



# THE WOODEN FISH

The No Barriers Zen Newsletter



## Message from Oshin

BY ŌSHIN JENNINGS SENSEI



When we see how deep that connection is and how special the circumstances of all of our lives ... we start to act like it more, following the way of more interconnectedness.

We see the Buddha born in our children, in our neighborhoods, in the creek flowing through Jikoji, In the turkeys and in the Steller's Jays. In each other.

It's a kind of knowing that is deep and powerful. What happened here was that deep compassion for the world and all beings and deep wisdom and awakening to the truth ... was born.

From a Talk on Buddha's birthday 2023

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Image: Painting by Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1769) of a monkey hanging from a tree branch, reaching for the reflection of the moon in the water.

# A Sangha Member In Need



Jessica is a single mother and sign language interpreter from Tampa, FL. She was interpreting an event in April when she developed a terrible headache and went to the

emergency room.

After some tests, she was diagnosed with an arterial blood clot in her brain that was cutting off the blood supply. She was admitted to Neurological ICU, where a team of medical professionals provided exceptional care. After stabilizing with medication, she was sent home to recover for three months. Her treatment plan involves physical restrictions, costly medication, and imaging.

Donations are greatly appreciated to help with medical bills and to provide for her and her child. Sharing her story is also encouraged. Thank you for your help!

**For more details or to donate, please go to:**

**<https://www.gofundme.com/f/jessica-pay-her-hospital-bill>**

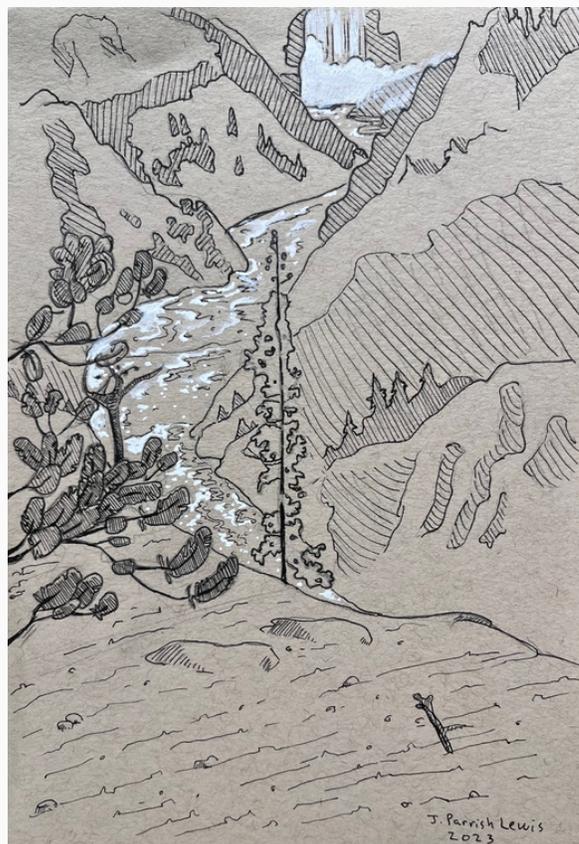


Illustration by J. Parrish Lewis

Description: ink drawing of a river coursing between mountains, with trees and a waterfall being the focal points.

Zen saying, translated: "In the beginning, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers; later on, mountains are not mountains and rivers are not rivers; and still later, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers."

3/18/2023

go for the walk  
that does not  
take you  
farther away  
but rather brings  
you to the present

you have already arrived  
at this destination

so let your Ordinary Mind  
reside there for a while  
instead of the past  
or the unwritten future

what do you see in this place?  
touch, taste?  
what sounds and smells envelop you?

these  
are all the things  
that exist in your presence

*By Justin Lewis*

<https://www.instagram.com/justinsummerchilde/>

*This poem was inspired by a Saturday morning  
Dharma talk by Ōshin Sensei.*

*Justin is a Deaf diarist/poet living in Rhode Island*

you have already arrived

# SPOTLIGHTING SANGHA ARTISTS!

## TAM SUNDARI

By Tam Sundari

I was inspired to paint "Growth" (A tree on OM with Chakras and a lotus) by my personal journey for the past couple of years. Growth is a continuous journey but it is up to us on how, who and what we want to grow with.

When I was first introduced to the concept of chakras, it expanded my understanding of how energy works within our body, mind and soul. This led me to studying Buddhism. This art is a constant reminder of my journey and I see it as a blessing. "The Six Paramitas" (A daisy in chakras color with each of the paramitas named on the petals) artwork was inspired by my art "Growth." I wanted something to ponder upon in my yoga/meditation studio during my practice. It is currently hung facing where I meditate and when I shift into a mindfulness state, it is the first thing I see. It reminds me as a student of Buddhism of what I value and intend on incorporating into my daily life. Besides the paramitas, the daisy flower has a significant meaning to me. It's my birth flower. I am constantly reminded of my purpose of being on this beautiful planet.

