

# SEVEN THUNDERS

newsletter

www.seventhunders.org



May 2020

## SEVEN THUNDERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Co-President

Matthew McTigue  
503.548.7004  
mattmctigue@hotmail.com

### Co-President

Greg Smith  
503.758.1020  
gasmith@clark.edu

### Secretary

Kailyn Kent  
925.321.1704  
Kailyn.kent@gmail.com

### Treasurer

Jenny Brausch  
541.971.1297  
livinggreen@comcast.net

### Director

Michael Seely  
503.730.0821  
ms452mss@me.com

### Director

Dan Dickinson  
503.632.5957  
firfied@bctonline.com

### Director

Ed Glad  
503.662.4265  
eglad57@gmail.com

### Director

Naheed Brown  
503.502.1682  
naheedbrown@gmail.com

### Director

Dan Brown  
503.504.2955  
dcareybrown@gmail.com

## Newsletter Editor

Greg Smith  
503.758.1020  
gasmith@clark.edu

## Newsletter Layout

Teresa Marcel  
503.534.2600  
tdmarcel@mac.com

## TEACHERS

Leonard Marcel Roshi  
503.636.9009  
LJMarcel@comcast.net

Sr Joan Saalfeld

503.347.4333  
joansaalfeld@gmail.com

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## TOGETHER REQUIRING THE BLESSING SHOYOROKU CASE 15

by Leonard Marcel

Kueishan asked Yangshan, "From where are you coming?"

Yangshan replied, "From the fields."

Kueishan said, "How many people are there in the fields?"

Yangshan planted his hoe in the ground, clasped his hands and stood there.

Kueishan said, "On South Mountain there are a lot of people cutting thatch."

Yangshan took up his hoe and went.

ing transmission from his teacher, Paichang (Hyakujo). Thus empowered, he went into the mountains, built himself a hut and did nothing there other than train himself further for several years. He built no buildings, offered no teachings, had no students. Only after seven or eight years did anyone notice him. Gradually students began to gather round and soon a large monas-

*Continued on page 8*

The master in this case is Kueishan Lingyu (Guisan/Isan Reiyu, 771-853), who was a student and Dharma heir of Paichang (Baizhang/Hyakujo Ekai, 720-814) and the master of three important successors, including Hsiangyen (Xiangyan/Kyogen Chikan, d.898), who became enlightened when a pebble he swept struck bamboo; and the woman known as Iron Grindstone Liu (Liu Tiemo/Ryu Tetsuma, n.d.), who was formidable in Dharma encounters, and his most important successor, as seen in this case, Yangshan (Kyozan Ejaku, 813-890), who was known as Little Shakyamuni.

We first encountered Kueishan (Isan) in case 40 of the Wumen Kuan (Mumonkan) when he kicked over the water jug and received teach-

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## SEVEN THUNDERS RETREATS & EVENTS

### FIRST SATURDAY SITTINGS

Monthly "First Saturday" sittings have been transferred online until it is deemed safe to meet at the Trappist Abbey again. Up to date information and links to join the sitting can be found on the Seven Thunders website at [seventhunders.org](http://seventhunders.org). The format remains much the same, with formal group sitting beginning at 9:00 a.m. A talk by the teacher begins at 10:00 a.m., which is followed by opportunities for private interviews with the teacher. Formal sitting ends at noon. There is no charge, but donations for teacher support and Seven Thunders via the website are gratefully accepted. The schedule for the next few months is:

- June 13, Leonard Marcel
- July 11, Leonard Marcel
- August 1, Leonard Marcel
- September 12, Sr. Joan Saalfeld
- October 3, Sr. Joan Saalfeld

### RETREAT SCHEDULE

- June 26 & 27 – Virtual CIR on Zoom, led by Sr. Joan Saalfeld. Registration information on page 11.
- July 15-18 – Virtual Zen sesshin on Zoom led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information on page 12.
- December 3-8 – (tentative) Zen Rohatsu sesshin at Stones and Clouds, led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information and confirmation of venue & dates in a future newsletter.

### ZAZENKAI

Held at the Stones and Clouds (*Rai'un*) Zendo in Lake Oswego, led by Leonard Marcel. Confirmation of dates and whether these will be in-person or online will be sent as the situation is assessed.

- September 19
- October 24 ✈

## SEVEN THUNDERS REGULAR SITTINGS

### PORTLAND AREA SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings via Zoom (until further notice) at Stones and Clouds (*Rai'un*) Zendo, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., zazen & dokusan. Check [SevenThunders.org](http://SevenThunders.org) for details. Contact: Leonard Marcel at 503.636.9009 or [marcellj@hotmail.com](mailto:marcellj@hotmail.com).

