

# Zen Heart Sangha

Newsletter

Spring 2023

Issue 37



Buddha's foot print (Buddhapada),  
2nd Century, India

## On Forgiveness

*"There are those who do not realize  
that one day we all must die.  
But those who do realize this settle their quarrels."*

*~The Dhammapada*

In researching the Buddhist canon, I was surprised to find little or no mention of the idea of forgiveness. Other than the Dhammapada, there were no references to it specifically, although it is clearly a central theme in other religions and a part of ordinary human experience. Growing up Catholic, I often recited the Lord's Prayer that ended, "... forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us..." As a child, my understanding was that we were asking God to forgive our sins while we promised to forgive those who sinned against us as part of the deal. What I observed, however, was that the adults in my life weren't as willing to forgive others as we hoped God would be with us!

While influenced by this early teaching, it was Buddhism that provided me tools to actually practice forgiveness. The Three Marks of Existence, a core teaching of Buddhism, are self-evident truths which point the way to the compassionate act of forgiveness: the truths of suffering/dissatisfaction, impermanence, and emptiness. Dissatisfaction (*dukkha*) exists—even when we get what we want, things change because of impermanence; but emptiness (the lack of a permanent, abiding nature separate from everything else) shows us our interconnection.

Understanding these truths may allow us to view forgiveness in a different light. When misunderstandings arise that cause hurt feelings

# Zen Heart Sangha 2023

## Head Teacher

Misha Shungen Merrill

## Dharma and Sewing Teacher

Jill Kakushin Kaplan

## Practice Leaders

Work Leader: Jim Little/Sylvia  
Hawley

## Board Officers

President: Kathleen Dickey  
Treasurer: Shannon Bergman  
Secretary: Jim Little

## Board Members

Bill Clopton  
Marya Shahinian  
Alisa Mallari Tu

## Stewards

Email/Website: Jill Kaplan  
Dana/Outreach: Bill Clopton  
Setup: TBD  
Newsletter: Sue Jensen, Alisa  
Mallari Tu

## Committees

Ethics Council  
(formerly Council of Harmony):  
Diane Comey, Camille Spar,  
Sylvia Hawley  
Membership:  
Misha Merrill, Bill Clopton,  
Nancy Leech  
Finance:  
Camille Spar, Jill Kaplan,  
Alisa Mallari Tu, Misha Merrill,  
Skanda Goudar

or anger, it is because we believe in the delusion of self and other as separate (i.e., we take it personally) when in fact there is no permanent, unchanging self to continue being offended. Unfortunately, our lack of forgiveness will be based on that original delusion and carried forward. As the Dhammapada states in the opening verses: "He abused me, he overpowered me, he robbed me. Those who harbor such thoughts do not still their hatred." The result of harboring those thoughts is the unwillingness to forgive which continues feeding our upset.

But the Dhammapada continues: "There are those who do not realize that one day we all must die. But those who do realize this settle their quarrels." When we see the truth of impermanence and emptiness, we realize that we can end the suffering of our hurts by forgiving—by settling our quarrels. There is no time but now, no time to harbor hatred. Let us forgive ourselves and each other for being human.

Blessings, Misha Shungen

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*Forgive*



Forgive  
bowing, head and body touches the earth,  
receives the suffering of others,  
heart understands my own

Forgive  
life is short

Jill Kakushin

# Forgiveness Notes from Dharma Seminar

The Dharma Seminar is discussing Norman Fischer's teachings in When You Greet Me I Bow. Birgit selected the chapter "On Forgiveness" and asked us to consider the following questions.

What means forgiveness to you?

Do you remember an occasion when you were being forgiven?

When do you know that you have truly forgiven someone?

Do you need a repentance from the other person in order to forgive?

What is the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation?

What is the relationship or connection between forgiveness and mercy?

What is the relationship or connection between forgiveness and servility?

Here are the notes on forgiveness and reconciliation from the group: Jill Kakushin Kaplan, Birgit Maas, Rick Moss, Sue Jensen, Rena Zahorsky, Marya Shahinian, Olivia Heathcote, Sylvia Hawley, Laura Hansen, Judy Reyes, Judith Dauberman & Diane Comey

Forgiving takes more than saying the words.

