

Cedar Rapids Zen Center Newsletter

Volume 9, Number 2

Spring, 2008

Mercy Mirror

This year's heavy rains that caused large-scale floods have also made our yard green. The long summer days and the moisture encourage the weeds, so this afternoon I was out digging up sorrel and creeping Charlie among the grass and flowers. It's good to work in the sun and fresh air, to bloom along with everything else.

Working around the cedar tree out front reminded me of the name I made for this temple when we applied for Japanese registration – Shōgetsuzan Jikyōji (松月山慈鏡寺) – Pine Moon Mountain Mercy Mirror Temple. I was waiting for our temple to be registered before using this name, so we haven't used it much so far. Bureaucracy being what it is, it looks as if it will be a while before this actually happens, so I've been thinking we should begin including it as part of our name. What does this name mean? Each word reminds us about how to practice, so let's take it word by word.

To begin with, the name has two parts: the mountain name and the temple name. In China, a temple's first name was usually that of the mountain on or near which it stood. In Japan and America, temples are often far from mountains but this naming tradition remains. In our name the first part, ending in “zan” (“mountain”) is our mountain name. The second part is the temple name - the name that's usually used in referring to a particular temple, and it ends with “ji,” which means “temple.”

“Shōgetsu” (松月) is “pine moon.” It's a lovely image, isn't it? It's the name of the temple of the nun who shaved my head at my ordination ceremony. Tsugen Narasaki Rōshi, a man, ordained me, and ordained people are not supposed to touch people of the opposite sex, so Shōgetsuji-san shaved all but the last lock of hair, which Tsugen Rōshi cut. I don't actually know her dharma name since, at Zuiōji, respected elder teachers were referred to either by their titles or by their temple's name. Shōgetsuji-san, a small nun in her eighties from Hiroshima, did takuhatsu (begging) for the entire month of January each year in order to support her temple. I was ordained in January, so the honorarium for her help became part of Shōgetsuji's operating budget for that year. I admired her strength in walking day after day in the cold to support herself and her temple. I also admired her quiet self-possession. Though she was curious about everything, she lived inside herself with contentment and groundedness. “Shōgetsuzan” is our daily reminder to have steady, quiet practice like this nun. It's also my expression of gratitude for her kindness to this American woman, and for showing me what it means to be ordained.

But there's another level, too. “Pine” refers also to eternity and to flexibility. Pine trees remain green in winter, unchanging. They remind us to remain steady in the face of whatever season we are in. They also invite us to remember the long view, the absolute – the unchanging dharma. Pine in its stability is not rigid, though. Pine bends with whatever comes. This winter, snow bent our cedar's boughs down to the porch roof and anchored them there for a month or so. As the snow melted, the branches returned to their usual position. Right now, there's a cardinal sitting on one of them.

The moon signifies realization - the light by which we clearly see reality. The moon shines equally on all things, never choosing what it will illuminate and what it will leave in darkness. It invites us to see all sides of the reality of each moment. “Pine Moon” points us toward being awake with steadfastness and flexibility.

“Jikyō” (慈鏡) is “mercy mirror.” These two characters connect our temple with our tradition of seeing and taking care of life just as it is, and with my mentors. They are my expression of gratitude for the wisdom, compassion and – yes – patience of my teachers.

“Ji” is part of both Tsugen Rōshi's and Katagiri Rōshi's ordination names, so it brings their spirit and their tradition to this temple. It invites us to continue the simple practice taught by Shakyamuni Buddha as it was passed down to them and as they have passed it on to the next generation.

“Ji” means “compassion” – seeing that others only want to be happy just as we do, noticing that they do hurtful things because, in their suffering, they have forgotten the true nature of reality. It invites us to remember this basic fact and to be awake to others' suffering. It reminds us to forgive others when they hurt us and to help them however we can without judgment and comparison.

“Kyō” - “mirror” - is part of the names of both Milwaukee Zen Center (Kōkyō-an) and Hōkyōji in southeastern Minnesota. Tōzen Akiyama, the first resident teacher at Milwaukee, was one of my teachers. His everydayness, his constant effort to demystify practice, and his refusal to deal in titles or sentimental language are part of our spirit at Jikyōji. Before I was ordained I was closely associated with Hōkyōji in southeastern Minnesota. I had hoped to return there when I finished training, but time and tide wait for no woman. I gained much from my experiences there and want

our temple to reflect the quiet wonder of early morning zazen among Hōkyōji's green hills.

But – you guessed it – there's another level here. "Mirror" also refers to enlightenment, but in a different way from "moon." A mirror, like our minds, reflects what's in front of it. Unlike our minds, it reflects with no distortion created by thoughts and ideas. It simply reflects exactly what's before it and stops reflecting when that thing moves on. We are invited to do the same, to put away judgments and prejudices and just see what's in front of us with no aversion or greed, letting go when it moves on.

The mercy mirror is very honest and totally without judgment. In it we see our desire and the desires of all beings to be content and peaceful reflected back to us. Seeing the things, both admirable and not-so-admirable, we do to attain this desire, we wake up to suffering and we can be the mercy mirror, reflecting the truth of our lives and of others' lives with acceptance.

So, our temple is Shōgetsuzan Jikyōji – Pine Moon Mountain Mercy Mirror Temple. Our name places us firmly in the middle of Shakyamuni Buddha's simple tradition of doing zazen and being awake. It urges us to be aware with flexibility and stability, reflecting reality just as it is honestly and clearly with no grasping or aversion.

Let's work together on being Pine Moon and Mercy Mirror. We can take it one piece at a time, walking together on the Buddha's Path.

