

Walking Mountains

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

Dear Sangha and Friends,

This time of year we notice just a hint of color in the trees as the days grow shorter and nights longer. Reminiscent of the color of Bodhidharma’s robes, this calls to us. And just as the founder of our sect sat facing the wall in his cave, our thoughts turn toward commitment and the Term Student Program beginning this month. And so, we begin yet another busy season in earnest.

During the Sangha Gardening Weekend, we begin to put the gardens to bed in preparation for the winter ahead. The World Peace Ceremony quickly follows, and we’re acutely aware of how needed it is. In October, just as the Vermont foliage peaks, we honor Bodhidharma, host the Jataka Sesshin, and finish the month with the Hungry Ghost Ceremony, remembering those who have left us. Please join us.



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MISSION

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.



A Long Walk in the Park by Susan Grimes

Like to walk? Interested in an extreme walking challenge? Perhaps a Centurion? The rules are simple: walk 100 miles in 24 hours. One foot must be always in contact with the ground and no jogging or running.

The Centurion Ultra race is usually held once a year in the United States. This year it was at Normandale Lake Park in Bloomington, Minnesota on June 4 and 5. The

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course is a 1.8-mile loop around the lake on a paved surface. Each participant has a chip timer as well as a dedicated volunteer who counts your laps. The race is held under the United States Centurion walker rules on a pre-certified course and is a judged event. To date there have been 100 people who have become U.S. Centurions since 1878 and many hundreds of others in Centurion events worldwide.

Racers may stop, rest, eat, or get a massage, but the clock will not stop—not even for a weather delay. Racers must weigh in every four hours and if you lose more than five percent of your body weight you will need to take a break and eat.

I was inspired by Roshi's training and competition, and having been a runner, I decided to pick up the baton she handed over in 2021. Just as in practice, from the outside it looks simple. Just sitting. Just walking. Once you begin going deeper things get interesting and more challenging. My training began in earnest in February 2022, starting with a racewalking clinic. To be an efficient racewalker takes a lot of practice and attention to details. There is also cross training and managing nutrition for long distances and, most importantly, finding the right shoes and learning foot care.

I hadn't told many people I

“ The weather was perfect, five planets were in alignment and there was so much support from Sangha and friends to carry me. ”

was entering a Centurion and when Roshi announced to the Sangha I was registered it became very real. Saying it out loud and in front of Sangha instilled a strong commitment to do my best—not unlike Term Student. My husband, Scott and my athletic trainer, Scott, came to Minnesota with me. The weather was perfect, five planets were in alignment and there was so much support from Sangha and friends to carry me. In my fanny pack was a small Kannon figure, inspiring notes, and 50 small pieces of paper with names and causes to send Metta throughout the race. I was ready!

My goal was to finish, to stay positive, and not to engage in strict expectations along the way. Not meeting expectations can take you to a negative mind state and is not helpful. The phrase “not too tight and not too loose” was a constant refrain. After 50 miles a sense of timelessness settled in, and it was 8:00 p.m.—twelve hours into the race. My coach kept the fluids and food coming, and though it was an effort to eat, I wanted to remain clear-minded and stay focused. The lake was a constant