■ Thursdays, Harbor of Hush, at Fountain Side Sanctuary, 4 - 6 pm, 12555 SW 4th in Beaverton. Just Silence, drop in anytime, stay as your schedule allows. Contact Roy Guptill at 503.643.4183. **Note:** Harbor temporarily closed until June 18.

### SALEM SITTINGS

■ For Salem Zen Center's online offerings, email for the Zoom links:

[SalemZenCenter@gmail.com](mailto:SalemZenCenter@gmail.com). Wednesday evening meditation & Dharma talk from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. PST and a Saturday morning

meditation & Poetry share from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. PST.

### OLYMPIA SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., and every Saturday morning from 6:00 to 8:00 a.m. in the Chapel at St. Michael Church, 1021 Boundary St. SE, Olympia, WA 98501. Three rounds of sittings (from 6:00 to 7:30) are followed by a reading from contemplative writers and a questions and comments period. Contact: Pat Harvey, 360.357.8401 [patriciamharvey@comcast.net](mailto:patriciamharvey@comcast.net)

### REDMOND SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at 529 NW 19th, Redmond, OR 97756. Contact: Leanne Latterell at [leannelatterell@bendbroadband.com](mailto:leannelatterell@bendbroadband.com) or 541.604.1739. ✈

## NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

Published three times a year, our newsletter is a benefit of Seven Thunders membership. Prospective members who would like to receive the newsletter can be added to the mailing list by contacting Jenny Brausch at [Livinggreen@comcast.net](mailto:Livinggreen@comcast.net). Complimentary copies will be sent for up to one year or until January dues requests are mailed. After that, if membership dues (full membership currently \$30 per year) are not received by March, you will be sent an announcements-only version of the newsletter. Please send membership dues to: Jenny Brausch, PO Box 3119, Albany, OR 97321. ✈

## OTHER PACIFIC NORTHWEST DIAMOND SANGHA GROUPS

### NO SANGHA, PORT ANGELES

■ Teacher: Kristen Larson. Zazen: Saturday mornings, 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. For more information, please contact Kristen Larson at 360.452.5534 or [NOSangha@aol.com](mailto: NOSangha@aol.com).

### THREE TREASURES SANGHA, SEATTLE

■ Teacher: Jack Duffy. Zazen at *Dharma Gate* (1910 – 24th Ave S.) on Wednesday evenings 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Friday mornings 6:30-7:30 a.m., followed by breakfast. For more information, please contact Larry Keil at 206.322.8759 or go to their website at: <http://three-treasures-sangha.org/> ✈





## A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT: SHELTERING IN PLACE, MEDITATING IN PLACE

by Greg Smith

With the arrival of Covid-19 in March, the Seven Thunders board held our first virtual meeting and decided to see whether we could extend this experiment to as many of our events as possible. Since then, we've held a Saturday zazenkaï and a book club meeting in March, a half-day contemplative intensive retreat on Holy Saturday in April, and regular Monday night sittings through the present. We sponsored another Saturday sitting for our members on May 9 between 9:00 and 12:00 in the morning as well as our second virtual board meeting in the afternoon.

Approximately 16-18 people join us for Monday night sittings, and participation at the Saturday events has also been strong. Chanting scriptures, seeing the zendo and one another's images when we get up to bow or walk, listening to Marcel Roshi's final words of encouragement, and then checking in for a few minutes after the end of formal sitting have provided a way to stay connected and support our mutual practice. One

of the benefits of meeting in this way is the possibility of including members who do not live in the Portland area but beam in from Salem, Albany, Central Oregon, Washington State, Texas, and Virginia. At the same time, we are looking forward to the time when we can be together with more than our images and voices and have a chance to catch up with one another in the driveway before heading off to our homes after sitting.

Although the State of Oregon is gradually opening things up after the sheltering-in-place order this spring, the board decided at its May meeting to err on the side of caution with regard to upcoming retreats in part because of the age of many of our members and the size of our meeting places. The **June CIR** and the **summer sesshin** will both be shortened and conducted on-line using the format described above. Please see the registration forms included in this newsletter for more information about dates and charges (to cover teacher fees and other expenses).

We're hoping for strong attendance regardless of these changes.

Watch, as well, for information about the timing and format for the **annual meeting**. It's our practice to hold this event following the summer sesshin. Since sesshin will be held on-line, it makes sense to do the same with the annual meeting. Your participation will be important since this is when new board members are elected. If you are interested in helping Seven Thunders by serving on the board yourself, please let either me (gasmith@lclark.edu) or co-president Matt McTigue know (MattMcTigue@hotmail.com).

