



Encouraging Words from the Teacher

Maggie Gluek

Courage

The task of offering “encouraging words” got me thinking about *discouragement*. “Courage” is at the root of both terms, deriving in the first instance from Middle English *corage* which means “heart as the seat of feeling.” The Zen path, like any path, presents obstacles and the possibility then of losing heart, maybe abandoning the project. How to proceed when you are discouraged? Faith is fundamental. Faith in the tradition, in the Buddha’s experience, in the experience of those who have gone before you, faith in *yourself*. Can the practice be other than your very life? And constancy, I want to say, is fundamental. It’s tempting to think that whatever your practice on the cushion is, there’s a better one that you could be pursuing, something else that might offer better results or experiences. Who am I to judge? But be careful of wanting to chop and change--this is often just fantasy, not to say desire on the part of the ego. Aitken Roshi instanced concern with one’s *condition*, with states of mind and body that seem difficult, as being a particularly sticky hindrance in zazen. He advised against getting caught up in content. Instead, you can regard personal conditions as being like the weather...sometimes sunny, sometimes overcast, sometimes cool, sometimes wet. In any case, like the weather, they change. The thing is just to keep going, keep going! Be right where you are. That’s it. Not denying anything. And returning faithfully to your single-minded focus, letting everything else fall away. Being willing to forget it all, to not know. It is that simple.

“Not knowing with each step” comes forth in Janet Selby’s illuminating talk on her Shikoku pilgrimage (accessible on the SZC podcast page.) To take up the way of Zen is to be a pilgrim wherever you are—faithfully going nowhere to realise the self and all beings. A favorite quote: Someone said to Soen Roshi, “I am so discouraged. What should I do?” “Encourage others!” was that teacher’s wise reply. At the heart of our Zen path—at the heart of real courage—is forgetting the self. I’ve recently had an upper respiratory “situation” wherein a virus circled around from nasal congestion to cough to post-nasal drip to headache, back

to cough and so on. It strikes me as an analogy for self-created suffering, a closed system that loops around and around toxically, repeating and reinforcing the same deluded thoughts. Step outside that closed system and the world greets you. How to do so? Become one with Mu, with this breath, one with circumstances—the pilgrim’s one step.

But again, it is a matter of persistence. Reminding yourself to be true. The words of John Bunyan’s hymn, sung back-in-the-day at Zen sharings, comes to mind:

Who would true valour see, let him come hither;

One who would constant be, come wind, come weather.

There’s no discouragement shall make him once relent

His first avowed intent to be a pilgrim.

The 17th-century Japanese poet and pilgrim Bashō often travelled in rather poor health. His journal speaks of weariness and trembling legs. But, faithful to the Way, he kept going.

Exhausted

seeking an inn:

wisteria flowers.

“At the very point of despair,” writes Aitken Roshi in his *Zen Wave*, “Bashō encounters the rich, lavender wisteria flowers.” And the Roshi quotes Dogen: “Without the bitterest cold that penetrates to the very bone, how can plum blossoms spill forth their fragrance all over the world?”

Persist and practise, dear Zen pilgrims. Take heart! Liberation is always at hand.

Maggie Gluek

Reports

Family Weekend and Picnic Day 22 October 2017

"There is a 'precious heart-to-heart connection sangha members experience,'" Gillian Coote recently reminded us at the AGM. 'In this time of increasingly virtual relationships, the importance of face-to-face communication in handing on the live coal of the Dharma, as Robert Aitken roshi did, is ever-greater. Turning up for sangha events maintains these connections, not turning up erodes them. Sangha – one of the Three Treasures - is the embodiment of the Buddha's Way, bringing forth kindness – compassion, wisdom – and care - in abundance. Thich Nhat Hanh even hypothesised that the coming Buddha, Maitreya, will be Sangha.'

This was borne out at the recent Family Weekend, when SZC members and their families, as well as almost all of the residents along the Gorricks Run road came to Kodoji for a neighbourly gathering. We got to know each other better, had a fabulous picnic and a friendly game of cricket. When we first started building at Gorricks Run in the 1980s we often brought our families along and had games with our neighbours. The SZC Board decided that it was time we did it again.