Forgiving doesn't mean the act was acceptable.

How do you know if you forgive someone?

Forgiveness and love are the same.

Forgiveness is not to get stuck in the pain.

It comes in waves, and it's not dependable.

Forgiveness means giving space to thoughts, not taking things personally, replacing resentment with unconditional love.

Holding onto anger and resentment holds us back.

Forgiveness with reconciliation entails remorse, rehabilitation

Borges: "Without forgetting there is no forgiveness."

Maybe we need to forget to forgive.

Forgiving is a mystery, it's grace, it's not intellectual.

Seeing the woundedness brings up compassion and sadness.

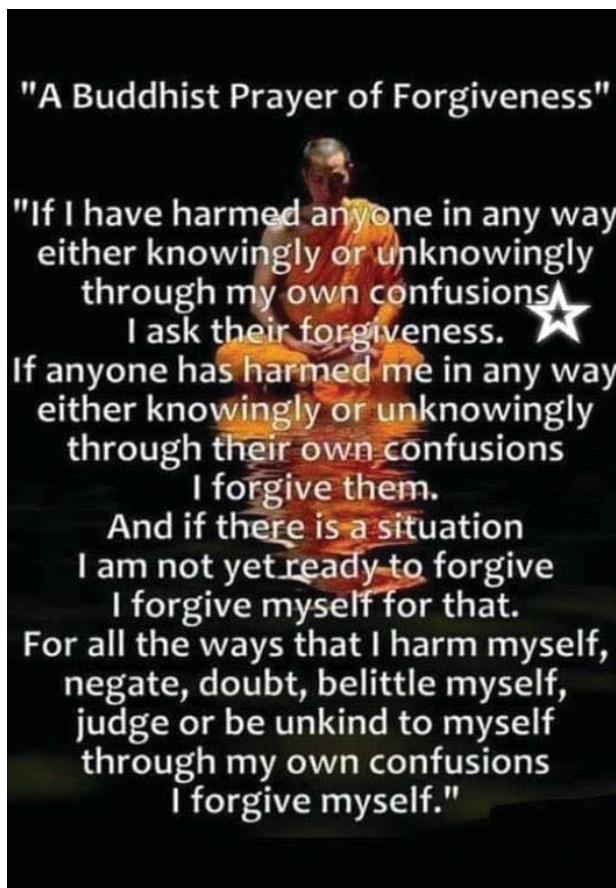
Receiving forgiveness is a great gift.

When I forgive I recognize you are human.

When there is forgiveness there is love and healing in the process.

All my ancient twisted karma is for all beings.

We are fools when we think we're a separate self.



from Wing Ng



## Practice of Dana

In the Buddhist tradition teachings are given freely because they are considered priceless; in the Buddhist tradition we also practice Dana, or generosity, by making monetary offerings for the teachings. Dana is not a payment for goods or services rendered; it is given from the heart. To donate please go to: [zenheartsangha.org/donate](http://zenheartsangha.org/donate)

## Gasshos

Gassho—two palms together—is our way of expressing gratitude. At this time, we offer gassho to the following individuals:

- Sylvia Hawley, for her leadership as president with humor and compassion for the last three years!
- Kat Haimson for being a member of the Council of Harmony for three years
- Jill Kaplan for on-going sewing practice and IT support
- Bill Clopton and Rick Moss for continuously supporting sangha members in need of extra attention
- All of our doans and kokyos who provide the bells and chanting for our services
- A big gassho to all of you who supported Al and Kat Haimson through Al's final days
- And to all of your love and support of Hau Long over the last ten months

## Monthly Schedule (online)

### Daily Sittings

Mon-Fri mornings	
Zazen	6:30
End	7:00

Contact Jim Little  
[stillsilentmind@gmail.com](mailto:stillsilentmind@gmail.com)

### Monday evenings (changes are in bold)

Zazen	7:00
Service	<b>7:30</b>
Lecture	<b>7:40</b>
Final Bows	<b>8:15</b>
End Eventing	<b>8:30</b>

### Tues-Fri. evenings

Zazen	5:30
Merit & well-being	6:00
End	6:15

Contact Jill Kakushin Kaplan  
[kjillkaplan@gmail.com](mailto:kjillkaplan@gmail.com)