With luck, we will be able to be physically together before too much longer. In the meantime, if you haven't yet joined us on-line, please do. You can find the link and instructions on the Seven Thunders website ([www.sevenththunders.org](http://www.sevenththunders.org)). It will be great to see more faces on Zoom's gallery view. ⚡



## GENERAL MEETING AND 35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AUGUST 1

by Greg Smith

The Seven Thunders Annual Meeting will be held virtually on Saturday, August 1, starting at 11:30 a.m. (PDT). Invitations to join the meeting will be sent the week before to all Seven Thunders members. That Saturday will be the 35th anniversary of the formation of our organization, and at the beginning of the meeting Leonard Marcel Roshi will provide

an overview of its history. Following that we will hold a board election and engage in a conversation about our adoption of electronic technologies to facilitate our support of one another's Zen or Christian Contemplative practices. Although we will be missing out on Mike Seely's annual contribution of plank-cooked salmon, we hope that the

agenda and the chance to see our fellow members from far and wide will be enough to tempt you to set aside an hour that day. Please join us. We want to hear from you. ⚡





## FATHER WILLIGIS JÄGER - REMEMBERING A SEVEN THUNDERS FOUNDING FATHER

by Leonard Marcel



**F**ather Willigis Jäger died in Germany on 20 March 2020, shortly after his 95th birthday. He is considered a founding teacher of Seven Thunders.

He was born on 7 March 1925 in Hösbach, Germany. He attended Benedictine boarding schools in St. Ludwig and Würzburg. After graduating from high school, he joined the Benedictine monastic community in 1945 and was ordained a priest in 1952.

Initially, he was assigned as a teacher at a Benedictine high school; then, from 1960 to 1964, as a consultant for mission and development in Düsseldorf and later in Bavaria. This work took him, among other destinations, to Japan where he met the remarkable

Jesuit priest and Zen teacher Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle. He first began a deep investigation of Zen and the koan way with Father Lassalle before continuing Zen training in the Sanbo Kyodan (now Sanbo Zen) lineage with Koun Yamada. He would spend six years in Japan studying with Yamada Roshi, finally receiving teaching authorization from Yamada Roshi in 1980.

In 1983 he founded the Haus St Benedikt in Würzburg as a Zen and Christian contemplation center and continued as its director until 2001. He was also a principal in the formation of the Ecumenical Working Group on Contemplative Prayer, which would later become the Würzburg School of Contemplation.

For several years there were complaints against Father Jäger within the Catholic Church accusing him of subordinating dogmatic teachings to mystical experience. On March 1st, 2002, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, at the time Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ordered Father Jäger to cease all public activities, including lectures, courses, and publications. He declined the silencing, and instead was granted permission to leave residence at the order and all leadership roles as a Benedictine but to continue as a friar.

He taught within the Sanbo Zen community until 2009 when he chose to teach independently, creating the Empty Cloud lineage. That year he also received confirmation as a Chan master from the Chan Grand Master Jing Hui, abbot of the Bailin Temple in Hebei Province, China. In 2016, he retired from active teaching, leaving many Dharma successors and others inspired by his life and his teachings.

Fr. Willigis Jäger is considered not only a founding teacher of Seven Thunders but also a seminal figure for interfaith dialogue. He was a generous and wise teacher, and his influence and the fruits of his labors no doubt will continue for many years to come. ✎



In that same year, 1983, as Sr Joan has indicated in her remembrance, in response to invitations from Abbot Bernard, he came to Portland each summer for the next five years, to lead retreats. It was from those retreats and the core group of those of us who attended each year that the foundations of Seven Thunders were laid. My last fond memory of him was at the ceremony for my final Zen transmission in Germany in 2001.



## IN MEMORIAM

by Joan Saalfeld, SNJM

I met Fr. Willigis Jäger Roshi, in 1982 when Fr. Bernard invited some of us who were in the original 1978 "Zen for Christians" group to meet a priest who was visiting him at the Abbey. The person we met was a slight, sturdy man, exuding energy and intensity. We had been told that he was a German Benedictine who had just finished koan study with Yamada Roshi in Japan, and that Aiken Roshi thought he would be "just right" for our group.

And he was.

He came and gave sesshin at Loyola Retreat House in Portland each of the next five summers, and we came to appreciate the breadth of his expertise, and the depth of his understanding of both the Christian and the Buddhist traditions. Yet, it was not until I stayed at his retreat house in Würzburg, Germany that I realized how widely he was known in Europe and beyond. There I heard from his resident students and retreatants about the large numbers of people who

looked to him for leadership and counsel, and who sorely missed him when he was away. It made me very grateful to him, and to them, for the time he gave to us in Oregon. He helped us to form a strong foundation, and to establish the method and spirit of our practice together. He is also the one who, speaking with the authority of a mystic, said to Fr. Bernard, "You should build a meditation hall." And, in spite of a setback or two, Bernard saw to the building of beautiful Bethany House.

