



# Great Tree Zen Temple

newsletter / spring-summer / 2011

## Ordination



Jan Jinen Howard, Rev. Chimyo Atkinson, Rev. Kuden Paul Boyle, Rev. Shogen Chris Sheehy, Rev. Rendo Jonathon Flaum, Rev. Teijo Munnich, and Brook Genryu Reynolds gather after the ceremony.

April 10, Rev. Munnich gave priest ordination to Rev. Rendo Jonathon Flaum and Rev. Shogen Chris Sheehy. In preparation, they had spent the past year sewing traditional robes by hand, chanting on each stitch, purchasing oryoki bowls and other supplies, and generally coming to terms with this big step in their lives.

*Zazen teaches you how to face yourself and how to face your daily life whatever may arise.*

**- Dainin Katagiri**

*Each Moment Is the Universe*

## GREAT TREE

### Abess:

Rev Teijo Munnich

### Board Members:

Katherine Blackburn  
Stephanie Jones-Byrne  
Traci Childress  
Jonathon Flaum  
Gary Gray  
Anna Matheson  
Brook Reynolds  
Erin Rafalowski  
Marijo Simpson

### Temple Administrators:

#### Fusu:

Ruthanne Kah

#### Ino:

Jan Jinen Howard

#### Shisui:

Jonathon Rendo Flaum

#### Tenzo:

Open

#### Tsusu:

Rev Chimyo Atkinson

Great Tree Zen Temple  
679 Lower Flat Creek Rd  
Alexander, NC 28701

Here below are some of their thoughts on the process and prospect of ordination. (more pictures on GT website)

**RENDO** Last night my daughter, Eve, said, "You want to have a karaoke dinner?" When she took out the set of bowls my wife, Tami, had put together for her, I realized she meant oryoki. Sure we can. "In one bowl I'd like pasta, in the other bowl I'd like chicken, and cooked carrots in the third bowl." My 9-year-old, Ren, was on board with oryoki as well and got out his set.

After chanting the verse, we unwrapped Buddha's bowls and set up our little world of bowls, utensils, wiping cloth, and napkin. After finishing and cleaning our bowls with hot water and wrapping them back up, we found ourselves chanting: "Abiding in this ephemeral world, like a lotus in muddy water, the mind is pure and goes beyond, thus we bow to Buddha."

The meal took a while and my children asked a lot of questions, but for the most part they stayed focused on being present with the oryoki and with each other. The ritual brought us toward each other; we had to pay attention to the act of serving and being served.

I've almost finished sewing the okesa. I'll be glad to wear something that was sewn with the effort of a Sangha. I have not attained anything: "No origination, no stopping, no path; no cognition, also no attainment." I see that effort is endless, at times flowing and at times painstaking. Dogen said practice and enlightenment are one. The thing I'm slowly waking to is that there is nothing outside of practice. The effort of practice is life and that practice is happening everywhere ceaselessly without stopping. Every part of nature is making an effort to contribute without thinking of "success, failure, meaning, no-meaning." Human beings sit back and judge the nature of their effort. I'm seeing that this judgment has not been useful for me.

**SHOGEN** I wanted to get something special when I started to do zazen in the early 1990s. I wanted to be unique and enlightened. So I read *Zen Flesh*, *Zen Bones* and *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* and began to sit by myself for five then 10 then 15 minutes at a time. When I met Teijo-sensei in 1997, she was a nice vehicle for continuing on this path toward being a cool Zen guy. I started doing zazen every day for 30 minutes and sat with the Charlotte Zen Meditation Society on Sunday nights. I could not wait to go for my first sesshin at Southern Dharma in 1998. I did dokusan with Teijo at that sesshin and described my practice to her honestly. She said that, based on my practice, "The most I could expect to gain (was) the delusion of doing something important." I struggled with this comment for several years and it became a kind of koan for me. What IS important? Is Teijo's practice important? Is there anything important? In the end, I became depressed and nihilistic, but I could not stop doing zazen. I wished I could stop doing zazen because it made me miserable. As this went on, I continued to consult with Teijo. I told her that I felt like I had nothing to grasp onto and I felt crazy, and she said "Hey, not bad!" This pissed me off and made me feel supported at the same time.

When I came to Paris in 2005, I found a new sangha and teacher here. I began to sew the okesa with my new teacher, Philippe Coupey, in October 2007, with the support of a large, well-organized sangha that held sewing classes every Saturday. Six months later, with my earnest efforts and the limitations imposed by the instructors, I had only ironed the material twice. In spring 2008, I was finally allowed to cut the fabric, and I began to sew the first band with the

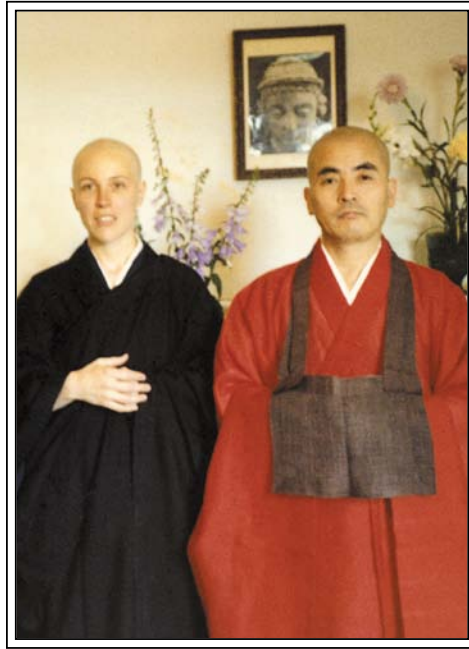
## Pulling Me Up the Mountain

– Reverend Teijo Munnich

Someone asked me recently about what a student-teacher relationship should look like. My response is this: There is no fixed definition. Nevertheless, I want to share a few of my thoughts based on my own experience.