- Zuiko Redding

Remembering Kyuko

he was the barky one
now my house is so quiet

it's snowing today

- Hōkō Jan Karnegis

In the Zendo

Sit together,
like two
stars.

Not touching.

But sharing
each other's
light.

- Courtney Cook

All-Day Sitting

July 20, 2008

first zazen period – 5:00 a.m.
last zazen period ends – 4:30 p.m.

Join us as your schedule permits.

Out-of-town people may stay at Zen Center.

To register or get details -

phone: (319) 247-5986
email: crzc@avalon.net

Weightless

The most abstract
of things.

Which we build
ladders of logic
to reach.

Is beyond our
greatest distances
of construction.

Instead.

We must learn to fly
free.

- Courtney Cook

A fountain may spring a mile high
But every drop has its source in the pool.
While falling alone in the sunshine
A single drop may see in itself completeness and
independence

Until the splash where it disintegrates,
Truly whole now that it ceases to exist.

- Courtney Cook

Mu

A butterfly shadow
flutters in a red geranium
just watered.

- Paula Duvall

The Flood

Fortunately, Zen Center came through the Cedar Rapids flood without mishap, and all our members are fine as well. Now we're all concentrating on cleaning up and rebuilding our community. Zen Center hopes to contribute to this effort in many ways in the coming months. We began on June 21 by helping clean mud out of the basement at Mother Mosque of America, the oldest mosque building in the U.S.

If you wish to donate to flood recovery in Cedar Rapids, you can send a check with "Flood 2008 Fund" on the memo line to the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation at 200 First St. SW, Cedar Rapids IA 52404. You may also contribute on their web site – www.gcrf.org. GCRCF is making 100% of the money available to local nonprofits to help individuals and families to recover and rebuild.

Cedar Falls Zen Sitting Group

St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Cedar Falls
Tuesday evenings at 7:20 p.m.
Saturday mornings at 7:20 a.m.

Information www.home.cfunet/~cfzensitting
Email cfzensitting@cfu.net.

If You're Cleaning Out the Attic . . .

Chairs are needed for the discussion room. Some of our older chairs have become too fragile to use and we need to replace them. We'd prefer wooden dining chairs, hopefully in a dark wood that would fit in with the ones we already have.

Shelves We'd like to replace the pressboard shelves under the windows in the discussion room with ones that are more sturdy and a bit more attractive. We'd need shelves that are 12 inches or so inches deep, 40-45 inches wide and 36-40 inches high.

Published by

Cedar Rapids Zen Center

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Zen Isn't Just Sitting . . .

If you're looking for practice opportunities at the Center, here are some possibilities. If you're interested, email us - crzc@avalon.net or phone us - (319) 247-5986.

Work days At our last sangha meeting, we scheduled work days for June 21, July 19, and September 20. These are days when we do maintenance and other work around the center. We invite you to join us for work, pizza and the good company of other practitioners.

Among the tasks on our agenda are scraping and painting the ceiling and floor of the porch, repairing the exterior paint, washing windows and putting sealer on the new railing.

If you've seen a project that needs doing, you're invited to send your thoughts to Tim (tmace00@msn.com).

Librarian The receipt of a recent gift of books from David Ard has reminded us that there is no longer anyone taking care of the library. Would you like to do that? If so, you would be putting our sticker on new books and shelving them along with books that have been returned. You would also be continuing to organize the shelves, and developing the library so that it is useful for everyone.

Recycling Components from a former computer could be recycled by taking them to Goodwill. Also, a box of old cleaning supplies and another of metal that need to be taken to the city recycling center. If you have a couple of hours, one of these trips would be a fine opportunity to help the Center.

Media work We need someone to download Zuiko's talks from the recording device to the computer and to make copies of them on request.

Bookstore The bookstore needs a manager to keep track of the inventory, order books and organize the sales shelves. The bookstore manager would work together with Zuikō to decide on books to order and she would train her or him in the ordering process. Our bookstore is small, so this should take an average of an hour a month.

Newsletter It would be helpful to have someone to edit and proofread the newsletter, as well as someone to write the news notes and other notices. Creativity is welcomed.

Credits

Editing	Ryan Wheeler
Mailing	Teresa Macejak
Writing	Courtney Cook Paula Duvall Hōkō Jan Karnegis Zuiko Redding

Cedar Rapids Zen Center

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Daily Schedule

Zen Center – 1618 Bever Ave. SE

Morning

Wednesday and Thursday
 6:00 - 6:40 am zazen
 6:40 - 6:50 kinhin
 6:50 - 7:20 zazen
 7:20 - 7:40 sutra chanting

Sunday
 9:00 - 9:40 am zazen
 9:45 - 10:30 dharma talk
 10:30 - 11:15 tea
 11:20 - 12:30 work period

Noon

Tuesday and Friday
 12:15 – 12:55 zazen

Evening

Tuesday
 6:30 - 6:50 pm zazen
 6:50 - 7:00 kinhin
 7:00 - 7:20 zazen
 7:20 - 7:30 kinhin
 7:30 - 7:50 zazen

Wednesday and Thursday
 6:30 - 7:10 pm zazen
 7:10 - 7:20 kinhin
 7:20 - 8:00 zazen

Calendar

May	18	All-day sitting
	21	Zazen instruction
June	18	Zazen instruction
	22	All-day sitting
July	16	Zazen instruction
	20	All-day sitting
August	9 - 16	Great Sky Sesshin (Hokyoji)
	20	Zazen instruction
September	17	Zazen instruction
	21	All-day sitting
October	15	Zazen instruction
	17 - 19	Sesshin
November	16	All-day sitting
	19	Zazen instruction
December	5 - 7	Sesshin (Rohatsu)
	17	Zazen instruction
	31	New Year's sitting