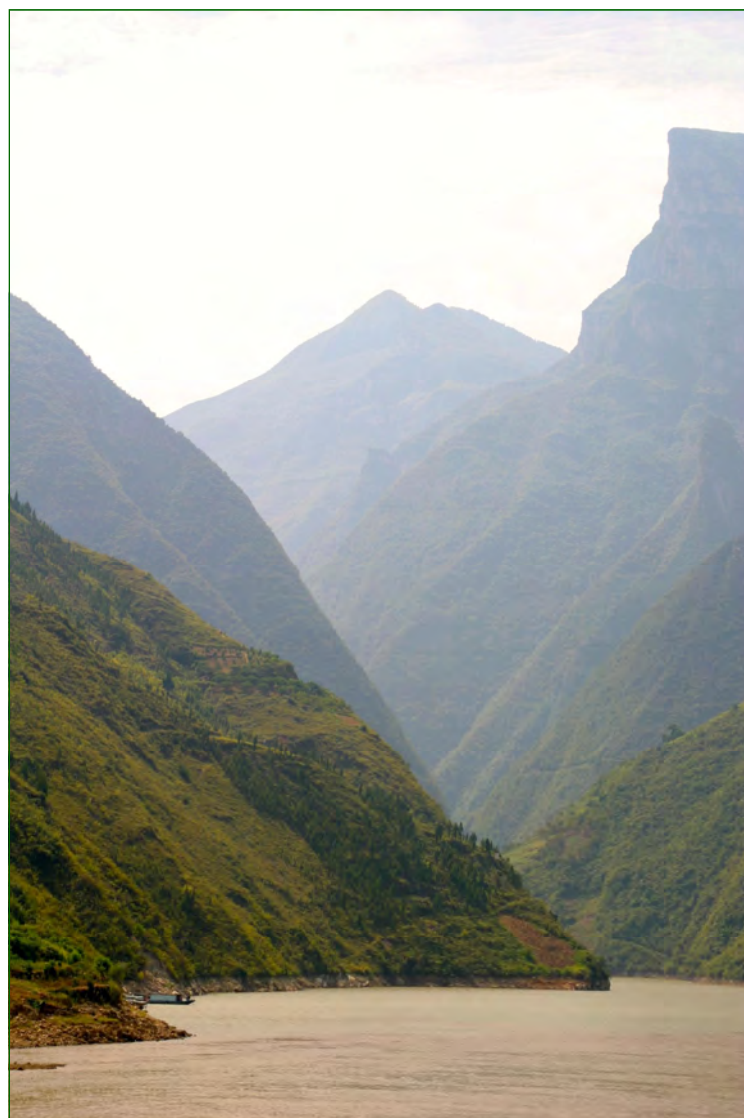
companion, full of life with many ducks, turtles, fish, rabbits, and birds all cheering us on. Through the night there was no letting up. One foot in front of the other. One breath at a time. *Through the day Kanzeon, through the night, Kanzeon.*

The last forty-five minutes were the most difficult as the computer was delayed in updating times and we knew it was close, but the race officials were unsure exactly how close. So, we were told to keep going all the way to the end. No letting up! It was total determination and a one-pointed focus to finish. Chants of “keep going” from the spectators and the minutes flying by allowed us to finish strong. At last, it was 8:00 am — 23 hours and 58 minutes! Centurions C99 and C 100 were added to the list. Two of us finished within seconds of each other and it was only possible because we worked together at the end using our collected energy like the joriki built up over long hours of sesshin—a group effort. In the end I have so much gratitude to Roshi and everyone who supported my effort along the way. We all did it together! —

Letter to Cold Mountain

Let us meet at Tientai
where the herb gatherers
entered the forest,
returning 200 years later.
Let us both come as we are,
two brushes and a big pot of ink.
Let us duel, slopping our black diction
on the face of a sheer rock wall
until we run dry. Having said it all.
Having said nothing.
Let the rains come,
and our words fall
through the cataract,
slowing at the crevasse
where you once disappeared,
and landing in a ravine,
flow into stream after stream.
Along the way,
let us gather all the chatter
from this world of dust
and with it enter the Yangtze,
that empties into the China Sea at Huangchou,
where the two of us float belly up
and wash out our ears.

—Joan White



Han Shan, "Cold Mountain," was a hermit writing poetry 1,200 years ago. He wrote his poems on the rocks, trees, and Buddhist temple walls of China's Tientai mountains. Long after his death, he became one of China's most beloved poets. To read his poems see "The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain," by Red Pine.

Sangha Garden Work and Social Weekend

A SANGHA GARDEN WORK & SOCIAL WEEKEND will be held from **Friday evening, September 9 through Sunday afternoon, September 11**. The purpose is to work together on buildings and especially grounds, enjoying the beauty of our land and the company of our Dharma family. 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.** Roshi will offer dokusan on Thursday evening (as usual) and possibly on Friday morning.

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—

more about that closer to the event. It would be a big help to know who is coming for planning purposes, so please send a reservation to the Center by September 2, if at all possible. The registration form is online at vermontzen.org/events_gardenweekend.html

All are welcome. No special skills are needed.

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

WHEN TO ARRIVE: The weekend schedule starts on Friday evening, September 9. It's fine to come for all or part of the weekend.

CHILDCARE: If you are bringing young children, childcare

will need to be arranged by parents for formal sitting times. Children need to be watched at all times and 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: More information is on the VZC website 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 2, 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 9:40 a.m.

May Peace Prevail on Earth!



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.

World Peace Ceremony

At the Zen Center, we have a **WORLD PEACE CEREMONY** on a Sunday as close as possible to the United Nations' International Day of Peace. This year it is on **September 18 from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m.**

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 members are welcome to attend in person. Non-members are welcome to attend via Zoom.