All of our neighbours were interested in finding out about our Zen practice, so Sue and Brendon gave them a tour of the place and explained what we do at Kodoji. Many of them were interested in coming along to sit, so we may have an introductory day of practice for our neighbours in the new year. We enjoyed sharing the Dharma and having it organically spread into the Valley.



Left: On Saturday, our members Nick and Sean brought their partners, Jo and Yumi and their kids. We had a wonderful afternoon and evening meal together. The kids loved playing in the field, picking flowers for the table, and riding their scooters on the verandah.

Right: Heath, Fleur, Curtis, Chiyo and Sachi particularly enjoyed toasting marshmallows in the new fireplace.

Below: A family weekend isn't complete without games, so after lunch when the clouds came over and it was cooler to be in the paddock, young and old took to the freshly mown pitch for a game of cricket. Nick spent Saturday afternoon mowing the whole property to make it look and feel loved. He even mowed 'S Z C' into the long grass!



Attendees:

*Zennies: Nick, Jo and kids Heath and Fleur, and Sean, Yumi and kids Curtis, Chiyo and Sachi along with Jill Ball, Janet, Jason, Lily, Allan, Sue & Barry, Glenys, Helen and friend Naseer, Jill Stevenson, Brendon & Kerry
Neighbours: Bronwyn & Jim, Dave, Patrick, Carol, Radha, Sarah, Pat & Lily (Living Heritage), Sahaj (Mogo Creek via St Albans)*



Family Weekend and Picnic Day Pics



Jukai Ceremony for Britta, at Spring Sesshin



Memorial Ceremony 12 November 2017



Eight of us met together to sit and chant and then share words about someone we especially wished to honour. Gilly introduced the Ceremony by speaking of Generosity- in particular the generosity of Aitken Roshi (who would have been 100 years old this year) in coming out to Australia to lead sesshin. She placed a photo on the altar of the very first sesshin he led, and by looking very carefully at those so much younger, hairier, folk, a few familiar faces emerged.

Each of us who had photos put them, with a flower, on the altar, then we each spoke of who we had been especially remembering.

Very interestingly many of us had been thinking of our parents, but more particularly of our fathers, their lives and the role they played in our lives.

Great friends were remembered with gratitude, and two greatly loved cats. A very rich time of sharing together. We then enjoyed a potluck meal around the table, chatting heart to heart of Life, the Universe and Everything.

Spring Sesshin 2017

This year's spring sesshin was dedicated to Robert Aitken Roshi. Janet Selby and Jill Stevenson were boundlessly supportive in their roles as sesshin co-ordinator and food planner. There was one newcomer to sesshin and the rest were seasoned students, one of whom had sat with Ross Bolleter in Perth. Our leadership team comprised Maggie Gluek, Jane Andino, Will Moon and Jason Koh. Britta came from Perth to sit with us and took Jukai in a moving ceremony, attended by her close friend Shauna with her young - 14 months old - daughter, Saorise, whom we welcomed into our sangha at the Buddha's Birthday Ceremony in April. During sesshin, we also responded to a call in Living Heritage, a local newsletter for 'community volunteers in action', to record the distinctive grunting calls male koalas make during the mating season from September to November. People listed hearing these calls most nights. One morning, the kinhin line walked past a green and gold diamond python, a large goanna visited most days, probably wondering where all our compost had gone, birdsong filled the valley and moonlight lit the paddock as it waxed to full over the days. At the closing ceremony, I spoke about the precious heart-to-heart connection sangha members experience, and how in this time of increasingly virtual relationships, the importance of face-to-face communication in handing on the live coal of the Dharma, as Roshi did, is ever-greater. Turning up for sangha events maintains these connections, not turning up erodes them. Sangha - one of the Three Treasures - is the embodiment of the Buddha's Way, bringing forth

kindness - compassion, wisdom - and care - in abundance. Thich Nhat Hanh even hypothesised that the coming Buddha, Maitreya, will be Sangha.