In the early stages of my Zen practice I found myself seeking advice from Katagiri Roshi. I told him that I needed a friend who could help me get some perspective on my life and asked him if he was willing to do that. He agreed. And that was the beginning of what some might call a teacher-student relationship. I hadn't really considered this much before the question popped out of my mouth. And my request to him is probably not the conventional way of creating such a relationship. But I'm glad I didn't have a specific idea about it, because the way I learned from him as a teacher was also not what one might imagine. I learned from something he might say in a lecture that gave me a new insight, or a comment or suggestion that shifted the way I was thinking about something. But his deepest teaching was not communicated with words, but through the intention he exhibited and the authenticity with which he conducted himself in his everyday life. Without professing "enlightenment" or acting as if he had superior understanding, he just put one foot in front of the other and simply did his practice and lived in the best way he could.

I do not mean to imply that he was without fault. Part of what compelled me to continue in Zen practice is that Roshi wasn't afraid to let his weaknesses show, but he didn't get caught by self-criticism or self-doubt. I found this compelling because we all have to deal with mistakes and inadequacies. The real problem is not the mistakes themselves, but getting stuck, becoming polarized by what we call "failure." This very simple teaching has helped me continue in the midst of many challenges. Not letting my mistakes and misjudgments dominate my life has freed me to do many things beyond what I ever imagined.



I once told Katagiri Roshi that I felt he was "pulling me up a mountain." I was reflecting on the fact that he often said just the right thing at my moments of discouragement or confusion about Zen practice. Perhaps he was able to read my body language; or maybe he just happened to say what I needed to hear at the time. But either way, his words helped me to persevere. Perseverance in the midst of confusion is one of the greatest lessons I learned from Katagiri Roshi – through his words and through his example. He always said, "No matter what happens, you have to stand up there." And what I discovered is that confusion is really just a word, a concept. We feel confused when life doesn't unfold in the way we expected or planned. But if we don't take ourselves so seriously, we can drop that concept, and when we do, the infinite possibilities of each moment present themselves to us. At those moments, we can see new options that we might not have considered before, possibilities that were hidden to us when we were caught in an idea of a particular result.

Roshi's response to my statement that he was pulling me up the mountain was, "You wake me up." This statement reinforced his teaching that, in

this practice, teacher and student learn from each other. I always felt that he was as much a student of Zen as a teacher.

After Roshi's death in 1990, there were moments when I questioned whether I could continue the practice without the support of my teacher. Even though I had been away from him quite a lot while practicing at Tassajara and Hosshinji, I still felt his support by knowing he was available and ready to help me answer my questions if necessary. When he died, I worried that I would not be able to resolve some of the questions that came up in practice. But I then realized that, in fact, I had been doing just that. I had been the real source of the support I was attributing to him. I had been the one who had answered my questions. His role was simply to guide me, and he did this by just continuing in the practice no matter what happened.

Sometimes people seem to have expectations of me in my role as a "teacher," expectations that I am or should be a certain kind of person or teach in a particular way. And this has at times been a source of concern for me. I have the benefit of many great opportunities that have helped me reflect on how to live life in an authentic way. And I want to share whatever I can about what I've learned. Katagiri Roshi was committed to sharing what he could of his own experience by constantly making the effort to embody what he believed. And his embodiment was his true teaching.

Yet anyone who makes a sincere effort to bring spiritual practice into everyday life is a teacher, an embodiment of truth. I am inspired and awakened by everyone I practice with, regardless of their experience. We all have access to truth, and I am committed to continue to offer assistance to anyone who wants to climb the mountain. As Dogen Zenji says, the relationship between student and teacher is one of "imperceptible mutual assistance," as are all relationships between living beings. There is no right or wrong way, only trusting the process and trusting our own wisdom.



## Morning Bonsho

– Chimyo Atkinson

### NOTES FROM SHOGOJI...

At 5:10 am the sodo bell rings signaling the end of kinhin. We return to our places, bow to our tans and then to our counterparts across the room. As everyone else in the assembly clambers up onto their tans, I quietly slip out the back door of the sodo (the meditation hall) and into the dark kinhin corridor. Bare-headed and night-blind, I slide the noisy sodo doors open and step out into the cold morning. I've forgotten my hat and my flashlight again but I'm not inclined to further disturb the peace of the meditation hall by going back.