More information at www.vermontzen.org/ceremony_worldpeace.html

Term Student Program

If you want to strengthen your Zen training, invigorate your sitting, and learn how to incorporate practice into your daily life, consider joining one of the three Term Student Programs. All three programs begin on **Tuesday, September 13.** They end on different dates. Registration forms are due by **September 6** for all three programs.

You will find that Term

Student 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, you will derive benefit from participating in the program. It is an unsurpassed way to strengthen your commitment to the Dharma and deepen your practice.



For detailed information about the program as well as Term Student Forms, please go to www.vermontzen.org/termstudent.html

Ceremony for the Liberation of Hungry Ghosts



A CEREMONY FOR THE LIBERATION OF HUNGRY GHOSTS will be held on Sunday, October 30 at 10:00 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.

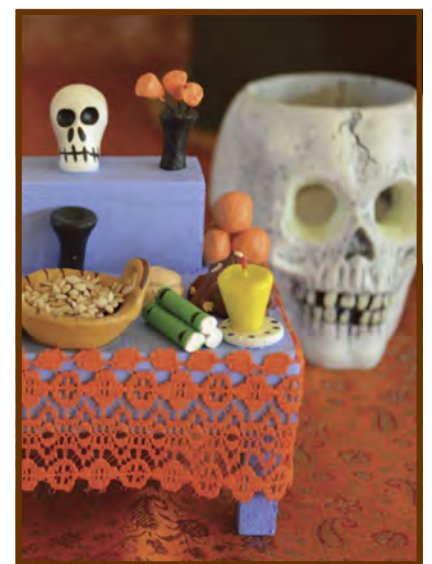
During the Hungry Ghost Ceremony, we chant sutras and make offerings of food and water to the beings of the preta realm. In making this gift we must overcome our own greed, thereby setting an example for the hungry ghosts. This freely-offered food and drink does not turn into poison or fire, which is 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 per-

sonal 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.

Members are invited to attend in person. You may also attend via Zoom. For full information visit: www.vermontzen.org/ceremony_hungryghost.html



Upcoming Courses

Flower Arranging September 24

Learn basic Ikebana and flower arranging elements used at the Vermont Zen Center. 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. Register on the Zen Center's website:

www.vermontzen.org

Indian Cooking

Weekend Meal September 17

Learn how to prepare a delicious and authentic 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. With a cookbook of the recipes and practical experience, you will be ready to prepare a delicious Indian meal for your family and friends.

Festive Meal October 15

A bit more challenging—in this course you will learn how to prepare a festive meal for a special occasion. Manju Selinger and the experienced cooks in the Zen Center's spacious kitchen will guide you through the process, and you'll enjoy the results for lunch. More information and registration on the Zen Center's website: www.vermontzen.org

October Jataka Sesshin—Deadline September 30

We are extremely fortunate to be able to offer once again a Jataka Tale sesshin with Roshi Rafe Martin as the guest teacher. The sesshin begins on **Friday evening, October 21**, rather than the usual Saturday start of a sesshin. The first two days (Saturday and Sunday) will be full-time, the last three 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 (Graef) will be giving dokusan three times a day

during the first two days, and twice a day during the last three days.

The sesshin will be devoted to working with Jataka tales. Roshi Martin will be conducting discussions of the Jatakas during the weekend, and giving teishos using the Jatakas throughout the rest of the sesshin. The emphasis will be on how these ancient stories of the Buddha's previous lifetimes relate to our own lives and practice.

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. This year once again, there will be the option of Zooming in for the Jataka talk portion of the sesshin.



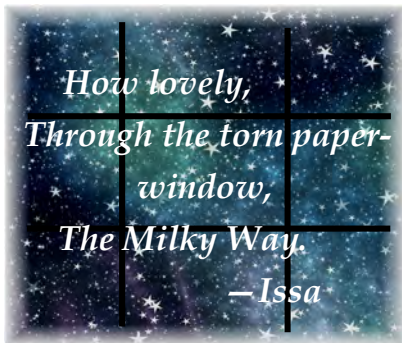


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The Zen Center is Open to Members and Trial Members

All members and trial members are now welcome to attend sittings at the Center! The only requirements are that you are neither ill nor have been in recent contact with someone who is ill, and you wear a high-quality mask while inside the Center.

As variants of Covid continue to appear we will monitor and possibly have to adapt our policies to accord with the situation.

We continue to have all events, including sittings, dokusan, and sesshin, available via Zoom. But local members are encouraged to begin attending sittings in person. We miss you! —