

# SEVEN THUNDERS

newsletter

www.seventhunders.org

September 2022

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Many thanks to all who contributed their time and talents to this publication. Articles may not be reprinted without permission from the author.



## RETURN TO THE FATHER

by Leonard Marcel

Thomas Merton (1915-1968) enunciated the central task of the contemplative life when he wrote:

One thing above all is important: the "return to the Father." The Son came into the world and died, rose and returned to the Father; sent us His Spirit, that in Him and with Him we (too) might return to the Father.

That we might pass clean out of the midst of all that is transitory and inconclusive and return to the Immense, the Primordial, the Source, the unknown, to the One Who loves and knows, to the Silent, to the Merciful, to the Holy....

To seek anything or to be concerned with anything but this is madness and sickness, for this is the whole meaning and heart of all existence....

To pass from the midst of all that is transitory and inconclusive and return to the Immense, to the Source, to the Silent, to the Holy, to the One Who loves.

Is this not the reason we are on this path? Is this not why we sit down again and again, straighten the back, and enter silence and stillness?

In thinking about this, I have been drawn once again to the teachings of the man known as Meister (or Master) Eckhart. Eckhart von Hochheim (c.1260-c.1328) was a German theologian, philosopher and mystic, born in the mountain village of Tambach in central Germany. About age 15, he left home to join the Dominican Order at nearby Erfurt. By 1293, aged 33, he had been fully ordained as a priest. Over the years, his piety, talent and reputation were such that twenty years later that in 1314 he was made Dominican Vicar-General of the Order.

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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 six months is:

- October 1, Sr. Kathleen Pruitt, guest teacher:
- November 5, Leonard Marcel
- December 3, Sr. Kathleen Pruitt, guest teacher:
- January 7, 2023, Sr. Kathleen Pruitt, guest teacher:
- February 4, Leonard Marcel
- March 4, Leonard Marcel
- April 1, Leonard Marcel

### RETREAT SCHEDULE

- December 2 - 7, 2022 – Rohatsu Sesshin, led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information on page 11.
- January 20 & 21, 2023 – Contemplative CIR, led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information on page 12.



### 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. ✍

### ZAZENKAI

Held at the Stones and Clouds (*Rai'un*) Zendo in Lake Oswego, led by Leonard Marcel. These will be hybrid events, with limited in-zendo attendance. More details on page 8.

- September 17, 2022
- October 22, 2022
- February 18, 2023
- March 18, 2023 ✍

### SEVEN THUNDERS REGULAR SITTINGS

#### PORTLAND AREA SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings at Stones and Clouds Zendo, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., zazen & dokusan. Hybrid events with limited in-zendo attendance and online via Zoom. Registration for following Monday opens at 9 a.m. on Tuesday. Contact [StonesCloudsZendo@icloud.com](mailto:StonesCloudsZendo@icloud.com) to reserve a place. Check [seventhunders.org](http://seventhunders.org) for other details. ✍

#### SALEM SITTINGS

■ For Salem Zen Center's online offerings, email for the Zoom links: [SalemZenCenter@gmail.com](mailto:SalemZenCenter@gmail.com). Teacher: LeeAnn Nail. Wednesday evening meditation & dharma talk from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. and a Saturday morning meditation & poetry share from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. ✍

### OTHER PACIFIC NORTHWEST DIAMOND SANGHA GROUPS

#### PORTLAND SITTINGS

■ Ring of Moss Sangha. Zazen: Wednesday evenings, 7:00-8:30 and Sunday mornings, 7:30-8:30; virtually on Tuesday mornings, 6:00-7:00. Contact: Teacher Andrew Mason at [andrewmasonpdx@gmail.com](mailto:andrewmasonpdx@gmail.com). ✍

#### OLYMPIA SITTINGS

■ Contemplative Community at St. Michael's. 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. Contact: Mary Solberg, 360.250.6362 or [msolberg2@gmail.com](mailto:msolberg2@gmail.com) ✍

#### PORT ANGELES SITTINGS

■ NO Sangha. 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). ✍

#### SEATTLE SITTINGS

■ Three Treasures Sangha. 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/> ✍



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN: NEW BOARD

by Mike Seely

I am pleased to share that Seven Thunders held its annual meeting virtually on July 16th, 2022, at the close of summer session. Though we all miss meeting in person while enjoying a potluck lunch, attendance was solid with 18 participants. Co-President Ed Glad initiated the meeting by having each member introduce themselves and share their practice and connection to Seven Thunders. It was wonderful to hear and experience the depth of connection voiced, after which we got down to the necessary reports and business specific to the annual meeting. After the review and approval of last year's minutes, Jenny Brausch provided a comprehensive financial report which revealed an excellent balance sheet.