There are lights along the covered walkways and the wind is gentle but the air is ice cold. By the time I make my way back to the nun's quarters, a ridiculously small room behind the hatto (ceremonial hall), my ears and fingers are numb. I am also barefoot, as we are not allowed to wear socks in the sodo, so when I step out of my slippers onto the wooden floor, I can't help but curse with the pain. So much for right speech this morning.

This being the case, the first thing I grab is three pairs of socks and my bessu. I have less than 10 minutes to get prepared to ring the sequence signaling the dawn on the bonsho, the big temple bell in the courtyard. In these 10 minutes I am expected to run back to my room, fasten on a pair of bessu, drape my robes correctly and stuff myself and the three layers of clothing I'm wearing under the robes into my coat. The coat will not close. I pull a wool hat down over my ears, grab my gloves and outside shoes, stuff my bulky feet back into my temple slippers and charge out of the room.

At this point I have no idea what time it is. I am listening hard for the drum back in the sodo that announces the time and is my cue to begin ringing the bonsho. I waddle down the corridors and around to the sodo stairs that face the courtyard where stands the covered platform that houses the bonsho. At the top of the stairs I change into my outside shoes (I have to stand on the backs of the shoes since they are too tight to accommodate my layers of hose), waddle down the stairs and a few feet across the courtyard, which is covered in a foot of snow, to the bonsho.

There is a small motion light on the platform directly under the bell. It gives out a weak, ghostly glow, but it's reliable. It casts weird shadows on the plastic sheeting that has been hung around the bell shelter to shield the bell ringers from the wind. The plastic billows and rustles around me as if some spirit on the other side is trying to find its way in. A

warm light emanates from the soji-style windows of the sodo across the yard, but it doesn't reach the bonsho platform. There is a large alarm clock taped to one of the bell house railings. We are meant to use it to keep time as we ring, but its glow-in-the-dark face is too faint and the motion light obscures it completely. I use my trusty Indiglo Timex watch. A counter made of nine wooden disks is also taped to the railing. I am to use this to keep count of the number of hits – 18 of them, 30 seconds apart. With each hit, I must prostrate and chant a verse. It's easy to lose track.



**Chimyo ringing the bonsho**

*Photograph by Kosan Maquestieau*

Three minutes can seem a long time when you are standing on a platform under a one-ton bell, in the dark, on a remote mountain in Japan. It's deathly quiet. Twenty-one other monks are sitting but a few feet away in quiet meditation. They might as well be in another universe. All I can feel about me is darkness and the heaviness of the mountains all around me, the heaviness of the bell hanging next to me, the weight of a hard winter. When the motion lamp dims I wave my bulky arms and remind myself that the temple spirits, if they exist, are probably friendly. I spread my zagu on a wooden pallet under the bell. I use the four stones left for this purpose to hold the zagu down at each corner to keep the wind from blowing it away. I perform three awkward prostrations, stand and check my watch.

5:20. The drum sounds.

The bonsho's clapper is a three-foot section of palm tree suspended from the ceiling of the shelter by a thick hemp rope. When the drum sequence ends I grab the rope and swing the log. The deep tones of the bonsho reverberate throughout the temple complex and the valley below. I bow and whisper the verse:

*May all living beings in the dharma realms*

*Stifled and mired in bitterness*

*In the three painful destinies and eight hardships*

*Hear the sound and awaken to the way.*

I'm hoping the spirit poking at the plastic next to me can hear it. I'm hoping my intention will reach the kindly villagers down in the valley. I send it to my mother back in North Carolina, to my family and friends. Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

By the fifth round of ringing and prostrations, I'm sweating in the cold, my knees are aching, I'm spooked by the shadows. By the 10<sup>th</sup> I've given in and all I can do is just keep ringing. If the cold or the spirits are going to take me, there is nothing I can do about it. The 14<sup>th</sup> ring is meant to sound louder than the rest to signal the group of monks waiting in the sodo that it's time to get up from their tans to go to their appointed tasks. I swing hard and hope it doesn't sound as weak as I feel. Bow, 15, bow, 16, bow, 17, bow, 18, again a little louder to announce that my sequence is ending. The drum in the sodo begins in response.

I perform three prostrations one more time and gather up my zagu. There are tears on my face for no good reason. I am not miserable though I am cold and lonely in the dark. I am not happy either. I line the stones neatly against the edge of the pallet and push the counting disks back to their start position. The tears pass. I mouth the verse one more time as I make my way towards the kuin and the rest of the day.

*Chimyo Atkinson, a resident of Great Tree, recently completed a 3-month training Anjo at Shogoji Temple in Kikuchi, Japan.*



## Milestones: Financial Report – Ruthanne Kah

As Great Tree approaches its sixth anniversary this fall, much has been accomplished since the outset. Teijo's dream of a residential practice center, which dates back to 1987, eventually resulted in the purchase of our property here in Alexander, North Carolina in 2005. It is quite a story—one that includes some hard times as well as hard work by many hands.

This year marks a first—just one of many milestones along the way. In looking through the archives, I discovered reports from early strategic planning meetings that really surprised me. Some of the goals mentioned are now achievements: a website, outreach through email, 10 sesshins per year, diverse and inclusive programs, a full calendar of events, board committees, a supportive sangha, and now, this year, our first long-term resident.

