the same time; but the medical system can fail to support and acknowledge critically important aspects of care that don't fit on a spreadsheet. So how uplifting, in the midst of all this, to have the opportunity to meet and work with people who refused to close their hearts and took the time to truly connect with us and others. We offer bows and thanks to them, especially as we know the challenges they face.

People who worked in the admitting office, cafeteria, and other areas of the hospital also offered the light of kindness. It doesn't take a grand gesture to brighten the day. Many offered a smile and a simple greeting in the hallways and at the cash register. One person said my plate from the salad bar

“When Jan was still quite groggy after the surgery and I told her about the many calls and emails of goodwill and support she said, “I can feel it.” ”

looked delicious and healthy. I said my wife and I were “veg-heads” and we had a chat about the benefits of a vegetarian diet, as she mentioned that her mother was also a vegetarian and had been trying to get her to eat in a more healthy way.

There are studies that have demonstrated that a loving touch during recovery can help a person to heal more quickly. This may not be surprising to Dharma practitioners, but now science is helping others to respect and cultivate this in medical settings and at home. Holding Jan's hand and chanting in the recovery room and afterwards was, perhaps, of some help. In any case, it was practice—sitting on the mat, strolling through the forest, driving to the store, holding hands in recovery.

We offer sincere and deep thanks for this loving buoyancy and kindness. —

Moving

by Sandra Ross

My dad was in the Air Force when I was a kid. We moved about every three years. This was just a normal part of life growing up as an Air Force kid. I was used to saying goodbye to friends and making new ones. I liked seeing new places and being able to start anew.

As some of you might already know, after five years as a resident at the Vermont Zen Center I have moved to my boyfriend's house in Georgia, Vermont. As I get used to this new location and situation, I am happy to know that unlike my earlier life and many moves, I will not have to say goodbye to all my friends. I plan to be a consistent and forever presence at the Vermont Zen Center.

So I am writing this not to say goodbye, but to say thank you. Without you, dear Sangha family, this would not have been possible. I will be forever grateful that I was able to have had this experience in my life.

Like most things in life it wasn't always what I imagined it would be. Of course I had romanticized ideas of what living in a Zen Buddhist center would be like, which is what



so often gets us into trouble – our ideas and expectations, and then our frustrations when things don't go as we expected. But as I learned, and as Roshi says at every Training Program I have been to, we smooth our rough edges by bumping up against others, akin to being in a rock tumbler.

I am so grateful to all of your patient teachings as so many of you let me smooth out some of my rough edges in your company. Thank you for showing me how to be a better person by setting amazing examples of compassion, patience and non-judging. I truly feel as if you are family, and I look forward to growing old with you.

Then, of course, there is this wonderful place we are so very lucky to have to practice in. Without you it could not exist. I had no idea what it took to make a place like this work

until I lived at the Center. Day by day I saw more and more of the vast amount of work that people do. So thank you so much for all of your hard work and love and all of the time you dedicate to our Center.

And to Roshi! I can't begin to express my gratitude in words. So I will say thank you by continuing to show up and work and, above all, doing zazen. —



Sangha Garden Work & Social Weekend

A Sangha Garden Work & Social Weekend will be held from **Thursday evening, September 7 through Sunday afternoon, September 10**. The objective is to work together on buildings and especially grounds, enjoying the beauty of our land and the company of Dharma brothers and sisters. Sangha members and their families, including children of all ages, are invited. You are welcome to stay at the Center. There is no fee for this event, but you must be a member of the Sangha.

We will schedule the bulk of the work for the morning in order to leave most of the afternoon free for unstructured activity as well as mini workshops offered by Sangha members. It would be a big help to know who is coming for planning purposes, so please send a reservation to the Center by

September 10, if at all possible. The registration form is online at www.vermontzen.org/events_gardenweekend.html

Everyone can participate. No special skills are needed. We will sit a bit more than the regular schedule, and dokusan will be offered each day, but this is most definitely not a sesshin.