We moved on to membership matters. Greg Smith and Beth Brenner will be stepping off the Board. Ed Glad acknowledged Greg's two terms as President and all of his efforts on behalf of the organization. He also thanked and acknowledge Beth for her work on the board, especially her gracious guidance regarding COVID precautions from the perspective of her experience in public health. Nick Coffey offered to join the Board along with Jared Taylor. Both were voted onto the Board.

I have agreed to step up as a Co-President for the next year to support Ed Glad as he wraps up his tenure which will conclude in 2023. I have been on the board since 2006 and have filled various roles over these years. I plan to take on this assignment as Co-President for one year but will depart the board at the next annual meeting in 2023. A good discussion ensued about the importance of other Seven Thunders members stepping up to join and support the board. My hope is that this will happen. We are a small but vital organization, and the board plays an essential role in sustaining it.

Ed Glad was acknowledged for his work with the Abbey where he wired Bethany House to allow hybrid participation as an option. It was agreed that using a hybrid model for all Seven Thunders sponsored events and retreats will continue given the ongoing reality of COVID. We discussed the way this necessity has proven to be a wonderful gift since it has allowed people from across the globe to participate in our events.

The final discussion was a review of ongoing COVID precautions that will remain in place indefinitely. The pandemic is a moving target

that will continue to require ongoing adaptation. All in all, the discussion was robust and thoughtful. Toward the end of our conversation, Diana Richardson offered some very sage advice. Namely, the bottom line for us all is how we take care of each other. Taking all necessary precautions to protect each other is key. It is the "other" that matters here. We need to remain mindful and committed to this perspective as we move forward.

Finally, I am pleased to report that our collective efforts to secure additional teachers to support the contemplative side of Seven Thunders events has been successful. We are fortunate to have engaged Sister Kathleen Pruitt and Ruben Habito Roshi. Both will be part of the First Saturday contemplative rotations and ideally some of the CIRs moving forward. The experience so far has been exceptionally positive and well received by First Saturday participants. Many thanks to Beth Brenner for guiding us to Sister Kathleen, and equal thanks to Lee Ann Nail and Leonard Marcel for the connection with Ruben.

May your Fall be joyous and colorful. ⚡





## TRIBUTE TO DOUG SPEERS

by Tom Davies

On the evening of July 29, 2022, Seven Thunders lost a long-term board member, dedicated treasurer, and valued friend for so many of us. Doug Speers passed away at the age of 83 after some years of struggle with Parkinson's disease. As his wife of 59 years, Alice, described it, "Doug departed from his old, ruined body."

Doug was a pillar of the Seven Thunders group and participated in so many ways. Whether it was keeping track of members, timekeeping at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey 1st Saturday sittings, organizing retreats at Bethany House, assisting members with transportation, or creating spreadsheets for accounting, Doug's high energy level and commitment were visible if you paid attention, but were not obviously on display.

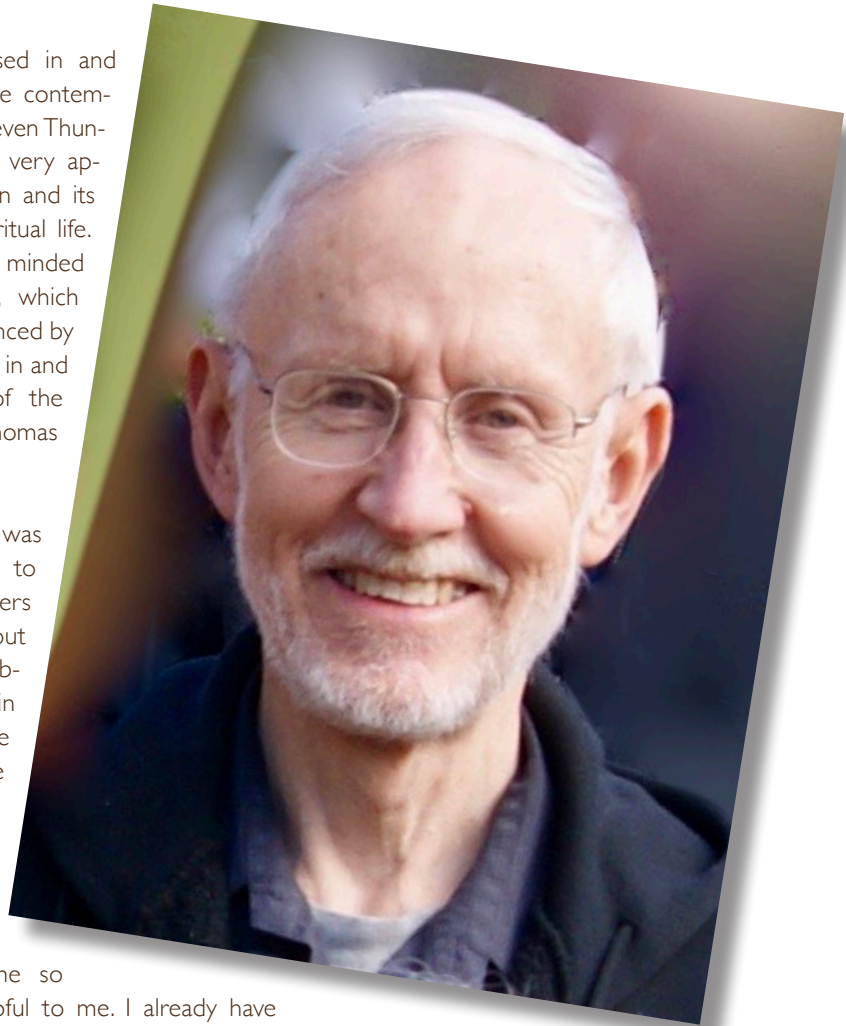
Although Doug was accomplished in so many ways, you would not hear about it from Doug. A degree in hydrologic engineering from the University of Washington and a graduate degree from Stanford after being valedictorian of his high school were early milestones for Doug as a young man. He was interested in many things, active and successful in so many ways, yet he walked humbly. In Zen terms you might say he lived as a person of "no rank."