During the two months I was in Würzburg several contemplatives from other countries came to see Willigis, including Fr. Bede Griffiths from his ashram in India. Willigis often included me in his conversations with those who spoke English, so I was able to see what special gifts of intellect and mysticism and compassion he possessed.

Willigis told me once that his first numinous experience was as a child in his mother's arms. She was carrying him into



church and several elderly ladies were in the back pews saying the rosary in a sing song chanting way. He didn't remember exactly how young he was, but he always remembered the experience, and he always loved chanting and singing.

At the beginning of Holy Week he took all of us resident students and several of his outside students, about 20 in all, to an old, no longer used, monastery at Georgenberg, high in the Austrian Alps. There we slept in the cold cells and had our sittings in the cold chapel. We fasted, and sat, and walked, and sat, and practiced singing, and sat. Willigis taught us hymns in Latin and various harmonies so all the language groups could sing as one, and every voice could sing its part. He took the liturgies for Good Friday and Holy Saturday out of doors. On Friday we went partway down the mountain and walked the steep, cold, Stations of the Cross back to the monastery. For Saturday's Easter fire we had a huge bonfire next to the river that flows down that mountain. I can still see the embers of that Easter fire flying up into darkness over the river; out of which we then drew icy water and renewed our Baptismal vows. Then Willigis led us to the east side of the mountain, where we sat and waited in the cold dark.

As the sun began to rise, he led us in singing the Easter hymns he had taught us. And then he said Mass there in the Easter morning sunlight. I never saw Willigis look so happy. ⚡







## REFLECTIONS ON THE PANDEMIC

by Mike Seely

To shelter in place with resources is a gift and privilege. Acknowledging the enormity of this pandemic with its relentless hardships, challenges, sadness, and worldwide pain is essential in day-to-day awareness. It is not a time to take anything for granted, and I pray I never do. It is a time to be as awake as possible on all fronts. Hopefully, this alertness will yield insight, possibly like no other time in our collective experience.

The word “apocalyptic” pops up on occasion to describe this time of pandemic with its common definition: “destruction.” For me, this descriptor promotes limits and constraints. The Greek origin of the word means to “reveal or uncover,” which seems more aligned with optimism, and perhaps a chance to see things more clearly. Marcel Roshi reminds us that current circumstances are an opportunity to deepen practice both on and off the cushion. A time for clarity.

Each week I speak with my dear friend Brad from Harpswell, Maine. Our friendship and conversation are rich and deep as we have known each other for more than 40 years. We have been zooming and musing about our old stomping grounds in Maine. Whenever we get together in Maine, we always take

a road trip Down East along the coast or northwest to the Rangeley Lakes region where Brad owns a camp. We always stop on the way at Moody's Diner in Waldoboro, a multi-generational family-owned diner. It is a tradition for us to order a breakfast of coffee, lobster rolls, and baked beans. Both lobster rolls and baked beans are lasting symbols of the austerity of Maine life. The byline historically in Maine is “use everything, waste nothing,” thus lobster rolls. Baked beans represent survival in rural impoverished areas of the state. All of this motivated me to check up on Moody's to see how they are faring during these times. Their website had updates on closure and potential opening, but with each update, I was struck by the general manager's concluding statement:

*My encouragement to you all is to not fear but be wise. No one can predict tomorrow, but today we must be cautious. Thank you for your understanding and patience. My prayer and hope are for your provision, safety and a calmness of soul during these uncertain days. May God bless you!*



His words brought me immediate comfort. Here is optimism and clarity coming from a man who is praying for others and their provision, safety and well-being. “A calmness of soul” is about presence, and to me, this makes clear his strong practice. Asking for God's blessing for others and encouraging people to not fear “but be wise” is reassuring. I welcome his words, authenticity, and optimism as I look forward to my next visit to Moody's Diner when the dust of the pandemic clears. ✨

### BOOK GROUP JUNE 19

On Friday, June 19, at 7:30 p.m. (PDT), the Seven Thunders book group will meet virtually to discuss Karen Armstrong's 2010 volume, *12 Steps to a Compassionate Life*. Armstrong is a prolific religious writer who has published books on Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. If you are interested in participating, please send an e-mail to Greg Smith at [gasmith@clark.edu](mailto:gasmith@clark.edu) by June 17, and an invitation will be sent to you with information about accessing our gathering on-line. ✨



## OFF THE CUSHION: CROSSING PATHS

by Paul Birkeland

I was about as far off the cushion as you can get, rallying for impeachment at the US Federal Office Building at 2nd and Madison in downtown Seattle with about 1500 others. I arrived just a few minutes before the official start time, so I was hopelessly separated from the speaker's platform by a plaza tightly packed with people.