WHAT TO BRING:

Work clothes, boots or other sturdy footwear, a hat, water bottle, (bedding and towel if staying overnight), sitting robe. If you are allergic to wasps or bees, remember to bring your medication.

WHEN TO ARRIVE:

The retreat starts Thursday evening, September 24. It's fine to come for all or part of the weekend.

CHILDCARE:

As there will be formal sittings

each day, childcare will be need to be arranged by parents for those times. Also, children should not enter the fenced area around the fire pond. The sides are steep, slippery, and dangerous, which is why it's fenced.

MEALS:

Meals will be provided, so there's no need to bring food unless you have special food requirements. In that case, you'll be responsible for your own meal preparation. Breakfast and lunch will be eaten together, and in the evening soup and leftovers will be available. If you must bring food, remember that no alcohol, meat, fish, or poultry are allowed on Center grounds.

REGISTRATION:

Please visit the web page on the Center's site for more information and for the registration form www.vermontzen.org/events_gardenweekend.html



Bodhidharma Day

"Once you stop clinging and let things be, you'll be free, even of birth and death. You'll transform everything. You'll possess spiritual powers that can't be obstructed. And you'll be at peace wherever you are."

— Zen Master Bodhidharma

On Sunday, October 1 we honor our great ancestor, Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen. Following an hour of sitting, we will have a chanting service with circumambulation and incense offerings. Children and family members are cordially invited. The ceremony will be during the morning sitting and will begin around **10:00 a.m.**

September 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
	※ Throughout the Term Student Program, on Tuesday evenings there will be a very short sitting followed by a meeting in the Buddha Hall for Term Students only. Non-participants are welcome to continue sitting informally in the zendo.					ZEN CENTER CLOSED
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ZEN CENTER CLOSED		AM ZAZEN TUE-SAT PM ZAZEN	Metta Course 2	PM ZAZEN	Sangha Garden Work Weekend	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Garden	ZC CLOSED	AM ZAZEN TUE-FRI PM ZAZEN	Metta Course 3	PM ZAZEN		Flower Arranging Course
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
World Peace Ceremony	AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Tai Chi Course 2	PM ZAZEN	Metta Course 4	PM ZAZEN	Sesshin Deadline	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Taped Teisho	AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Tai Chi Course 3	PM ZAZEN * Term Student Programs 3 & 2 Begin	Metta Course 5	PM ZAZEN		Indian Cooking Class: Lunch

October 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bodhidharma Day Ceremony	AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Finding Your Seat Meeting Tai Chi Course 4	PM ZAZEN * Term Student Meeting	ROSHI IN CR Metta Course 6	PM ZAZEN	Costa Rica 3-Day Sesshin (10/5-8)	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Sitting and Sesshin Prep CR Sesshin	AM ZAZEN MON-FRI	PM ZAZEN * Term Student Meeting		Sitting and Sesshin Prep	VT Jataka Sesshin	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Vermont 7-Day Jataka Sesshin with Rafe Martin 10/13-20 VZC CLOSED DURING SESSHIN						Workshop
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
ZC CLOSED	AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Tai Chi Course 5	PM ZAZEN * Term Student Program 1 Begins		PM ZAZEN Oxfam Ceremony		Ceremony Workday
29	30	31	Throughout the Term Student Program, on Tuesday evenings there will be a very short sitting followed by a meeting in the Buddha Hall for Term Students only. Non-participants are welcome to continue sitting informally in the zendo.			
Hungry Ghost Ceremony	ZC CLOSED	AM ZAZEN TUE-FRI PM ZAZEN * Term Student Meeting				

Ceremony for the Liberation of Hungry Ghosts

A Ceremony for the Liberation of Hungry Ghosts will be held on Sunday, October 29 at 10:30 a.m. During this observance, we offer food and drink to the hungry, thirsty inhabitants of the preta realm.