Gillian Coote



Zen Roots Workshop

led by Paul Maloney, Annandale 23 September

Paul kindly offered to lead a workshop to deepen the understanding of those Sangha members who provide Orientation to new people. Ten participants attended this three hour workshop. Paul had provided significant pre-reading that supported the subsequent learning and discussion on the day. The papers covered an introduction, the historical Buddha, shikantaza and the two main Zen schools, the Soto tradition as passed down from Dōgen Zenji (1200-1252), and the reformed Rinzai tradition passed down from Hakuin Ekaku (1685-1768).

Paul held an informal style that enabled us to fully participate in discussion. Paul led the talks including why do we sit? Our preoccupation with our internal dialogue, self nature and zazen in practice. We discussed what really is Shikantaza (silent illumination) and do we practice this? Dogen translated this as wholeheartedly hit the cushion.

Paul included some of the great stories of Zen spirit and why these are part of our lineage. Such as how Hakuin also was not slack when it came to zazen. In Hakuin's autobiography, he recounts many occasions when, becoming stuck in a problem, he would do zazen without moving for seven days and nights. Even as an old man Hakuin did not sleep in a bed. Instead he would wrap himself in his futon and sit in the zazen posture while sleeping. In his song in praise of zazen Hakuin states the human condition and asks the question:

*Lost on dark paths of ignorance
we wander through the six worlds,
from dark path to dark path we wander,
when shall we be freed from birth and death?*

I found it an honour to attend and listen to Paul's knowledge. It is a treasure we have someone in our Sangha who has undertaken such serious study both in Japan and in Australia over many years. I felt better equipped to do my first Orientation of newcomers as I felt I would be able to field more questions of the Roots of Zen as a Buddhist practice. Deep bow of gratitude to Paul.

Jill Steverson

Coming Events



Rohatsu Sesshin at Annadale 8-13 December Led by Allan Marett

Rohatsu (8 December) is the day on which we, together with Zen communities around the world, celebrate the Buddha's realisation. Our five-day sesshin is non-residential and held at SZC at Annandale. Full or part time participation is welcome.

Enquiries and bookings Jill Steverson
jillsteverson@gmail.com
Mobile 0411 655606

News from the Board

AGM

Thanks to everyone who attended and offered their time and energy at the AGM. For the first time we had all the jobs, that ensure the smooth running of our centre, filled. The Board would like to especially thank Sally for doing so many jobs over so many years, and to those people who've allowed her a well-deserved rest.

COPYRIGHT

It was brought to the Board's notice that with our publication, Mind Moon Circle, now available on our website, it wasn't clear who owned the copyright. So, a statement has been added to attribute copyright to each individual author, illustrator, poet or photographer.

MIND MOON CIRCLE

Please let Kerry know if you would like to save some trees by getting a digital copy of the MMC instead of the printed version.

2018 EVENTS

The Board is excited about some exciting events for next year. So far we're planning a walking weekend at Kodoji, another family weekend and maybe even a concert. Details will be revealed closer to the dates.

DONATION

At the AGM the members decided to give the St Albans Fire Brigade an annual donation of \$200. At the latest Board meeting it was decided to give the opportunity to members to add to that sum by putting their donations in a box in the foyer at Annandale. This will happen every year at this time, for about a month.

SAMU

One job that people aren't signing up for is to clean the dojo and hojo. The job is a simple yet integral part of keeping our dojo looking and feeling cared for. Kim Bagot is the new coordinator of the roster, so please contact him to offer your time: kimballb7@gmail.com

Notices

Leadership Roles

Dojo leadership is not only a fantastic way to actualise caring for the sangha and merging one's practice with the vast field we all share, it's also a great way to guarantee you'll turn up.

For those interested, please contact the following leaders who can guide you in the form of the roles.

Ino: Peter Bursky mowerman26@hotmail.com

Jiki: Sue Bidwell sue.bidwell17@gmail.com

Jisha: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

Books for Sale

Robert Aitken books for sale at Annandale include:

The Ground We Share, The Practice of Perfection, Zen Master Raven, The Morning Star, Original Dwelling Place.

And don't forget the books and CDs by SZC members Sally Hopkins and Glenys Jackson, *Star and Mountain*; *Zen Leopard* by Brendon Stewart; *Swimming in Sound* by Caroline Josephs.