With love, Tam



Image: *Growth* by Tam Sundari



Image: *The Six Paramitas* by Tam Sundari

ART, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

# MATT MEINHARDT

I was a librarian for a year at Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD). Two of the things I did was pick a book to read aloud and create a hands on activity related to the story for a variety of elementary classes. One class I picked the book called Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes. The theme of the book was the importance of a person's name or in this case an anthropomorphic mouse. I had a hard time finding activities I thought the kids would like related names. So I decided to create my own activity. I am not sure how I came up with the idea of fitting one's name on a whole page or canvas. It was definitely through experimental trial and error. I created almost 15 of these picture names. I xeroxed them and gave them to the kids for

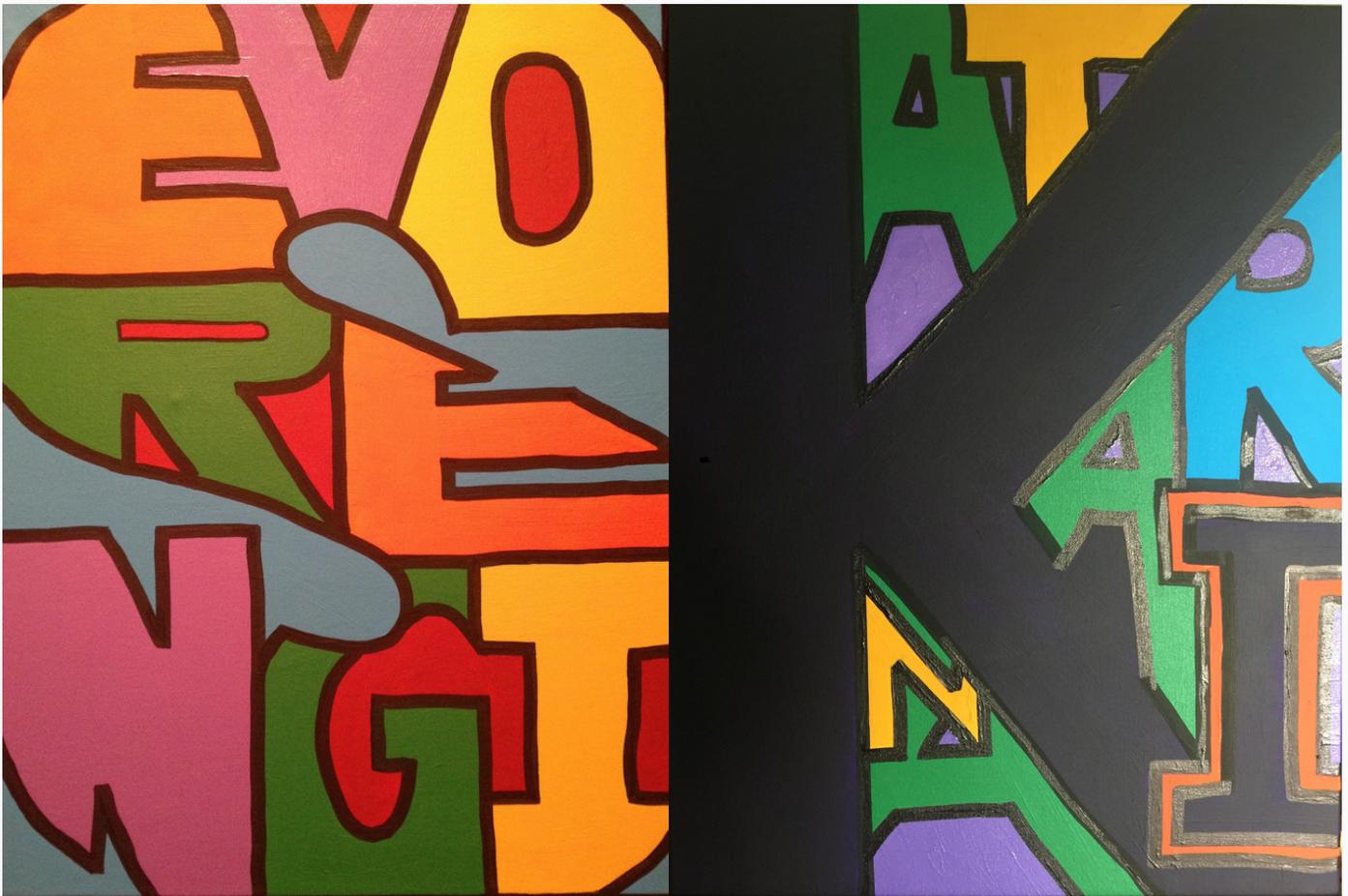


Image: Sovereign, and Katarina by Matt Meinhardt

them to color their names.