Hungry ghosts, or pretas, are beings in a sub-human state of development. Due to their extreme greed in prior lifetimes, they have been reborn into a state where they constantly suffer from hunger and thirst. Their stomachs are grossly distended, their limbs emaciated, and their mouths as small as the eye of a needle. Whatever they eat turns to poison; whatever they drink turns to fire.

According to legend, Moggallana, a disciple of the Buddha, was plagued by nightmares of his mother being tormented in a realm in which she could neither eat nor drink. The Buddha told Moggallana that his mother was in the realm of pretas, and he should try to help her overcome her bad karma through a special ceremony.

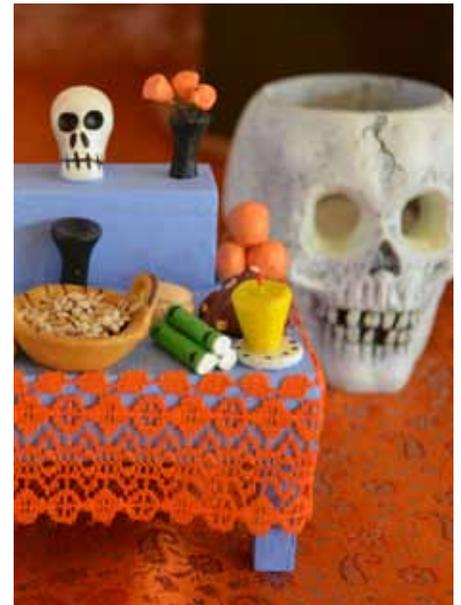
During the Hungry Ghost Ceremony, we chant sutras and make offerings of food and water to the beings of the preta realm. In making

this gift we must overcome our own greed, thereby setting an example for the hungry ghosts. This freely-offered food and drink does not turn into poison or fire, which is why at many Buddhist homes and temples small bowls are passed at the beginning of each meal to make offerings to the hungry ghosts.

Although the ceremony is directed particularly to these beings, it is also a time to remember all beings who have died in the preceding year. After the ceremony proper, a fire is lit at which time people offer the names of deceased loved ones.

The ceremony is also an opportunity to appease our personal ghosts – the voracious demons who fill us with passions for food, drink, recognition, possessions, money, and all manner of unhappiness. As such, the ceremony is one of personal, as well as other-worldly, cleansing, appeasement, and renewal. It is an expression of our compassionate concern for beings in all realms

At our Center, we combine the Hungry Ghost Ceremony with a



Halloween celebration. Children are especially welcome, so please extend a cordial invitation to all your family members. Friends and relatives who are not Sangha members are also invited. Come in street clothes or wear a costume if you wish.

Please bring a canned or dry vegetarian food offering for each member of your party. Everyone will give this gift to the hungry ghosts during the ceremony. Afterwards it is taken to a food shelf.

We hope you will join us in this ceremony of aid for the beings in the realm of the Hungry Ghosts. —

Hungry Ghost Ceremony Workday

Saturday, October 28 from 10 to 12 is a workday to set up for the Hungry Ghost Ceremony. Come help turn the Center into a spooky, haunted house, replete with ghosts and goblins, carved pumpkins, and lots of goodies for the Hungry Ghosts.

2017 Term Student Programs III & II Begin September 26



The first two of the three Term Student Programs will begin on **Tuesday, September 26**, and end on **Tuesday, November 14**. If you want to strengthen your Zen training, invigorate your sitting, and learn how to incorporate practice into your daily life, consider joining this program. You will find that it is a shortcut to deeper concentration and greater understanding of Zen. As well, you will discover that you are capable of working far more intensely than you had ever imagined. Whether you are a new student or a long-time practitioner, there is a Term Student Program that will fit your needs. This program is an unsurpassed way to strengthen your commitment to the Dharma and deepen your practice.

World Peace Ceremony **Sunday, September 17, 9:00-11:00 a.m.**

An International Day of Peace was established by the United Nations in 1981. In 2002 the General Assembly officially declared September 21 as the permanent date for the International Day of Peace. At the Center, we conduct this ceremony on the Sunday as close to that date as possible.