What we mostly saw of Doug was his commitment to the spiritual life. I first met Doug in 1996 when we were both working with Sr. Mary Smith of the Franciscan Renewal Center. As a board member he displayed the same energy level and dedication to FRC that he later demonstrated with Seven Thunders. He was committed to the sisters of St. Francis, and helped them with program offerings, International Merton Society presentations, among other responsibilities. Doug went a step further and became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis to more closely follow and live a contemplative and active life as a Secular Franciscan as prescribed by St. Francis.

While well versed in and involved with the contemplative side of Seven Thunders, Doug was very appreciative of Zen and its influence on spiritual life. He was open minded and ecumenical, which was partly evidenced by his great interest in and intense study of the writings of Thomas Merton.

For me, Doug was my introduction to Seven Thunders when we rode out to the Trappist Abbey together in about 2008. He introduced me to Brother Mark Filut and Leonard Marcel and the larger cast of characters that has become so familiar and helpful to me. I already have missed our many meetings for coffee at a bakery near his house. I miss his "Have you thought of" or "You might consider" as a gentle way of suggesting a shift in perspective. So, thank you, Doug, for being a mentor and role model without knowing you were taking on those roles. Thank you for being just yourself: a kind and humble man.

Doug was a long-term member of St. John the Baptist Episcopal parish in Portland where he was involved in many facets of parish life (for 40 years!). A funeral service will take place on Friday, September 16, 2022, at 4:00 PM., St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church (on the Oregon Episcopal School campus), 6300 SW Nicol Road, Portland, OR 97223. ⚡



More information about Doug can be found at:

<https://funerals.coop/obituaries/douglas-d-speers.html> ⚡



## SUMMER SESSHIN AT STONES AND CLOUDS

by Greg Smith

The Seven Thunders summer sesshin was held at the Stones and Clouds zendo from July 12th through 16th. A total of eleven people participated, six in person and five on-line. Once again, we discovered how meaningful and effective this hybrid approach is to our capacity to extend our practice to people who do not live locally or wish to continue to be cautious as the impact of the covid pandemic begins to wane. While still observing social distancing in the zendo at the moment, we look forward to the time when we will be able to open in-person sitting to more people, both for sesshin and zazenkai as well as on Monday nights.

The weather was eminently cooperative this summer with mild temperatures during the day. On one morning we were surprised to see our view to the north blocked completely by an unusual summer fog bank that burned off by noon. Outdoor kinhin after each day's teisho gave us a chance to delight

in the patterns of sunlight and shadow as we circled around the garden beneath the deciduous sequoia and prolific wisteria.

Experienced officers contributed to the success of this sesshin. Tom Davies served as tanto, Dan Dickinson as ino, Paul Birkeland as jikijitsu, and Teresa Marcel as karma dana. Marcel Roshi shared two stimulating teisho during our time together, and Greg Smith offered a dharma talk. All of us benefited again from Teresa's exceptional meals.

We benefitted as well from the opportunity to witness Jared Taylor's jukai ceremony that took place at the conclusion of the sesshin on Saturday morning. Hearing another person's reflections on the three vows of refuge, the three pure precepts, and the ten grave precepts can be a genuine source of inspiration and renewal.

