

Zen Heart Sangha

Issue 19

Winter 2011 Newsletter

Special Upcoming Events

Guest Speakers:

- Feb. 13: Rev. Cornelia
Shonkwiler, Middle Way ZC
Apr. 16: Guest (TBA)
May 14: Rev. Jill Kaplan (ZHS)

Special Events:

- Sangha meeting**
Jan. 16, at Diane and Wing's
Third Saturdays resume
Jan. 21
Monday evenings resume
Jan. 23
Annual Sangha meeting
Mar. 26
Vajrapani 3-day Retreat
Apr. 13–15

Monthly Schedule

Monday evenings*

Welcome/Instruction	6:30 pm
Zazen	7:00
Service	7:40
Lecture*	7:50
Final Bows	8:45
End Evening	9:00

* except 1st Mondays

1st Monday retreat

Welcome/Instruction	6:30 pm
Zazen	7:00
Kinhin	7:40
Zazen	8:00
Three Bows	8:40
End Evening	8:45

1st & 3rd Saturdays:

Zazen	5:50 am
Kinhin	6:20
Zazen	6:30
Service	7:00
Community breakfast	7:20
Soji (Cleanup)	8:00
Zazen	8:40
Study/Tea	9:15
End program	10:15

Zazen – sitting meditation
Kinhin – walking meditation

Dharma Transmission: Warm Hand to Warm Hand

“I possess the True Dharma eye, the Marvelous Mind of Nirvana, the True Form of the Formless, the Subtle Dharma Gate that does not rest on words or letters but is a special transmission outside of the scriptures. This I entrust to Mahakasyapa.”

–The Buddha

With these words, the first transmission between two buddhas occurred. What actually happened? Nothing more than the Buddha holding up a flower to his assembled monks and one of them, his chief disciple Mahakasyapa, smiling in response. In the commentary of the koan where this story is related, Master Wu-men says, “Rather strange. What if everyone in the great assembly had smiled—how would the true Dharma Eye have been passed on? And if Kasyapa had not smiled, how would the Dharma Eye have been passed on [at all]?” Strange, indeed, and a lot of weight given to one little smile!

In August 2011, this very same transmission took place between me and one of my senior disciples, Jane Shuman. I say ‘very same’ because that is the nature of what is sometimes called ‘mind to mind transmission’. It is the acknowledgement of one buddha to another that her mind and the disciple’s mind are *one and the same mind*, passed down through 93 generations in a direct line from Shakyamuni Buddha to the present. A large part of the ceremony is spent copying your teacher’s documents of this very lineage, a difficult task requiring great mindfulness and patience; however, these documents are not just to give the disciple a record of her predecessors, but also to deeply experience a connection to all those who have gone before to carry the Buddha’s Way forward to us. It is both humbling and deeply gratifying to be included in such illustrious company.

But the Buddha says that the true Dharma Eye is a special transmission outside of scriptures, so what is actually transmitted? In the commentary, Wu-men continues, “When someone says that the true Dharma Eye can be passed on, it is like the old man with the gold-colored face playing tricks at the village gate. But if someone says that it cannot be passed on, how could it then have been entrusted only to Kasyapa?” If you say that something is passed on, it is just trickery and sleight-of-hand, but on the other hand, if you say that nothing gets passed on, then what about the 93 generations and the lineage tracing a complete circle back to Shakyamuni?

Dogen’s understanding that “all beings *are* Buddha nature” helps us see that everything we need to know is already inside us—there is nothing anyone else can give you. However, our true nature may still be covered by desire, aversion, or delusion, and it is the work of a teacher to help disciples free themselves of these ‘coverings’. When this has been deeply accomplished, the mind of the student, the teacher, and all the ancestors are the same, and that mind is ‘passed’ from warm hand to warm hand.

In gassho, Misha Shungen