The police department had inexplicably left 2nd Avenue open to traffic. The crowd was pressed to the curb, and there were throngs of ralliers across the street, separated from the action by an asphalt void when the light was red, and a stream of commuter traffic when it turned green. I asked one of the cops "Who made the decision to leave 2nd Avenue open for this?" He replied, clearly unhappy with the minor mess they were stuck with, "It wasn't me. It was definitely someone with gold bars on his shoulders."

The next time the light turned red and the crosswalk sign lit up to cross, I strode out into 2nd Avenue to the median stripe and held up my sign to the wavefront of commuters across Madison being held at bay by the red light and the traffic cop. When the crosswalk sign began to countdown, the traffic cop blew his whistle, and I followed him back to the curb.



I did this a few times, appealing with my sign to the ever changing line of commuters who happened to have caught the red light at this intersection at this particular day and time. Then another fellow joined me, and we strode like happy teammates out to the median stripe and back with each light, signs in hand. People would greet us when the light changed and we returned to the curb. And then a third person joined us. We did this for the bulk of the 90-minute rally.

So, I was pretty far off the cushion here. Although I am coming to believe that you can take the boy off the cushion, but you can't take the cushion out of the boy.

The first protest action I ever attended (actually I was the organizer) was a march for climate action in 2007. Over the years, I have started attending more and more protest actions, two to four a year. I attribute my increasing comfort with taking to the streets to the time I've spent on my cushion. Old hesitations like, "What if no one else shows up?" or "What difference will it make?" have gone away. My practice has filled me with agency, a realization that I am in a position

to do something here to try change things, make things better, to perhaps alleviate someone's suffering in some small way. Dare I say "to save the numberless beings?"

This agency is rooted in an expanding compassion that sees this current day, not as a political moment, but as a spiritual one, and sees my actions, not just as a public statement, but as a spiritual practice of compassion to ... someone. Maybe me!

The single counterprotester I encountered was crossing 2nd Avenue toward me on one of my forays out to the median stripe. I read his hastily scrawled sign. He read mine. We locked eyes for an instant and I smiled. Here we were, dharma actors crossing paths in a moment of minor drama, each of us and both of us the sound of one of a pair of palms.

It's maybe not so far off the cushion after all.

### ABOUT "OFF THE CUSHION"

Off the Cushion is a regular feature of our newsletter. We invite you to submit articles about what your practice means to you, of activities off the cushion which feel like an extension of your practice. Please e-mail your submissions to newsletter editor Greg Smith at [gasmith@lclark.edu](mailto:gasmith@lclark.edu). ⚡

December 2019 ⚡





## TOGETHER REQUIRING THE BLESSING, *continued from page 1*

tery came into being. A good model for all teachers.

Kueishan (Isan) and Yangshan (Kyozan) had a very close relationship and are generally considered to be the co-founders of the Guiyang (Igyo) school of Chan (Zen) in China. It was a very strong lineage known for its subtleties, a lineage that continued over several generations for more than a hundred and fifty years.

This koan reminds me of the famous saying of Chingyuan (Qingyuan/Seigen Gyoshi, 660?-740):

"Before I studied Zen, I saw mountains as mountains, and rivers as rivers. When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I came to the point where I saw that mountains are not mountains, and rivers are not rivers. Now that I have got the very substance of Zen I am at rest. For I see mountains once again as mountains, and rivers once again as rivers."

Many people misunderstand this Zen statement. Does Chingyuan's (Qingyan/Seigen) enigmatic saying mean that enlightenment is just a return to non-enlightenment? Not at all. What would be the point of that?

Before Zen training, "Mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers" only because we have accepted name-and-form conditioning since childhood. So, we do not really see a mountain when we look at it. We just see a dull concept, the mental label "mountain." This is a form of deep affliction caused by years of conditioned conceptual thinking. It imposes the suffering of dullness. It separates us from things as they are in themselves – the suchness of things. It is the reason adulthood is so often feels like a cage when compared to childhood.

After one has entered Zen training and gained some insight, "Mountains are no longer mountains, and rivers no longer rivers." We then perceive that behind the mental act of labeling, which creates a stereotyped form, there is a wonderful, chaotic incoherence that is also supremely beautiful and ecstatic. We see that universe is supremely energetic, that everything is strangely linked together, and we gain first experiences of transcendent wisdom (Prajna Paramita).

It is like Cézanne compulsively painting Mont Sainte-Victoire or Monet painting the cathedral in Rouen again and again from different angles and in different lights. Many people would say, "It's a mountain, and not

a particularly interesting one." Or "It's just a big Gothic church, like so many others." Yet, these artists saw that it was the inconceivable Reality and tried to show other people what they had seen.