We have formed a Site Planning Committee and taken the first steps toward creating a comprehensive plan of the property and physical grounds. This is both exhilarating and scary. Primary needs are to improve parking and road safety, provide better accessibility for those with disabilities (long on our to-do list), and perform much-needed building maintenance. We were able to install a recommended water filtering system last summer to balance the pH of our water. All of these things entail out-of-pocket expenses we must incur both as a result of growth and in order to deepen our offerings. Meanwhile, volunteers are working hard on a new meditation path, clearing and cleaning up storm damage from the last two winters' snowstorms.

### New Fee Structure

We have been weathering the economic challenges of the past few years fairly well, but not without some turbulence. Along with more activities and sesshins come greater operational expenses. As you know, costs for food, utilities and upkeep have gone up. After six years, we have a better idea of our income-expense ratio. As a result we have raised fees to bring the increase in attendance in line with our overhead while still making allowances to support those who are financially challenged and have a sincere commitment to practice at Great Tree. The new fees were implemented April 1.

To help committed supporters continue their practice, we initiated a members' discount program last fall (details are available on the website; please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions).

### Practice Support Fund

At the same time, we have made an effort to raise funds for specific projects, one of which is the monastic residency program. We successfully met our goal to support the continuing education of our resident, raising over \$6,000 toward her stay in Japan this winter and ongoing support now that she is back here at Great Tree. Those funds were dispersed as a scholarship to her for expenses overseas. In addition, donations to the Practice Support Fund help offset expenses for some practitioners who, without help, would not be able to deepen their practice here. Program fees and donations to that fund make up about one-third of our income.

Our mortgage payment still makes up almost one-half of monthly expenses. In July 2008, we initiated a pledge campaign to help build sustaining contributions to reduce the impact of that large monthly payment. Many of you responded to that request, but monthly pledges remain steady at about only half our goal of \$2,000 per month to help offset the mortgage payment. Still, it is a welcome feeling each month to see that obligation met.

### Japanese Earthquake Relief

The other good news is that as I write this in late March, we appealed to our sangha for help to support the Soto Zen Association of America's campaign to raise funds for relief of the Japanese earthquake disaster. The results were immediate and very positive. We have collected nearly \$2,000, which will go directly to hard-hit communities in Japan where many residents have died, are missing, or are homeless, and temples and other buildings have been entirely destroyed. I am humbled not only by the way in which Great Tree flourishes, but also by the generous and heartfelt support our tiny community has offered to succor those in need. This, too, is a milestone. Deep bows.

### Great Tree Site Plan Committee Report

Please see our website for a report on this ongoing process.

## JANUARY – DECEMBER 2010

### EXPENSES

Administration	\$7,594.33
Development & Outreach	\$2,943.30
Fundraiser Expenses	\$1,156.90
Mortgage	\$16,256.00
Building & Grounds	\$5,608.94
Programs	\$4,699.17
Scholarships & Gifts	\$6,940.00
Staff	\$10,902.35

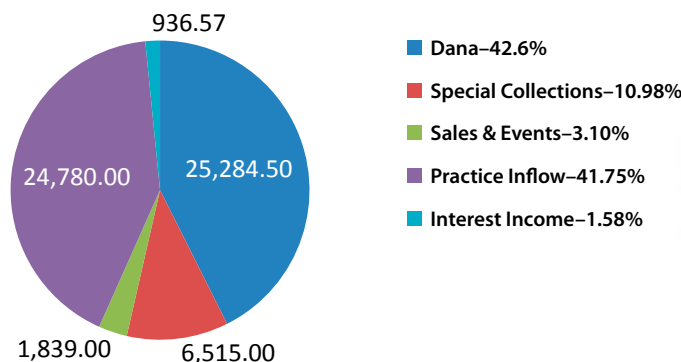
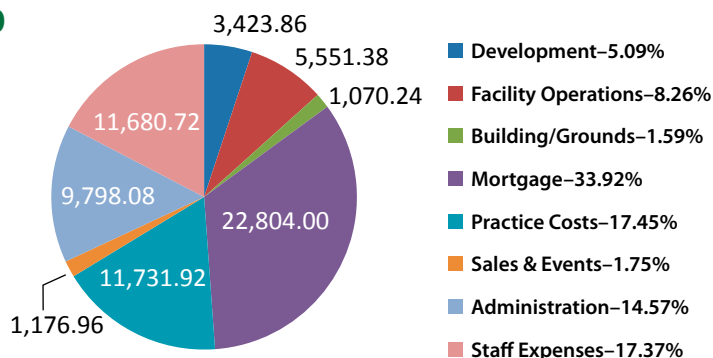
TOTAL EXPENSE \$56,100.99

### INCOME

Annual Fund	\$11,542.00
Fundraiser Inflow	\$1,666.00
Pledges Sustaining	\$9,360.00
Practice Support Fund	\$8,640.00
Program Fees	\$19,635.00
Interest Income	\$325.03

TOTAL INCOME \$51,168.03

Difference +/- (-4,932.96)



### BALANCE SHEET

Bank Accounts	\$12,479.33
Savings CDs	\$62,813.07
Fixed Assets	\$331,949.65
Total Assets	\$75,292.40

TOTAL \$407,242.05

Current Liabilities	\$1,641.78
Mortgage	\$217,825.03
Equity	\$187,775.24
Total Liabilities	\$219,466.81

TOTAL \$407,242.05



## GREAT TREE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS JUNE – DECEMBER 2011

Please visit [www.greattreetemple.org](http://www.greattreetemple.org) for more information.