Notice Board

Dokusan

Mondays

Subhana: Dec 18

Allan: Jan 8, 15, 22

Wednesdays

Gillian: Dec 20, 27.

Jan 3, 24

(without Gillian: Jan 10, 17)

Full Moon Ceremony

December 4 + 6 (Not Killing)

January 29 + 31 (Not Stealing)

Dharma Café

January 29+30

Zazenkai

January: Sun 21 Zazenkai 8.30-12

Talk Jane Andino, Dokusan Paul Maloney

Orientations for Newcomers 7-9pm

Thursdays: January 18 with Janet

Beginners Night January 25

See website for more details www.szc.org.au

Board Meeting

December 5 + January 9

6 pm for 6.30 start.

All SZC members very welcome.

Womens Group Open to all Women Members

December 1 Jill Steverson's

January 13 Caroline's

Regular Notices

Use of Kodoji

Kodoji is available for use by members of the SZC and guests (if accompanied by a member). It can also be hired by other groups if approved by the Board. Fees are \$20 per night for members and \$25 for non-members. There is a \$100 booking fee for non-member groups. Booking of Kodoji is essential and it is also essential to receive instructions about use of the facility before going there. Please note that the local Fire Brigade has advised restrictions during summer.

Try giving the family a wonderful weekend, or yourself a few days of private retreat.

Enquiries to Brendon Stewart, phone 9879 7290

email stewarts34@bigpond.com

Blue Mountains Zen

The Blue Mountains Zen Group meets on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, 2 - 4.30pm in Lawson. Our teacher is Paul Maloney, 9045 3897 or contact Jane at janeandino@yahoo.com.au

Canberra Zen Group

Meets on Wednesday evenings.

Please contact Gary for more details: 0429 635 412
email gcaitcheon@gmail.com

North Shore Zen Group

Meets on Thursday nights 7-9pm at the *Quaker Meeting House*, 59 Boundary Road, Wahroonga. Please bring your own zafu/stool and zabuton.

Contribution \$5 - \$10 towards hiring the venue.

Please contact Maggie Gluek for more details:
magpiewarble@yahoo.com.

Ashfield Morning Zazen

SZC members interested in morning zazen and dokusan are invited to join a small group that sits regularly on Wednesday mornings from 6.30am - 8.00am.

Please contact Allan Marett allan.marett@gmail.com
0409712767 or Peter Bursky
mowerman26@hotmail.com 0405 042 236

Members of the New Board

Kerry Stewart (Chairperson) stewartkerry4@gmail.com; Steven Crump (secretary); Helen Sanderson; Jason Koh (treasurer); Danny Banyer; Alex Budlevskis; Jillian Ball; Brendon Stewart.

Newsletter Editor: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

SZC: info@szc.com.au, www.szc.org.au

SZC Calendar December 2017-January 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Nov 26	27 ZAZEN 7-9pm	28	29 ZAZEN 7-9pm	30	Dec 1 Women's group Jill's	2
3	4 Full Moon Ceremony (not killing) 7-9pm	5 Board Meeting 6pm for 6.30	6 Full Moon Ceremony (not killing) 7-9pm	7	8 Rohatsu Sesshin starts	9
10	11	12	13 Rohatsu ends ZAZEN 7-9pm	14	15	16
17	18 ZAZEN 7-9pm	19	20 ZAZEN 7-9pm	21	22	23
24	25 ZAZEN 7-9pm	26	27 ZAZEN 7-9pm	28	29	30
31	Jan 1	2	3 ZAZEN 7-9pm	4	5	6
7	8 ZAZEN 7-9pm	9 Board Meeting 6pm for 6.30	10 ZAZEN 7-9pm	11	12	13 Women's Group at Caroline's
14 Zazenkaï 8.30-12 Talk Jane Andino dokusan Paul Maloney	15 ZAZEN 7-9pm	16	17 ZAZEN 7-9pm	18 Orientation 7-9pm	19	20
21	22 ZAZEN 7-9pm	23	24 ZAZEN 7-9pm	25 Beginners' night	26	27
28	29 Full Moon Ceremony (not stealing) 7-9pm	30	31 Full Moon Ceremony (not stealing) 7-9pm	Feb 1	2	3