The World Peace Ceremony begins with a chanting service, which is followed by a group recitation of the names of all the world's countries along with the Peace Prayer—"May Peace Prevail in [name of country]."

Please join us on this special day. All are welcome.

Oxfam Fast for a World Harvest

In this month of abundance, it is sobering to remember that millions of people are hungry all the time. Taking our vows seriously means opening our eyes and hearts to this suffering and resolving to offer help where it is needed.

On **Thursday, October 26** we will commemorate the *Oxfam Fast for a World Harvest*. For this ceremony, the Center will match all donations received, which will be sent to Oxfam America.

Members are encouraged to fast in whatever way they are able and contribute the money they would have spent on food to Oxfam. Of course, you are free to give as much money as you wish. In addition to the monetary donation, please bring a vegetarian *packaged food offering*, which will be sent to the local emergency food shelf.

If you know anyone who would like to participate, please feel free to invite them to the ceremony. (Remind them about the offerings.) The ceremony will take place at **7:50 p.m.**, after the Thursday evening zazen and dokusan.

Upcoming Courses

Flower Arranging

Learn basic Ikebana and flower arranging elements used at the Vermont Zen Center: triangulation, depth, placement, color, container size, and materials. Through understanding the interaction between spiritual practice and flower arranging, participants will gain an appreciation of the deeper meaning of flowers as offerings and as a way to bring a sense of tranquility to one's environment.

Date: Saturday, September 16. See website for more information and registration: www.vermontzen.org/flower_arranging.html

Indian Cooking North Indian Lunch

Learn how to prepare a delicious and authentic all-new vegetarian Indian meal

in the Vermont Zen Center's spacious kitchen. Manju Selinger will guide you through the process of preparing the meal, which all will enjoy for lunch at 1 p.m. With a cookbook of the recipes in hand and practical experience from the Zen Center's cooks, you will be ready to prepare a delicious Indian meal for your family and friends. No cooking experience is necessary.

Date: Saturday, September 30. See website for more information and registration.: www.vermontzen.org/indian_cooking1.html

Tai Chi

Tai Chi offers many benefits for health, relaxation, and concentration. A Tai Chi practitioner is mindful during each posture and movement, allowing

the chi energy to flow throughout the body. There are numerous medical studies demonstrating the physical and mental benefits of Tai Chi, including for many people with arthritic and neurological conditions.

Dr. Eric Berger offers several six-week courses in Tai Chi at the Vermont Zen Center. The next one begins on September 11. Each hour-long Monday evening session includes instruction, practice periods, and Q&A. These courses fill almost immediately, so sign up soon to reserve your space.

Time: Mondays 7:30-8:30 p.m. and 6:30-7:30 p.m. for those who have taken at least five prior courses.

Dates: 9/11, 9/18, 9/25, 10/2, 10/23, 10/30.
www.vermontzen.org/taichi.html



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*Dance from one blade of grass
To another,*



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October 13-20 Jataka Sesshin

Application Deadline September 22

We are extremely fortunate to be able to offer once again a Jataka Tale/working person sesshin with Rafe Martin as the guest teacher. The sesshin begins on **Friday evening, October 13**, rather than the usual Saturday start of a 7-day sesshin. The first two days (Saturday and Sunday) will be full-time, the last five days there will be sittings in the early morning and the evening, with nothing scheduled during the day so that people can go to work. Roshi will be giving dokusan three times a day during the first two days, and twice a day during the last five days.

The full seven days of sesshin will be devoted to working with Jataka tales. Sensei Rafe Martin will be conducting discussions of the Jatakas during the first two days, and giving teishos using the Jatakas throughout the seven days. The emphasis will be on how these ancient stories of the Buddha's previous lifetimes relate to our own lives here and now.

A reminder that there is a flat rate \$70 surcharge for all those who attend this sesshin either part time or full time. This is the honorarium for our guest teacher. —