### 1st & 3rd Saturday mornings

Zazen	8:00
Service	8:40
Tea	8:50
Study	9:00
End	10:15

\* Except 1st Monday of the month:  
1st Mon: Zazen | Group Discussion

Contact for online links:  
[admin@zenheartsangha.org](mailto:admin@zenheartsangha.org)

Zazen – sitting meditation  
Kinhin – walking meditation

## Calendar of Events

### April

15 Third Saturday ((zoom)/Ordinees meeting

22 Zazen and service (zoom)/Dharma Seminar

### May

1 Retreat evening (zoom)

6 First Saturday (zoom)

8 Speaker: Jill (zoom)

13 Zazen and service via zoom

13 Tokudo ceremony for Kathleen and Sylvia: 11-2pm in-person at Mallari Studios

15 Speaker: Misha (hybrid at Peninsula School)

19 Tea Ceremony

20 Third Saturday ((zoom)/Ordinees meeting

22 Guest Speaker: Sylvia Hawley (hybrid at Peninsula School)

27 Zazen and service (zoom)

29 NO MEETING (Memorial Day)

### June

3 Return to in-person/hybrid Saturday mornings at Mallari Studios (1st and 3rd Sat)

5 Discussion evening

10 Zazen and service (zoom)

12 Speaker: Misha

16 Tea Ceremony

17 Third Saturday (hybrid at Mallari Studios)/Ordinees meeting

19 Speaker: Jill

24 Zazen and service (zoom)

Dharma Seminar (Jill)

26 Guest Speaker (TBD)

### Retreats

Fall Retreat: October 13-14 hybrid at Mallari Studios (tentative)

December 1-8 Rohatsu Practice Week

December 1-2 Rohatsu 2-day retreat

### Sangha Meetings

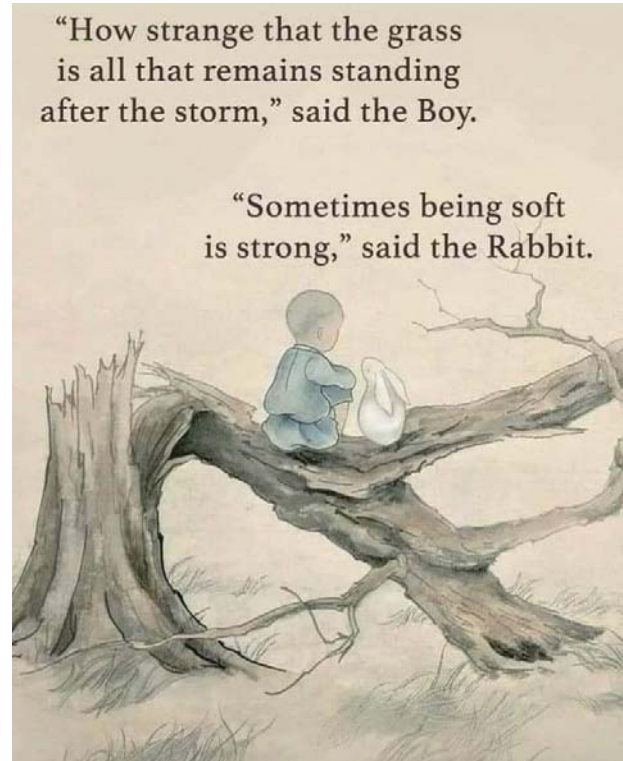
April 29

Other dates TBD

## Short Time in this Body

When you attempt to resolve a past trauma with more strength or threats it is followed by more suffering. To give or receive forgiveness it must come from love and an appreciation of our short time in this body.

~ Diane Comey



“How strange that the grass is all that remains standing after the storm,” said the Boy.

“Sometimes being soft is strong,” said the Rabbit.

## Child's Dream

Forgiveness is the answer to a child's dream of a miracle by which what is broken is made whole again, what is soiled is again made clean. The dream explains why we need to be forgiven, and why we must forgive.

~Dag Hammarskjold

It rang true to me.....