These longer retreats provide an important opportunity to regenerate and deepen our practice of zen. Although the time we spend with one another is largely silent, the depth of relationship nurtured during these times serves to strengthen the experience of sangha and our commitment to one another as we walk the way. Whenever it is possible, we invite you to participate in these interior expeditions with us. ⚡



From L to R, standing: Teresa Marcel, Tom Davies, Greg Smith, Diana Richardson.  
Kneeling: Leonard Marcel, Jared Taylor, Paul Birkeland, Dan Dickinson.  
Online: Marian Morgan, Edward Lams and Pam Evans.



## RETURN TO THE FATHER, *continued from page 1*

Part of his work in Germany in that turbulent era was to teach Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy (proper views and practice) but, judging from his sermons, his own chief interest seems to have been to invite any already advanced, pious souls into a profound state of God-realization in this very lifetime, and he found many such persons among the women and men of the region.

By 1322, Eckhart had become the most famous preacher of his era, and was moved by the Dominicans to Cologne, where he preached some of his most memorable sermons. His teachings were laced with fresh imagery from the vernacular style of chivalrous courtly love, and made even more rich with an extremely sublime mysticism, often featuring aphorisms such as the following that could jolt one into spiritual awakening: "God is at home, man is abroad" and "Be thoroughly dead and buried in God" and "I pray God to make me free of God, for the Divine unconditioned Being is above God and all distinctions" and "If I had a God I could understand, I would no longer consider that one God."

His engagement in the "ways of the world" makes his teachings more accessible to us lay people, since there is no requirement that we live as hermits or go into the silence of the cloister in order to open ourselves to the experience of returning to the Father. Busy lay people have throughout the centuries been contemplatives, too.

As a professor and theologian, Meister Eckhart had a deep understanding of scripture and of the Christian tradition. He speaks with such full nondual consciousness that not infrequently he is misunderstood, but then he often clarifies an abstruse passage with a brilliant one-liner like "What we plant in the soil of contemplation we shall reap in the harvest of action."

Meister Eckhart was clearly a man of great piety himself and urged this in others as well. Yet he was also ahead of his time and psychologically quite free, it seems, of that

morbid penitential religiosity that weighed so heavily upon the West during the Middle Ages and afterward. In this, he was actually quite like Jesus, who taught the simple Our Father prayer instead of a complex regimen of penitential practices. Listen, for instance, to Eckhart's words on "sin" from one of his earliest writings: "Love knows nothing of sin—not that man has not sinned—but sins are blotted out at once by love and they vanish as if they had not been. This is because whatever God does, God does completely....Whom he forgives, he forgives utterly and at once." (*Talks of Instruction 15*) Astute spiritual counselor that he was, Eckhart did not want people maintaining a sense of ego through *guilt* any more than he wanted them to inflate their sense of ego through *pride*. The essential aim toward which Meister Eckhart always points us is selflessness and emptiness, so that we can return to the Father as the only One.

He wrote: "When God laughs at the soul and the soul laughs back at God, the persons of the Trinity are begotten. When the Father laughs at the Son and the Son laughs back at the Father, that laughter gives pleasure, that pleasure gives joy, that joy gives love, and that love is the Holy Spirit."

Another translation of the same passage puts it this way: "The Father laughs and gives birth to the Son. The Son laughs back at the Father and gives birth to the Spirit. The whole Trinity laughs and gives birth to us."

Indeed, laughter may well be the ultimate act of letting go and letting be: the music of the divine cosmos. For, in the core of the Trinity, laughing and birthing go on all day long.

Eckhart taught the simple power of letting go and letting be. To let go is no easy task. Yet, in any loving relationship, such a surrendering is the source of joy.

Heaven is now and we are invited to participate in the eternal flow of trinitarian life right here, in this lifetime. The only thing

keeping us from God and heaven, keeping us from returning to the Father, is our attachments to our own cherished ideas and preferences and desires and possessions, including our attachment to the ultimate error of thinking that we have ever been separate from God.

In short, what keeps us from returning to the Father are our dualistic thinking and actions. In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus says: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, then will you enter the kingdom."

In other words, each of us is called forth as a transient expression of the inexhaustible and eternal reality of the divine life, and with the vocation of returning to our origin. Of this, Merton writes: "To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence. Love is my true identity, for God is love....To find love I must enter into the sanctuary where it is hidden, which is the mystery of God."

Eckhart speaks to our origin in God in one of his sermons when he says: "...for the Father begets the Son in the soul exactly as in eternity and not otherwise....The Father ceaselessly begets the Son and, what is more, begets me as well, not only as Son but as (God's) own nature, (God's) own being. At that inmost Source, I myself spring from the Holy Spirit and there is one life, one being, one action. All God's works are one and, therefore, God begets me as God does the Son and without distinction." Here he transcends any kind of dualistic thinking or experience, any notion that I, we, are here and God is somewhere "out there."