Once insight—realization—has been attained, and training continues, "mountains are again mountains and rivers are again rivers," but this does not mean that we have returned to the old dualistic dullness. It means that once we have seen the true nature of mountains and rivers, we do not mind using the old labels just for the sake of shorthand communication with other people. However, now we are aware that the labels and concepts are not the whole story. We can now use words without being used by them. The mind is free, luminous and penetrating. Yet, this final phase of relaxed equanimity could not have been reached unless everything had been overthrown and the labels "mountains and rivers" had been surpassed.

Do you understand? The third phase is fundamentally different from the first phase, even though they appear outwardly the same. This is realization itself.

*Continued on page 9*







## TOGETHER REQUIRING THE BLESSING *continued from page 8*

That trajectory echoes the arc of this koan. Chingyuan (Qingyuan/Seigen) took decades to evolve from the conventional, to the absolute, and then to their synthesis. Kueishan (Isan) and Yangshan (Kyozan) likely did as well; yet in this exchange they display the results of years of practice by leaping from one perspective to the next, in just a few moments.

To begin, Kueishan (Isan) asks an ordinary question. Yangshan (Kyozan) gives an ordinary answer. "From where are you coming?" "From the fields."

Why does Kueishan (Isan) ask at all? Yangshan's feet are covered in mud; he is sweaty and probably wearing dirty mud-splattered work clothes. Dogen comments here: "His disciple is carrying a hoe. Can it be that he does not know from where he is coming?" No, Kueishan (Isan) asks in order to test his student. He wants to see how Yangshan (Kyozan) practices working in the field?

Yangshan (Kyozan) answers from the everyday phenomenal side. Such an answer may be perfectly acceptable from a Zen practitioner. One need not always reply from the empty side. Sometimes it is preferable just to give the facts. If I ask you what time it is, please just tell me. No need to take off your watch and stand in silence. It would be insufferable to act "zenny" all the time.

Yet, if acting ordinary is perfectly acceptable, what is the purpose of practice? And why is this a koan? Should not practice change us in important ways? In case 19 of the Mumonkan (*Wumen Kuan*), Nan-chuan (Nanquan/Nansen, 748-835) tells us that "Ordinary mind is the way." While that is certainly true, we also need to realize that he is pointing us to the everyday as the eternal. He is pointing us toward transformation. "Ordinary" here does not refer to our usual limited self-centered view. Selfish conduct, speech and thought obscure the vast and boundless universal. Fortunately, years of Zen practice do help us transcend selfish conduct, speech and thought and make us ever less limited by the conven-

tional, ever more liberated, ever more free.

Kueishan (Isan) tests for this expanded view. Does his student Yangshan (Kyozan) just hoe the field as he always did, or have his years of practice expanded him? His test comes in the form of another ordinary question: "How many people are there in the fields?" Are there thirty people in the fields? One person? None? In response, Yangshan (Kyozan) shows his view is no longer limited to the conventional. In an instant he leaps to the top of the mountain, leaps up to heaven, and shows Kueishan (Isan) the whole universe. He plants his hoe in the dirt, clasps his hands and stands silently.

This is his presentation. This is the "no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind" of the Heart Sutra. It is a completely austere, beautiful emptiness. Form is exactly emptiness. No hoe, no fields, no people, no Kueishan (Isan), no Yangshan (Kyozan). It is not that nothing exists in this silence, but that we are liberated from categorizing and separating and counting. Liberated from alienation. To be intimate with work, skin to skin with it, you have to forget the self and let the work do you.

It is the central teaching of Zen that the view from heaven which encompasses the whole universe, and the view from the muddy field where we dig up one turnip at a time are one and the same view. We do not have to abandon one in order to attain the other. Turning our eyes from the dirt beneath our feet to gaze up toward heaven is dualistic delusion. It is when we are squatting down, with hands in the dirt and with no thought of self at all, totally absorbed, right there we are in heaven.

As soon as we become self-reflective, in that moment heaven and earth are separated.

So Kueishan (Isan) checks Yangshan (Kyozan) once more. Yangshan (Kyozan) shows that he is master of the phenomenal form side when he says, "I came from the fields," and then he shows that he is the master of

the absolute empty side as well when he plants his hoe and stands in silence. Is he stuck in the absolute, or is he free? Kueishan (Isan) checks him: "On South Mountain there are a lot of people cutting thatch." Yangshan (Kyozan) picks up his hoe and leaves.