*More detailed descriptions for many of these events are found on pages 6-7. For costs, registration information and updates, please visit [www.greattreetemple.org](http://www.greattreetemple.org) or call us at 828-645-2085.*

May 27-30 . . . . . Retreat at Southern Dharma Retreat Center  
 June 1-21 . . . . . Summer College Internship (SCI)  
 June 3-8 . . . . . Sesshin  
 July 11-13 . . . . . Children's Retreat  
 July 14-17 . . . . . Women's Retreat  
 Aug 5-7 . . . . . Zen Writing Retreat for Women  
 Aug 20 . . . . . Day of Mindfulness with Leslie Rawls  
 Sep 3 . . . . . All Day Sitting, Great Tree Anniversary  
 Sep 4 . . . . . Anniversary Pancake Brunch  
 Oct 7-12 . . . . . Sesshin  
 Oct 14 & 15 . . . . . Teijo visits Savannah, GA  
 Nov 4-9 . . . . . Sesshin  
 Nov 17-20 . . . . . Women's Dakini Retreat  
 Dec 2-7 . . . . . Rohatsu (annual) Sesshin  
 Dec 8 . . . . . Buddha's Enlightenment Day  
 Dec 10-11 . . . . . Art-Craft-Bake Sale  
 Dec 11 . . . . . Buddha's Enlightenment Celebration  
 Dec 30 . . . . . All Day Cleaning  
 Dec 31 . . . . . New Year's Eve ~ Ringing in the New Year

### FAMILY MEDITATION DATES Time: 10:30 am - noon

June 26 *Includes a short period of meditation and Dharma teaching.*  
 July 31 *May include an improvisational play, or other activity related to topic. Parents, children, and anyone interested are welcome to attend. If you would like to be put on the family meditation email list, email Paige Gilchrist ([pmgilchrist@gmail.com](mailto:pmgilchrist@gmail.com)).*  
 Sept. 25  
 Oct. 30  
 Nov. 27

## Practice Opportunities – Everyone welcome!

**Dokusan** – Private interview with  
Rev. Teijo Munnich

Available some afternoons and evenings between 3:30 – 4:30 and 7 – 9 pm. If you cannot come during designated times, appointments may be arranged for another time. For an appointment contact [info@greattreetemple.org](mailto:info@greattreetemple.org) or call 828 645-2085.

**Weekly Practice** – Open to the public

**Thursdays 6 am - 11 am: Meditation, chanting, breakfast, communal work (come for any part and stay as long as you wish)**

**Tuesdays 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm: Sangha meditation and study group, beginning in mid-October and running through mid-December. Call or e-mail for more details.**

## Registration for Great Tree Events

Great Tree requests a deposit of 1/2 the registration fee. Make checks payable and mail to **Great Tree Zen Temple, 679 Lower Flat Creek Rd, Alexander NC 28701, attn. Registration Coordinator.** If you need to cancel, do so 7 days before the event. All but a \$25 processing fee will be reimbursed. If Great Tree cancels an event you will be completely reimbursed.

**DATES TO ATTEND:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EVENT NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Phone (s): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Fee or  Deposit enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Diet / Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

Sleeping:  Mattress  Futon  Anything  Camp  Commute

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Their Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician / Phone / Insurance etc. if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

### Great Tree sesshins (Zen retreats) are, as much as possible, silent

Men and women are both invited to attend and stay at the temple for the duration of a retreat. Sesshins consist of zazen (sitting meditation), kinhin (walking meditation), work periods, and oryoki meals. Meals are vegan. Participants are expected to share cooking and cleaning up duties. Sesshins begin with orientation at 6:00 pm the first evening followed by a light supper and end at noon the last day. If you can only attend part of a sesshin, you are still welcome. Please let us know the dates you will attend on the registration form. We ask, as much as possible, that people all start the sesshin together.

**COST:** 2 NIGHTS (weekend): \$150 FOR MEMBERS, \$175 REGULAR  
 3 NIGHTS: \$175 FOR MEMBERS, \$225 REGULAR  
 5 NIGHTS: \$250 FOR MEMBERS, \$300 REGULAR

We ask you bring your own sheets, blankets, pillows, towels, toiletries, and other necessities. We do not wear shoes in the temple, so please bring indoor slippers if you need them. Also, please bring clothes and shoes for work period. If you are a sensitive sleeper, please bring earplugs, as accommodations are dormitory style.

## Stay in Touch!

*Look for upcoming events and the complete Great Tree schedule on the website, [www.greattreetemple.org](http://www.greattreetemple.org), where you can register or RSVP for most events.*

(You can also use the form in this newsletter to register by snail mail.) Check out our new monthly calendar, where you can learn about events and register well in advance. Great Tree's website went live in March of last year, and we are pleased that we can integrate it with email updates. If you are interested in staying up to date, be sure to share your email address with us. You can sign up on the website by clicking on Resources and then move to the Newsletter page. Or simply send an email to [info@greattreetemple.org](mailto:info@greattreetemple.org) and ask to be added to our email News List.