Willigis Jäger (1925-2020), a founding teacher of Seven Thunders, often used one of two images to describe, in his own way, this relation between the divine essence and the human species. Sometimes, he said it was like a wave and the ocean. The wave



## RETURN TO THE FATHER,

*continued from page 6*

is not the ocean but it is also not separate from the ocean. Sometimes, he used the analogy of a gold ring. The gold is not the ring and the ring is not the gold, but the coexist as one.

In every living thing there is a place inside that is not touched by any guilt, where none of us have ever done anything wrong. There we encounter the "unprofaned face" of the person, our true original innocence. There we find neither evil nor guilt. The primal divine principle, which we call Ultimate Reality or the Ground of Being or God, has created itself in every form, and lives its divine life as the many and varied forms of creation throughout the universe. It cannot be stained or sullied. It shows itself with shining clarity both in our joy and in our suffering. This unsullied center of each of us is the source of cheerfulness, joy and serenity. At the deepest (or highest) and most silent level, neither criticism nor praise reaches it, neither disgrace nor disaster touches it. All petty self-seeking has disappeared. It is there, at the Source, where we are most truly alive, most truly with the Father in the Holy Spirit.

The parable of the prodigal son is usually interpreted from a moralistic perspective, the son turning his back on the father, living in sin but then doing penance and returning to receive forgiveness from the father for his waywardness. At the same time, from a contemplative perspective, it is also the story of each of us, the story of wandering through life as in a dream, living impulsively a life of self-seeking greed and irresponsibility until, one-day, we realize that the meaning of life lies in returning to the Source, returning to the Father. Only there can we, like the prodigal son, find our true essence, our true home. This parable, from a contemplative perspective, is a guide for us on this path. It can help us orient ourselves to who we really are: daughters and sons of God and inheritors of the kingdom. The contemplative understands that this story tells us how we can awaken to our real life under the guidance of Jesus and through the Holy Spirit of God.



This contemplative life is the response to a call, a call from the One Who has no voice and yet Who speaks in everything that is, and Who, most of all, speaks in the depths of our own being. This contemplative life is a deep resonance in the inmost center of our spirit in which our very life loses its separateness and resounds with the majesty and the mercy of the hidden and living God, and that resonance is the divine life manifesting in each of us.

God is love, and this love leads to union with the beloved, or it is not really love. Because this truth of our call to divine union, to a return to the Father, is so overwhelming and unfathomable, it is difficult to speak about it. John of the Cross (1542-1591) speaks for many when he describes his experience in this way:

How gently and lovingly you wake in  
my heart,  
Where in secret you dwell alone;  
And in your sweet breathing, filled with  
good and glory,  
How tenderly you swell my heart with  
love.

In returning to the Father, we are filled with the love and compassion of the One Who penetrates our being, and to this awesome truth, we can only respond with wonder and with silence.

As a result of returning to the Father, the Holy Spirit envelops and penetrates the life of the contemplative, envelops and penetrates each of our lives. The Holy Spirit is a breathing forth of the loving union with the Father, and our lives are continually filled with that Spirit. Increasingly on this path, our contemplative life is a life led by the Holy Spirit.

And it is an effective life, not primarily because of the word spoken or the message proclaimed or the wisdom shared, but because of its inherent spiritual power. At the same time, it is a hidden life, a life hidden in the divine Triune mystery. Its struggles with its humanity may be lifelong and intense, but mostly secret and unnoticed. Its increasing inner fullness of the divine presence is largely concealed except when it blossoms forth in a radiant face or a joy-filled smile. Whether young or old, married or single, factory worker or cloistered, the hidden lives of contemplatives spread light and hope throughout this world.

So, never diminish the importance of this contemplative practice for your life. You benefit many people, most of whom you will never meet. Continue investigating where in heart and mind you are attached, and continue letting go and emptying, so that you can be a vessel of the Holy Spirit, continually returning to the Father. ⚡



## UPCOMING ZAZENKAI

**Z**azenkai are an opportunity for intense practice with the sangha in a shorter time-frame than either a kosesshin or a sesshin, as they are limited to one day only.

Zazenkai for the remainder of the year will be as follows:

- September 17, 2022
- October 22, 2022
- February 18, 2023
- March 18, 2023.

Zazenkai take place from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. In addition to formal zazen, the day includes a sutra service, teisho, and dokusan.

These will be hybrid events with both in-zendo attendance and online via Zoom, unless Covid circumstances dictate otherwise. Currently, all in-zendo places have been reserved for September and October zazenkai, so only online places are available.

**Please contact Teresa Marcel** at [tdmarcel@mac.com](mailto:tdmarcel@mac.com) or 503.636.9009 **to reserve an online place for Zazenkai.** She will confirm your reservation and send you a Zoom link as well as Zazenkai guidelines a few days before the event.