"On South Mountain there are a lot of people cutting thatch." In the world there are a lot of people suffering. Work needs to be done. If you are not attached to your work as separate from someone else's work, the work now versus the work later, the work here versus the work over there, if work is just work is just work, then the thatch being cut on South Mountain is just work needing to be done.

And how does Yangshan respond to this? He picks up his hoe and goes off. What is he showing? From the empty side, there is no one working. From the other side, he goes off to cut thatch. One translation says "he went" but another translation says "he left immediately." There is a duty to participate at once. When there is thatch to be cut on South Mountain, when there are people suffering in the world, why stand around engaged in Zen mondo?

The commentary at this point says: "Teacher and apprentice join ways...(and) complement each other's actions. The subtle family style is a guide for a thousand ages."

Hungchih (Hongzhi/Wanshi Shogaku, 1091-1157) the compiler of the *Shoyoroku* (*Book of Serenity*), writes this verse:

*The old enlightened one's feelings are many, he thinks of his descendants.  
Now he repents of setting up a household.  
We should remember the saying about South Mountain,  
Engraved on the bones, inscribed on the skin, together requiring the blessing.  
The old enlightened one's feelings are many, he thinks of his descendants.  
Now he repents of setting up a household.*

*Continued on page 10*



## AT BAY

The Japanese rose (*Kerria japonica*)  
splashes yellow among the just  
leafing out thimbleberries.  
A lone red tulip stands  
above a pot set among  
the now flourishing wood sorrel.  
The daphne is past its prime  
as are the daffodils and trilliums,  
but the bleeding hearts are just coming in,  
rising above their foliage like railway signals.  
Even the seedlings I planted two weeks ago  
are lifting their tiny leaves  
above the compost-rich soil  
of their plastic trays and pots  
after I brought them inside  
to protect them from cold and fungus.

We're trying to protect ourselves  
in the same way,  
sheltering in place  
to keep the virus at bay.  
Like a hunted prey  
faced with a pack of baying dogs  
we guard ourselves,  
watching our flanks  
and dodging parries  
as we wash our hands  
disinfect doorknobs  
and keep others at a distance.  
How odd to maintain such vigilance  
in this time of blooming abundance.

Greg Smith, April 6, 2020. ⚡

## TOGETHER REQUIRING THE BLESSING *continued from page 9*

The old enlightened one could be Kueishan (Isan), but more likely Shakyamuni himself. After seeing the Morning Star, the Buddha awakened but he did not want to teach. He preferred to stay under the tree, enjoying his experience. Hanging out in silence. Gradually he became convinced to teach—to set the Dharma Wheel in motion. We are the descendants of the household he established.

*We should remember the saying about  
South Mountain,  
Engraved on the bones, inscribed on the  
skin, together requiring the blessing.*

Do not settle for a superficial Zen. It is not just robes and bells and a handsome Japanese-style zendo. It is not memorizing all the chants. All of that has its place, but it is only the box in which the Dharma comes. It needs a box, but the box is not it. True Dharma must be embodied – engraved on the bones, inscribed on the skin. Then the Dharma is visiting a sick friend in the hospital, protesting and healing injustice, helping the poor, confronting hatred, and especially confronting our own unhelpful karma.

It is such a grave responsibility, this Bodhisattva path. There is so much work to do both in transforming ourselves and in the world. Every day we are confronted by an-

ger, hatred, divisiveness and injustice. The ordinary, little self-conscious self is not up to the challenge. That is why we must touch Yangshan's (Kyozan) huge silence. That silence, that perspective, that view from heaven, is big enough. When you come forth from that silence and lose yourself in your work, your judgmentalism and self-doubt fade and you are free to act boldly as the moment requires. That is the fruit of training. Sitting still and staring at a wall is activism. It is not enough on its own—that is the point of this koan—but it is excellent training, excellent preparation for the work to be done. That is the reason Bodhisattvas practice zazen. And then, when there is work to be done, we collect our tools and go.

This practice has been transmitted for two and one-half thousand years and almost one hundred generations. We practice in the same manner as Kueishan (Isan) and Yangshan (Kyozan) did. We are part of the same warm household that has been transmitted to us, where we can practice together and transform ourselves to take on the work that needs to be done for healing ourselves and the world's wounds. Let us continue it together as we hand it down to our descendants. Together requiring the blessing. ⚡







## VIRTUAL CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR) JUNE 26 - 27, 2020

**A**s have all other Seven Thunders activities, the Contemplative Intensive Retreat (CIR) usually held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey in June has been changed to a virtual retreat on Zoom.