Later, I decided to do the same thing as Christmas gifts for my two kids. I would first draw on a regular 12x8.5 sheet of paper then trace it on transparent paper and place it on an overhead projector. Yes, the old overhead projectors you utilized at schools of yore. The first few canvas work I used MSAD's projector. Later, I got lucky and bought one at a law firm that upgraded their technology.

When I was studying to become a librarian at St Catherine University. I took a class in 2017 on International Librarianship and got an opportunity to go to Poland for the International Federation

**ART, CONTINUED ON PAGE 5**

# ART, continued...

of Library Associations and Institutes. In order to raise money I did several paintings. Not only did I paint first names, I painted last names or meaningful words chosen by the person commissioning the piece.

I continue to paint in this style today varying in size, ranging from 8x10 to 18x24. I would love to incorporate hand shapes to these work to make them more bilingual. December 2022 I saw several Metro Deaf School (MDS) students' artwork for their annual Pancake and Art Show Fundraiser. Their work and talking to their art teacher gave me an idea that I have yet to apply.

I graduated with a Masters in Library and Information Science in 2020 and currently work as a full time librarian at MDS in St Paul, Minnesota.

“Separation, intense loneliness, causes enormous anger. Because of the self clinging of this being when it grows, anger grows. This occurs when people are being concerned about themselves, as themselves. When you raise illusory self and attach to it moment after moment, you become alone, of course. Separation is like that. The departure of yourself from others is like that. Where is the division of you and other things? Is skin the division of you and others? I don't think so. Air, big air and little air in you, is a good example. As you breathe in, where is the limitation?”  
— Kobun Chino Otagawa, *Embracing Mind: The Zen Talks of Kobun Chino Otagawa*

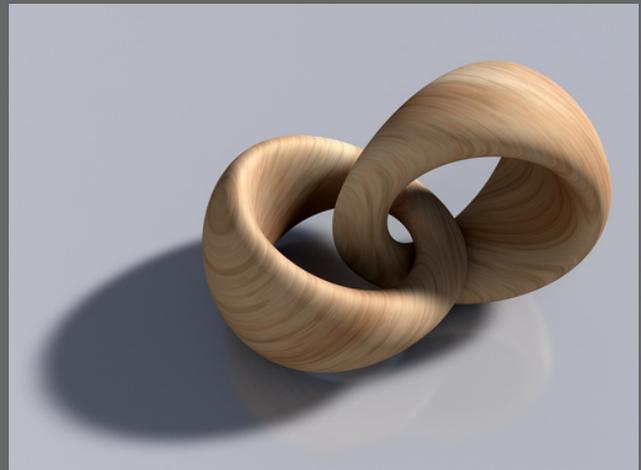


Image Source: [Ralf Kunze via Pixabay](#) Image shows two interlocking wooden rings, representing interconnectedness.

## CELEBRATING THE WEDDING OF TWO MEMBERS OF OUR SANGHA



Images courtesy of BJ Vriezen. Shawn Vriezen and BJ Vriezen sandwich Ōshin Sensei, left. Ōshin Sensei signs "Who?" to the newlyweds, right.

By BJ Vriezen

Shawn and I met through work. I was practicing with a local Sangha in Columbia, SC, where I was living at the time, and Shawn with No Barriers Zen (NBZ). Shawn invited me to join NBZ and I instantly felt at home. It was the first time for both of us dating another Buddhist. Having a partner to practice with and encourage my practice to grow has been a really beautiful experience.

We exchanged our vows in a private ceremony with Ōshin Sensei on November 22, 2022. Ōshin Sensei met with us regularly leading up to this, and continues to be available for support and guidance on our new journey together.

"No matter how bad a state of mind you may get into, if you keep strong and hold out, eventually the floating clouds must vanish and the withering wind must cease."

— Dogen Zenji



Submissions to The Wooden Fish are welcome from our Sangha members, as well as other Buddhists. Stories, poems, and art are all considered. Please contact [nobarrierszen@gmail.com](mailto:nobarrierszen@gmail.com) if interested.

# SUPPORT FOR NO BARRIERS ZEN IS WELCOME!



Your generosity, both through donations and through volunteerism, supports our mission.

Visit

<https://nobarrierszen.org/support-us>



## Join Us

### **Saturday Morning Sit & Dharma Talks**

1st and 3rd Saturdays at 7am PST/10am EST:

Short Description: Two 30 minute silent meditation periods followed by a Dharma Talk (or Wisdom Circle)

### **Weekday Morning Sits**

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 7am PST/10am EST

Short description: 30 minute silent meditation in our Zoom zendo

### **Wednesday Evening Sit**

1st and 3rd Wednesday evenings at 5:30pm PST/8:30pm EST

Short Description: 30 minute silent meditation in our Zoom zendo, followed by community Q&A and discussion.