While there is no set fee for zazenkai, a **donation of \$20** is requested and much appreciated to help cover costs. To offer a donation, please send a check to Seven Thunders Treasurer:

Jenny Brausch  
PO Box 3119  
Albany, OR 97321

Checks should be made out to  
"Seven Thunders."

Zazenkai is followed by a study group, to which all are invited. Study group lasts approximately one hour and is centered on a reading agreed upon at the end of the previous meeting. ⚡

## OBON OBSERVANCE

**F**or the third consecutive year, and in collaboration with the Do Shintei Kai (Shared Heart Arbor) tea school, Seven Thunders celebrated the mid-August observance of Obon.

There is an eight hundred year history of connection between Zen and Tea, ever since the Rinzai master, Myoan Eisai (1141-1215) brought the first tea plants to Japan from China. For centuries during Obon in Zen monasteries and temples, and more recently in some Zen centers in this country, ceremonial offerings of tea have been made to lineage and personal ancestors. It is a time in a more focused way to remember with gratitude those who have gone before us and for what gifts of spirit and example we have received from them.

Jan Waldmann, a tea teacher of forty years, provided background information about the Obon festival in Japan these days, after which Leonard Marcel made a bowl of offertory tea for the altar and everyone recited the *Maka Hannya Haramita Shingyo*. This was followed by offertory incense, some words of reflection and time for sharing via Zoom by those attending. ⚡

## FALL BEND RETREAT

**O**n Sunday, October 30, 2022, from 8:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Leonard Marcel will offer his usual Fall retreat for Bend Zen. This retreat will be given on Zoom, so it's open to practitioners anywhere – you don't have to be in Bend.

It will include sitting, two talks, and a phone interview with Leonard, with a break for lunch.

For further information and registration, please contact Leanne Laterell at [leannelaterell2@gmail.com](mailto:leannelaterell2@gmail.com) ⚡





## ON & OFF THE CUSHION: JUKAI

by Jared Taylor

**A**t the conclusion of this year's summer sesshin, I had the great honor of participating in Jukai, the Zen ceremony of formally receiving the 16 Bodhisattva Precepts. It was an important event for me, and the many months spent preparing for the ceremony contributed significantly to the quality and depth of my practice.

Zen practice encourages us to simultaneously cultivate wisdom and compassion. Compassion compels us to apply wisdom to alleviate suffering in the world. As I realized during my preparations, the precepts provide the shape of that applied wisdom, the framework for directing the understanding cultivated on the cushion back out into the world. Jukai is a formal acknowledgement, to oneself and to the community, of the intention to employ every scrap of wisdom and compassion we can muster to "save the many beings." Although some argue that Zen, in modern practice, is more of a method than a religion per se, I think it is clear that Jukai is a religious act. In addition to embracing the Zen *method* for the cultivation of wisdom and compassion, Jukai involves the adoption of Zen Buddhism as a religion: dedicating oneself to the Mahayana Buddhist path and embodying the bodhisattva ideal.

My preparations for Jukai were threefold: studying the precepts, sewing the rakusu, the bib-like representation of Buddha's robe, and choosing, with Leonard, my dharma name. I began by studying the Three Refuges, the Three Pure Precepts, and the Ten Grave Precepts, which together comprise the 16 Bodhisattva Precepts. Leonard suggested reading Aitkin Roshi's *The Mind of Clover* to direct my investigations, which I ultimately read through several times. The first time was too casual, and it didn't yield much. The subsequent times I read slowly, digesting one

section at a time. I also took notes, writing down key quotes and ideas. I then used those notes to begin writing drafts of the vows I would make publicly during the ceremony. After many months of contemplation and revision, and with guidance from Roshi, I finally began to enter into some measure of intimacy with the precepts and to find an honest expression of their meaning to me personally. Leonard then suggested Reb Anderson's *Being Upright: Zen Meditation and the Bodhisattva Precepts* which led me deeper into each precept and helped to shape the final form of the vows that I made at Jukai. I have since found that the study of the precepts is ongoing, and that preparing for Jukai was just the beginning of this invaluable practice.



The second part of preparations, sewing the rakusu, took substantially less time than I had expected. I searched online for a pre-made kit but couldn't find anything suitable. In the end I'm grateful that I participated directly in every step of the process. I sourced the fabric and the wooden ring, bought needles and thread, borrowed cutting mats and a blade, and dug out my iron and ironing board from the dark recesses of my closet. In all I think it took nearly a month, composed of one-to-two-hour sessions, three to four days a week. The time commitment and the focus required to recite a mantra with every stitch really forced me to fully engage with

not only the process of creating the rakusu, but with the unfolding of my practice as a whole, moment by moment.