~ Birgit Maass

# Forgiveness

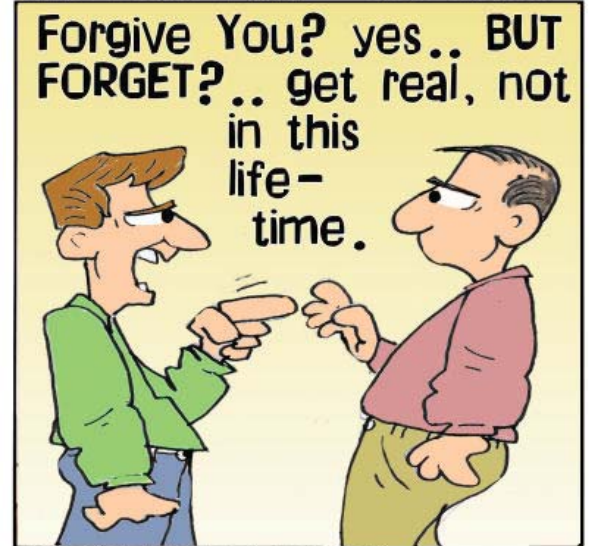
My great-grandfather, Robert Dickey, and his brother, Sidney, traveled by wagon train from Prairie City, Illinois, where they were born, to northeastern Colorado in 1883, where they had a general store. They traded the store for a homestead of 160 acres but then had a falling out over - what? And never spoke again.

Now one of my siblings and I have had a falling out and I keep thinking I have forgiven them, but this comic says it best.

Another quote I am trying to heed: "Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die." (Saint Augustine)

~ Kathleen Dickey

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



**FORGET ME NOTS** The difference between man's forgiveness, and God's is that God is forgetful? **1 Jo 1:9, Is 43:25, Ps 103:12**

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## Being Willing to Forgive

Sometimes, try though I may, I can't force forgiveness. I used to beat myself up about that, however, have stopped and started 'being willing to forgive.' For the real big things, this has worked because some things have several years and levels and forgiveness happens over time -- usually as I have grown and gained knowledge.

The other thing I learned about forgiveness, is it's really NOT about forgiving the other. It is about forgiving yourself, even if you weren't to blame or even the wrongdoer.

The big example in my life is the relationship with my mother. I hated her for many years because she was not a good mother. It wasn't until I stopped believing the negative things about myself she said about me and forgave myself for things she said or did that my healing occurred.

And the moment I healed myself (stopped buy into her narrative) forgiveness happened instantly and my hatred dissolved.

So, when I am hating someone, some thing, etc. I now look internally for where I've bought into the false narrative and work on the reason why it's hard to let that go. That is work I can do that leads to forgiveness.

~ Shannon Bergman



One of the first representations of the Buddha, Kushan period, 1st-2nd century AD, Gandhara, Pakistan

## Forgetting is Forgiveness

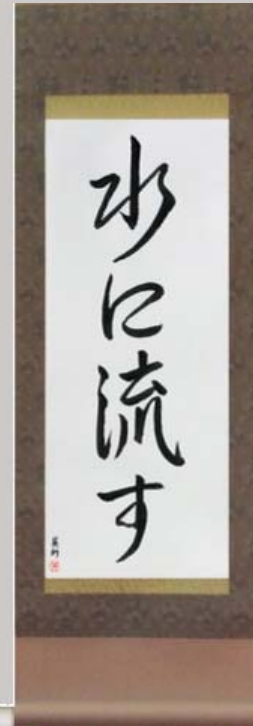
I learned something new about forgiveness just recently, reading a review by the Scottish family physician-author Gavin Francis of two new books on the subject of forgetting, by neurologist Scott Small and essayist Lewis Hyde (who wrote the 1983 classic on creativity and generosity, The Gift). Francis quotes Jorge Luis Borges for this profound insight:

“Forgetting is the only form of forgiveness.”

I pondered this, realizing that memory serves justice, but forgetting serves forgiveness, and in the end we can't live without it. In the course of elaborating this point, Francis offers an anecdote from Hyde's new book, A Primer for Forgetting, that was written by Navajo activist Woman Stands Shining (aka Pat McCabe). In it she addresses her murdered ancestors:

“I said to them, that we would love them always and forever, but that somehow we must forget, or let go of, all the violence that had come before now, or we ourselves would complete the job of genocide that the US government began. I begged them, my ancestors, to let us go free. I told them they must find their way home to the Spirit World. And then I prayed with all my heart and all my tears and asked for the Creator to open the gate for them to travel and to leave us in peace, and for them to find peace beyond the gate, and for each of us to travel in the correct way once again, each in our own world, me in the Earth Walk world and they, true ancestors, in the Spirit World.”