## Retreats for Women

### Women's Retreat – July 14-17

Led by Rev Teijo Munnich and Nancy Spence

An exploration of women's spirituality through meditation, study, body awareness practices, and rituals. Just by doing spiritual practice together, insights come up and are strengthened. Following a schedule, studying, and practicing in community, we naturally understand the practice of mindfulness in everyday life.

Fee: Non-members \$225/Members \$175

### Zen Writing Retreat for Women: Writing the Body's Wisdom – Aug 5-7

Led by: Peggy Tabor Millin

Starts at 2 PM Friday/ends 8 AM Sunday

When we write from our body's center within a safe and supportive circle of women, we release our creativity and express our truth. Master Dogen, 13th century founder of Soto Zen, exhorted followers to "just sit" and explained that when we sit on the cushion, we are enlightened. Writing offers many similarities to meditation. We must show up, sit in silence, and focus ourselves on the blank page as if it were a blank wall. We shall remain open to whatever shows up there: impulses to distract ourselves, to run from the room, or take a nap. When we keep sitting and observing, our bodies reveal our deepest truth through the words that spill from the unconscious onto the page. Join us for this in a safe supportive circle of women and make an empty-handed leap into your creative self. You need not be a writer and no meditation experience is required.

The agenda includes optional meditation (instruction available) and group writing to prompts. Come with an open mind and empty notebook and leave with an open heart and a notebook of inspiration. Accommodations limited to 10 women. Commuters welcome for this retreat at Great Tree.

Fee: non-members \$175/members \$150

### Women's Dakini Retreat – Nov. 17-20

Led by Rev. Teijo Munnich and Nancy Spence

In this retreat, we will explore what holds us back from awakening to our own wisdom, evoking dakini energy through guided imagery, rituals,

### RENDO *continued from Front Page*

The practice of life is not to fix something, or end it, or come to rest; it is simply to continue and to discover life in the midst of life.

I am ordaining to embrace practice – the effort of living through every moment without turning away from it. As a monk you get robes and bowls. A monk is traditionally supposed to eat what he receives in his bowl without complaint. How do I receive what life puts into my bowl and not run away from the scary parts? How do I not throw away the painful parts because they hurt too much

and meditations. Sitting, moving, and guided meditation, Dharma teachings, and discussion.

Fee: non-members \$225/ members \$175

## Retreats for All

### Children's Retreat – July 11-13

Led by Rev. Teijo Munnich.

Begins at 3:30 PM Monday and ends at 3:30 PM Wednesday

Children 7 years and older are invited to participate in a modified retreat schedule under the guidance of Great Tree Sangha adults. Includes Dharma teaching and discussion on some aspect of Buddhism. It will include meditation, chanting, study, discussion, and work. Some activities may include arts and crafts such as clay play and origami, outdoor fun, quiet time to practice silence, and music. A kid-friendly, playful practice time.

Fee: \$60 per child/\$20 each additional child

### Great Tree Anniversary All-Day Sit – Sept 3

Mindful Morning & Active Afternoon, from 9am to 3:30pm. The day will include yoga, an arts-related activity, lunch, discussion, and a short work period. We will end the day with tea together. Space is limited, so please RSVP no later than Friday, August 27. Limited to 14.

Dana suggested, \$40.

### Anniversary Pancake Brunch – Sept 4

Great Tree sangha members will prepare an Anniversary Brunch to celebrate Great Tree's sixth anniversary! Happy Birthday, Great Tree! Please RSVP to [info@greatreetemple.org](mailto:info@greatreetemple.org) or by phone message to 828-645-2085. Car pool if possible or ask about off-site parking-shuttle.

Fee: Dana

### Sitting in Savannah – Oct 14 & 15

Led by Rev. Teijo Munnich

This event includes a Friday-night lecture and an all-day sitting Saturday. For more information, contact Susan Lamb at 912-232-4065.

Fee: Friday night dana/Saturday sitting \$40

to digest? And how do I not hoard the sweet parts to myself? I don't know. Just continue: "No stopping, no path, no cognition, also no attainment."

I took the vow of marriage 15 years ago. Leading up to it and contemplating it I was afraid; but in the moment of committing to Tami, joy could not help but spring forth and wash away all fear. This commitment now reminds me of that. When I contemplate ordination it scares me; but I could not imagine living without a vow to this practice – to this life as it is.