### **Monthly Book Club**

2nd Wednesdays at 5:30pm PST/8:30pm EST

Short Description: We are discussing Embracing Mind, the Zen Talks of Kobun Chino Otagawa

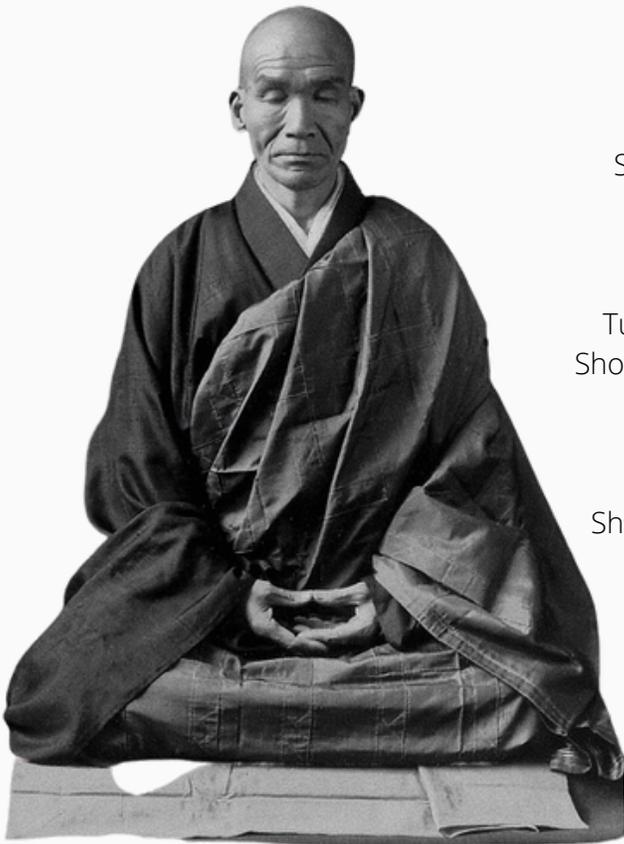


Image description: Kodo Sawaki Roshi sitting Zazen

## UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKER: SHOHO MICHAEL NEWHALL

**WHEN: June 17th, 2023**

Join us online for Zen meditation and a Dharma talk by Shoho Michael Newhall, Abbot Emeritus of Jikoji Zen Center, and teacher to our own Guiding Teacher, Ōshin Jennings.

Shoho Michael Newhall began practicing and studying with Kobun Chino Otagawa Roshi in the early seventies, and was ordained by Kobun in the mid-eighties. In the early nineties he was director at Jikoji Zen Center.

Throughout this time he taught visual arts at various schools and universities, including Naropa University, where he also taught meditation and Buddhism. Since that time, Mike has lived at Jikoji, serving as the Resident Teacher and chief priest.

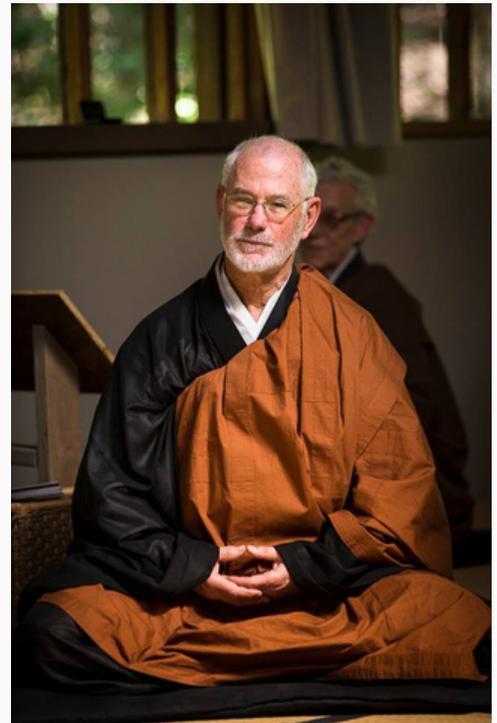


Image Description: Shoho Michael Newhall, a older white man with close cropped hair and white beard. He is wearing round wire-frame glasses, a brown Okesa and robes, while sitting with his hands in the mediation mudra in Jikoji's Zendo.

We will have 2 periods of Zen meditation (30 minutes each), followed by a Dharma talk.  
Join us on Zoom, copy & paste: [https://zoom.us/j/778202667?  
pwd=T0xmSUhK0h0QmlyUXlIMmJqK1ZmZz09](https://zoom.us/j/778202667?pwd=T0xmSUhK0h0QmlyUXlIMmJqK1ZmZz09)

All are welcome! This Dharma talk will be in English and ASL-English interpreters are provided for this event. For additional accommodations or for more information please contact us.



**"If you are focused  
on becoming a  
Buddha you'll miss  
the Buddha where  
you are."  
- ŌSHIN JENNINGS  
SENSEI**