The final part of preparation, choosing a dharma name, was something that I was especially looking forward to. Perhaps because it is not part of my native culture, I have always regarded the giving or taking of a spiritual name a fascinating and mysterious event. Leonard explained that he would make suggestions for the name, but that I could also make suggestions, and that we would agree together on the final choice. Although I have studied some Japanese, I do not have facility with Classical Japanese or its particularly Buddhist usage, so I struggled to come up with ideas myself. I eventually tracked down a published list of Japanese dharma names, with their components and meanings, and was able to put together a couple of possibilities. Trying to look plainly at oneself, seeing through the layers of persona but capturing the essence and aspirations, is a real challenge. How can that be represented authentically in a unique two-character name? This is the realm of Roshi! The moment I saw Leonard's suggestions I knew that the first proposed name, *Myo Do* (Bright, Clear Tao), was the best choice. It was full of meaning for me now and perfectly expressed my religious aspiration.

Roshi inscribed my dharma name on the rakusu, along with his name as preceptor and the date of the ceremony. I received it, along with the Blood Vein document establishing my place in the precepts lineage from Shakyamuni and Bodhidharma through Dogen and Leonard, during the ceremony. It was an exceptionally powerful moment, and one that I expect will resonate throughout my life.

I am so very grateful that my friends at Seven Thunders, along with my wife and brother, were able to share the joy and potency of that moment in time. I look forward to sharing similar moments with the community, again and again, as others decide to take that next step on their personal path. ⚡

**BOOK CLUB MEETING SEPTEMBER 30 AT 7:00 P.M.**

by Greg Smith

The next Seven Thunders book group will meet on Friday September 30 at 7:00 p.m. We will discuss the first half of Martin Lee Mueller's *Being Salmon Being Human: Encountering the Wild in Us and Us in the Wild* (up to p. 154).

Dan Dickinson and I have both read it and think you will find it penetrating, poetic, and very relevant to our practice as Buddhists. Carl Safina has described it in this way: "What if looking at salmon brought you into deep meditation, and at the end of that meditation you realized that you were looking at yourself, that the salmon was you, you were the salmon, and all is one? That realization is the greatest story on Earth. This book is that crucial meditation."

You can order it via Amazon; Powell's Books does not have it in stock.

Whether we meet on-line or in-person (with hybrid option) will be determined later in September depending on what is happening with covid by that point. If you are interested in participating, please e-mail me at [gasmith@clark.edu](mailto:gasmith@clark.edu) by September 25.

**Here is the review of the book on Amazon:**

*Nautilus Award Silver Medal Winner, Ecology & Environment*

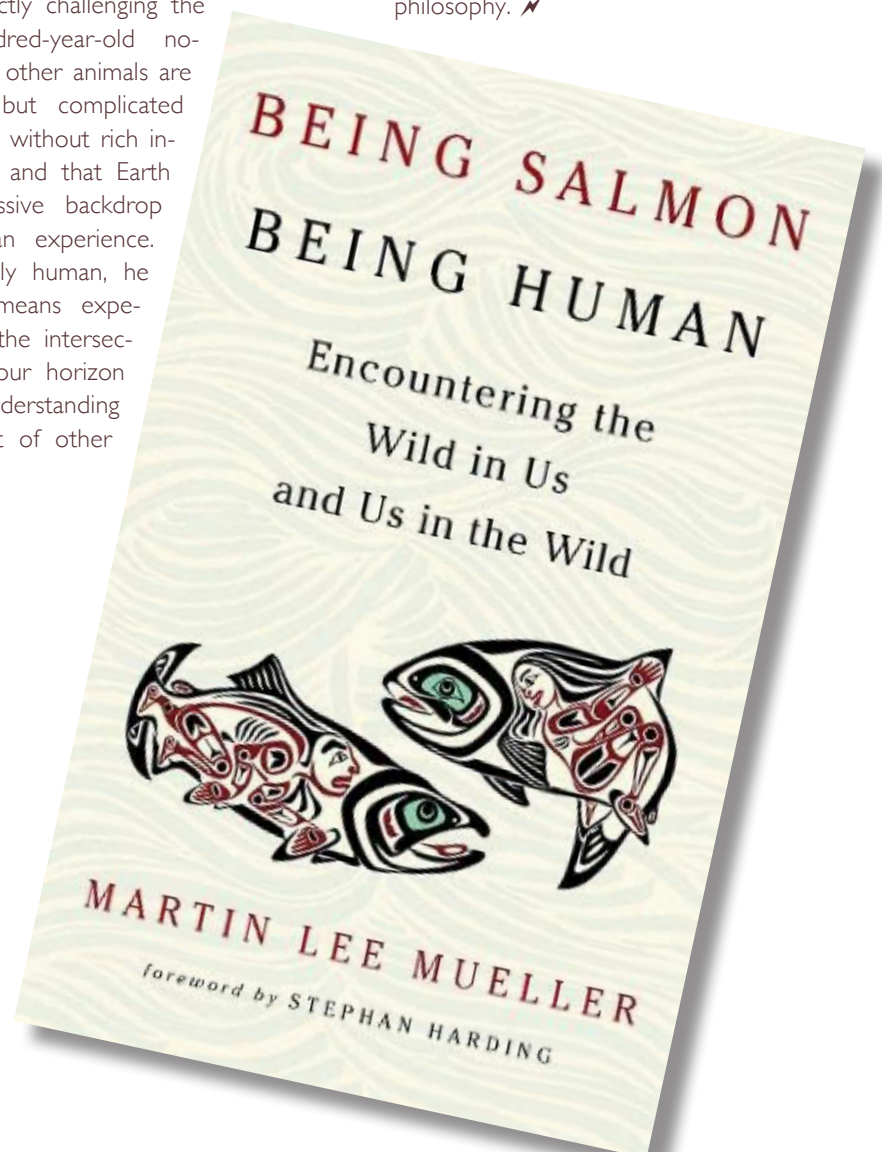
In search of a new story for our place on earth