– Jonathon Rendo Flaum

## Great Tree Zen Temple and Mars Hill College offer

### A Three Week Meditation Retreat for Undergraduate Students

#### Mindful Body Mindful Breath

June 1 – 21, 2011

*An opportunity for deep inner exploration, meditation practice, and immersion in mindful community life.*

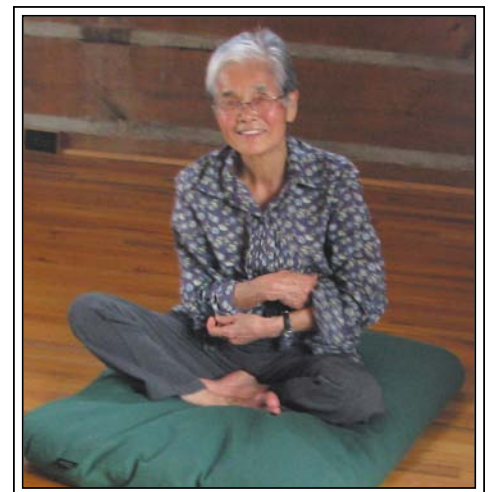
### Cost: Tuition, food, lodging & 3 credit hours for Mars Hill College – \$3,000

This three-week internship in monastic Zen meditation is open to three to eight undergraduate students. Mars Hill College will offer up to three credit hours in Religious Studies to participants. An intensive exploration of mindfulness in meditation and everyday life in a residential setting, this meditation experience is modeled after the Japanese monastic tradition. Students work, study, and meditate as a community in a retreat setting with the Reverend Teijo Munnich. For more information contact Great Tree for a brochure.

### ORDINATION *continued from Front Page*



*The head shaving became a family affair.*



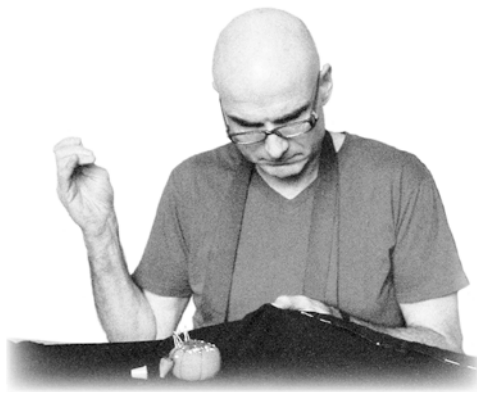
*Mrs. Tomoe Katagiri (Rendo and Shogen's sewing coach) enjoying the head shaving ceremony.*

SHOGEN *continued from Front Page*

100% white cotton thread that is the tradition here in Paris. (Of course, white thread on a black fabric shows every mistake and misalignment.) The going was slow, and by the time Teijo came to visit me in Paris in spring 2009, I had almost stopped altogether. In fact, I was actually losing interest in zazen when Teijo arrived, and had not sat in three weeks. I told her I didn't think I knew how to start again. She smiled and said, "Just sit." So we went to the Paris dojo on a Sunday afternoon and did zazen with about 100 others in standard black robes, and then we went to Monet's garden in Giverny. I was not good company for Teijo that day, but I began to sit with less intention or direction from around that time. When I came to visit Great Tree in August 2009, I told Teijo that I wanted to ordain with her. Since then, it is hard to describe my practice or the process of sewing the okesa. It seems as natural as growing hair, though at times it seems quite insane. What am I doing ordaining with the head of a tiny women's practice center thousands of miles away! Without my dharma brother Rendo, I would probably have woken up as if from a dream and stopped.

I don't usually talk about my practice now other than to explain that I can't do this or that because "I have to go to Zen." If I do make the mistake of talking about it, people start to look at me differently and criticize me for not being more Zen-like when I act normal. I know now that it doesn't make me special or more enlightened. It's just something I do. Naturally, those who know I am sewing the okesa ask why. My response is, "It's just a step on a path." Which reminds me of the story of the Zen master who attains enlightenment in the forest and the animals bring him food and take care of him. He continues to practice, and soon the animals can no longer sense his presence. I know I am just a bad Zen student with crooked seams and bad posture. I will never be a Zen master. I just intend to show up and see what happens next. "C'est tout," as they say in France. "That's all."

– Chris Shogen Sheehey



## Fall 2010 Residency

– Roxanne Sawhill

This time last year, my life, as I perceived it, fell apart. My mental health was in a bad state, I was struggling to finish writing my undergraduate thesis, my boyfriend broke up with me unexpectedly, and I was nearing college graduation with no plans for the future. I was a mess, and I was more miserable than I had ever been before. From what I could see I had two choices: end my life, or change the way I was living it. At the suggestion of a close friend, I decided to take the Buddhist books off my shelf and to sit zazen. At first I could only sit for five minutes before terrible thoughts and feelings flooded my being. I knew, however, that if I couldn't sit still, even if only for five minutes, I couldn't live the rest of my life.

I continued to develop my sitting practice over the next two months, and by the time I graduated had decided I wanted to participate in a women's Zen residency. I Google-searched "women's Zen residency," and Great Tree's website showed up first on the list; with continued research I saw that there seemed to be no other temples that offered women-specific residencies. After reading about Teijo's life and teachings and the project of Great Tree, I was convinced that this was the path I wanted to pursue. My primary goal was to develop inner stability, thereby reducing my own suffering and the suffering I cause others.

I lived in residence at Great Tree for two months mid-September to mid-November. The position of tenzo, temple cook and kitchen manager, needed to be filled, and since I enjoy cooking, I took it on. My time in the kitchen at Great Tree was a significant part of my practice as I was able to bring mindfulness to even the smallest tasks. I became aware of habits I had developed over time, such as rushing through or avoiding "unpleasant" chores. Awareness allowed me to change my perception and find value in even the most mundane activities. The kitchen was also a wonderful space for realizing community, as members shared regularly in food preparation, cooking and cleanup tasks. I received a lot of compliments on my cooking, and I felt good about my command of the kitchen as I prepared food for up to 12 people, but I was regularly humbled by Teijo's teachings on shunyata, or emptiness.