Sr. Joan Saalfeld, SNJM, will lead the retreat, present talks and offer interviews. Sr. Joan Saalfeld is a member of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, a retired professor of literature, and is currently living in West Linn, Oregon. She has studied and practiced Zen and Christian Contemplation for over 40 years, first with Robert Aitken Roshi, then with Willigis Jaeger, OSB, Roshi, and lastly with Pat Hawk, C.Ss.R., Roshi, who encouraged her to be a teacher in our Contemplative Intensive Retreats. She has been doing so since 2012.

The retreat will take place from 8:45 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Friday, June 26, and from 9:00 am to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 27. You will sit in your own space, access the retreat via Zoom on your own device and provide your own meals. Once your registration has been received and accepted, you will be sent a link for the retreat as well as a PDF containing the retreat schedule and all retreat prayers.

The retreat is open to a maximum of 12 attendees, and the total fee is \$75 for Seven Thunders members, \$105 for non-members.



Please notify registrar Jenny Brausch at [livinggreen@comcast.net](mailto:livinggreen@comcast.net) of your intention to attend this retreat. You may then register by sending your check to:

Jenny Brausch,  
P.O. Box 3119,  
Albany OR 97321

Or, you may pay the fee online at [SevenThunders.org](http://SevenThunders.org) (click on the 'Contribute' tab and follow the donation process, leaving a

note in the last window saying that this is your CIR fee payment.)

Fees are payable in full to confirm your registration. Should you need to cancel, all but \$30 will be refunded for cancellation requests received by retreat registrar on or before June 12; half the fee (\$38/\$53) will be refunded if received by June 19; no refund in the last week before the retreat. Partial scholarships are available to Seven Thunders members. Registrations will be made in the order received by registrar. ✍

### REGISTRATION FORM

### CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR) JUNE 26 - 27, 2020

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Special needs \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Full payment of \$105 enclosed

☐ \$75 (Seven Thunders members)

☐ Donation for Scholarships \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Request a Scholarship of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I commit to participating fully in the entire schedule of formal group contemplation.



## VIRTUAL SUMMER SESSHIN AT STONES AND CLOUDS ZENDO JULY 15 - 18, 2020



The 2020 Seven Thunders Zen Summer Sesshin, usually held at the Stones and Clouds Zendo in Lake Oswego, OR, will be an online retreat this year.

It will take place from Wednesday, July 15, starting at 7 p.m. and ending on Saturday morning July 18, at about 8 a.m.. Sesshin will be led by Leonard Marcel. You will sit in your own space, access the retreat via Zoom on your own device and provide your own meals. Once your registration has been received and accepted, you will be sent a link for the retreat as well as a PDF containing the retreat schedule and all chants.

Registration deadline is June 20. Registrations will be accepted on a first come basis. As this sesshin is usually well subscribed, early registration and payment is encouraged. Part-time attendance may be possible as schedules permit.

Space is limited to a maximum of 16 full-time, online. Additional applicants will be wait-listed in case of cancellations. Sesshin fee is \$110 for Seven Thunders members, \$140 for non-members. The extra \$30 of the non-member fee can be applied to your Seven Thunders membership, should you choose to do so, which then qualifies you for the member rate for all other Seven Thunders regular retreats and sesshin through the remainder of the calendar year. Should you need to cancel, all but \$30 will be refunded for cancellation requests received by retreat coordinator on or before June 30; half the fee (\$55/70) will be refunded if received by July 7; no refund in the last week before the retreat. You will receive a confirmation from the registrar.

If for any reason you find the full fee a barrier to attending, please check the box on the registration form requesting a "scholarship" or contact the registrar. Affordability need not be a deterrent to attendance. Full or partial scholarships are almost always available. Donations for such scholarships are both appreciated and tax-deductible.

Since this will be an online sesshin, please make every attempt to maintain silence to

the extent possible, as your circumstances permit.

To register for the retreat, please email registrar at [tdmarcel@mac.com](mailto:tdmarcel@mac.com) to signal your intent to attend, and then complete the form below and send it with your fee to:

Teresa Marcel  
1333 Skyland Drive  
Lake Oswego, OR 97034.

Please make checks payable to **Seven Thunders**. Alternatively, you may pay the fee online at [SevenThunders.org](https://SevenThunders.org) (Click on the 'Contribute' tab and follow the donation process, leaving a note in the last window saying that this is your Summer sesshin fee payment.)

Questions? Please contact Teresa Marcel at 503.636.9009 or [tdmarcel@mac.com](mailto:tdmarcel@mac.com) ✉

### REGISTRATION FORM

#### STONES & CLOUDS SUMMER SESSHIN, JULY 15 - 18, 2020

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact name & Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I enclose full payment of \$110 (the member rate).

☐ I enclose \$140. ☐ please apply \$30 to my Seven Thunders member dues.

☐ I request a scholarship of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I enclose a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to Seven Thunders**