~ Rick Moss



## Mizu Ni Nagasu

Scroll by Master  
Japanese Calligrapher  
Eri Takase

Forgive and Forget in Japanese is 水に流す which is read *mizu ni nagasu*.

The Japanese proverb *mizu ni nagasu* literally means “let it flow in the water”. This is equivalent to the English saying “Water under the bridge” or “Forgive and Forget”

## We are all on Hospice aka We are already Broken

I got in a rather dramatic argument with one of my family members the other day. I want to fix everything. I want things to be a certain way. I want to be acknowledged. I see something wrong and I want them to see it too. I'm not getting what I want, and I behave poorly and have judgement and resentment and am suffering and am causing suffering! Greed, hate and delusion.

I gave my son a call on the phone today. We had to take care of some business about paying for his summer college program tuition and mentioned this argument and dissatisfaction. (My son, Kawika worked at our care facility as a caregiver for several months). He says, “Mama, you just have to pretend everyone is on hospice. Just keep them clean, offer food and water, and be nice to them. They will be okay.”

~ Alisa Mallari Tu



## *Move in the Direction of Forgiving*

While cleaning out emails I came across these words of Desmond Tutu and his daughter. They may have been lifted from several places in their book.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1931–2021) and his daughter Mpho Tutu van Furth focus on our fragile humanity, the good and bad that we are all capable of, as the entry point for forgiveness: We are able to forgive because we are able to recognize our shared humanity. We are able to recognize that we are all fragile, vulnerable, flawed human beings capable of thoughtlessness and cruelty. We also recognize that no one is born evil and that we are all more than the worst thing we have done in our lives. A human life is a great mixture of goodness, beauty, cruelty, heartbreak, indifference, love, and so much more. We want to divide the good from the bad, the saints from the sinners, but we cannot. All of us share the core qualities of our human nature, and so sometimes we are generous and sometimes selfish. Sometimes we are thoughtful and other times thoughtless, sometimes we are kind and sometimes cruel. This is not a belief. This is a fact.

If we look at any hurt, we can see a larger context in which the hurt happened. If we look at any perpetrator, we can discover a story that tells us something about what led up to that person causing harm. It doesn't justify the person's actions; it does provide some context. . . .

No one is born a liar or a rapist or a terrorist. No one is born full of hatred. No one is born full of violence. No one is born in any less glory or goodness than you or I. But on any given day, in any given situation, in any painful life

experience, this glory and goodness can be forgotten, obscured, or lost. We can easily be hurt and broken, and it is good to remember that we can just as easily be the ones who have done the hurting and the breaking.

We are all members of the same human family....

In seeing the many ways we are similar and how our lives are inextricably linked, we can find empathy and compassion. In finding empathy and compassion, we are able to move in the direction of forgiving.

Ultimately, it is humble awareness of our own humanity that allows us to forgive:

We are, every one of us, so very flawed and so very fragile. I know that, were I born a member of the white ruling class at that time in South Africa's past, I might easily have treated someone with the same dismissive disdain with which I was treated. I know, given the same pressures and circumstances, I am capable of the same monstrous acts as any other human on this achingly beautiful planet. It is this knowledge of my own frailty that helps me find my compassion, my empathy, my similarity, and my forgiveness for the frailty and cruelty of others.

*Reference:*

*Desmond Tutu and Mpho A. Tutu, The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World, ed. Douglas C. Abrams (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014), 125, 126, 127.*

~ Marya Shahinian



# Sangha Scrapbook



January 2023



Hau's Buddha altar in her room at Gordon Manor surrounded by well wishes and cards of love



Photos from Buddha's Birthday Retreat, April 2023



Hau's Buddha on the altar at Zeni Mallari's house for the Retreat



# Sangha Scrapbook



Two teachers, two friends



Six teachers, six friends



Rug during retreat



Tea makes good friends



The road to the home zendo