My time at Great Tree taught me many things and continues to impact me every day. I know now that I can sit down and be still, that I can change, that I'm not alone, that I can do work for the sake of doing work and it will benefit others, that I have all the enlightenment of all the Buddhas inside me somewhere... and what a difference it

makes. I want to live! And I feel so much joy. The importance of sangha has become even more apparent to me having spent time away from Great Tree and trying to continue my practice on my own. Practicing with others under the guidance of a teacher is a very different experience than solitary practice. I look forward to returning and doing my part to foster the growth of our spiritual community, sharing intentions, and receiving the support of other practitioners.

## Mother & Child Retreat

– Sarah McCarthy

It was the end of January and all the mothers were outside in the sun (yes, really!) discussing poems written by some Japanese nuns and how they related to mothering. Just as we were relaxing and sharing our thoughts, we heard lots of loud instruments banging together in the zendo. We all laughed and knew Teijo was leading the children in a practice of one of her Buddhist plays. It turned out to be the practice of the *Birth of the Buddha*, a play that Teijo wrote herself.

Teijo has her own wonderful authenticity as a Zen teacher, which includes an appreciation for children! It is not all about sitting and teishos with Teijo, especially not at the Mother and Child Retreat. It is quite brave and incredible really, to take on eight children to read and discuss stories, do creative projects like origami, and practice plays like the *Birth of the Buddha*. Some other fun activities during the weekend included animal and partner yoga and a long, deep relaxation in the zendo.

Teijo has a respectful, playful, and loving approach with children that is quite amazing. During these retreats, the children are guided to a gentle, perhaps quieter side of themselves as they bow, sit, and cultivate discipline helping with meals, cleaning, and being part of work period. Teijo always makes sure the mothers are given time to themselves to reflect on how our practice relates to and inspires life, family, and motherhood.

This will be our third year coming to this retreat, and we look forward to it every year. I always leave inspired by the wonderful women (and young ones) I shared the weekend with. Being at the center also motivates questions about how I can deepen my commitment to being on the path as a householder. What a journey!

I am deeply grateful that family and children are so important to Teijo and Great Tree. What a special temple to have such an appreciation for women, family, and youth, who will grow up to lead our zany world!

Thank you so much, Teijo! Many gasshos.

Great Tree Zen Women's Temple  
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Or write us at the above address.

Additional newsletter content on [www.greattreetemple.org](http://www.greattreetemple.org)



**Work Days at Great Tree** If you can operate a chainsaw, an ax, a hoe, a trowel, a wheelbarrow, a shovel, a rag, a toilet-bowl brush, a vacuum cleaner, a mop bucket, a paintbrush, a stove, etc., etc., and like to connect with other people in the spirit of work and play, we need you! Great Tree constantly needs to be dusted off and cleaned inside and out, and its gardens need tending. We would love to have you show up for work days, get fed, sweat a bit at work, and sit a bit in the zendo. We'd also love it if you could volunteer for a regular job once a week such as lawn mowing, garden watering, trail building, land clearing, house cleaning, and more. All inquiries are welcome. Work practice gives us a wonderful opportunity to be in the moment together, apply our effort, and gain intimacy with Great Tree and its sangha as we care for what cares for us. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact the work leader, Jonathon Flaum, at [jonathonflaum@gmail.com](mailto:jonathonflaum@gmail.com)

## Great Tree Store New T-Shirts in New Colors for Spring!

Long-awaited sugar pink and forest green t-shirts in 100% cotton. Locally printed in Asheville and designed by sangha members, the tree is the work of Priscilla Yokote and the Great Tree calligraphy is by Teijo.



Dark forest green with calligraphy design, regular cut, in sizes from small to xx-large.

Sugar pink in women's cut in sizes from extra small to xx-large. Plum tree on the back.

The smaller sizes will fit children age 10 and up and younger children as a nightshirt. We also have "youth medium" size, which works as an adult extra small.

**T-SHIRTS: \$20.00 EACH**

Great Tree also has available our favorite incense from Shoyeid Corp. in two aromas. Made in Kyoto, we have had many requests for the incense used in the zendo. Each box has 35 sticks made from natural materials with no animal ingredients or testing or synthetics. We sell these quickly and supply is limited. If we run out, we'll be glad to order some for you when we restock.

**INCENSE: \$20.00 EACH**

And we have cheerful morning mugs! Designed by Brook Reynolds, these white ceramic mugs make great tea, chai or coffee mugs.

**MUGS: \$15.00 EACH**

## Help Us Grow!

If you would like to make a donation, volunteer, register for an event, or get information, please contact us at:

**Great Tree Zen Temple**  
679 Lower Flat Creek Road  
Alexander, NC 28701

828-645-2085  
info@greattreetemple.org  
www.greattreetemple.org



Your support is greatly appreciated.  
Without you, Great Tree would not have become a reality!