*Being Salmon Being Human* examines Western culture's tragic alienation from nature by focusing on the relationship between people and salmon – weaving together key narratives about the Norwegian salmon industry as well as wild salmon in indigenous cultures of the Pacific Northwest.

Mueller uses this lens to articulate a comprehensive critique of human exceptionalism, directly challenging the four-hundred-year-old notion that other animals are nothing but complicated machines without rich inner lives and that Earth is a passive backdrop to human experience. Being fully human, he argues, means experiencing the intersection of our horizon of understanding with that of other

animals. Salmon are the test case for this. Mueller experiments, in evocative narrative passages, with imagining the world as a salmon might see it, and considering how this enriches our understanding of humanity in the process.

*Being Salmon Being Human* is both a philosophical and a narrative work, rewarding readers with insightful interpretations of major philosophers – Descartes, Heidegger, Abram, and many more – and reflections on the human–Earth relationship. It stands alongside Abram's *Spell of the Sensuous* and *Becoming Animal*, as well as Andreas Weber's *The Biology of Wonder and Matter and Desire* – heralding a new "Copernican revolution" in the fields of biology, ecology, and philosophy. ⚡





The 2022 Seven Thunders Rohatsu Sesshin, will be conducted at the Stones and Clouds Zendo in Lake Oswego, OR. This is planned as a hybrid event from **December 2 - 7** with reduced zendo in-person attendance as well as online attendance.

The hybrid event will take place from Friday, December 2, starting at 7 p.m. and end on Wednesday, December 7 at 10 a.m.

Sesshin will be led by Leonard Marcel. Space is limited to a maximum of 16 full-time, 9 online and 7 in-person. If attending online, you will sit in your own space, access the retreat via Zoom on your own device and provide your own meals. Meals will be provided for those attending in person. Those attending online will be sent a link for the retreat as well as a PDF containing the retreat schedule, all chants, and cautions a few days before retreat begins.

Registration deadline is November 8. Registrations will be accepted on a first come basis. Additional applicants will be wait-listed in case of cancellations. As this sesshin is usually well subscribed, early registration and payment is encouraged.

#### Sesshin fees are as follows:

##### In-person hybrid retreat:

member: \$260, non-member: \$290.

##### Online hybrid retreat:

member: \$160, non-member: \$190.

In all cases, 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 the

## ROHATSU SESSHIN DECEMBER 2022

retreat coordinator on or before November 18; half the fee will be refunded if received by November 25; 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.

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](http://seventhunders.org). Click on the 'Contribute' tab and follow the donation process. Please be sure to enter "Rohatsu sesshin fee" in the note section. Questions? Please contact Teresa Marcel at 503.636.9009 or [tdmarcel@mac.com](mailto:tdmarcel@mac.com) ⚡

### REGISTRATION FORM

#### ROHATSU SESSHIN, DECEMBER 2 - 7, 2022

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

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

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

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

#### In-person hybrid retreat:

☐ member: \$260, ☐ non-member: \$290

#### Online hybrid retreat:

☐ member: \$160, ☐ non-member: \$190

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

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

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



## VIRTUAL CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR) JANUARY 20 & 21, 2023

As with other Seven Thunders activities usually held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey, and until Seven Thunders Board and member comfort levels for in-person attendance rise, the Seven Thunders January CIR will be an online-only event on Zoom.

It will be led by Leonard Marcel and take place from 8:45 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Friday, January 20, and from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 21. 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. Please be sure to enter "January CIR fee" in the note section.)

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 January 6; half the fee (\$38/\$53) will

be refunded if received by January 13; 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) JANUARY 20 & 21, 2023

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.