



## The one left behind

*The impermanence of this floating world  
I feel over and over.*

*It is hardest to be the one left behind.*

—Rengetsu

How wonderful it would be if, once we got things the way we wanted them, nothing ever changed. The best elements of our lives, the people we love, the activities and experiences we enjoy most, would go on and on forever. Our suffering would come to an end.

And yet we know from our own life experience that it isn't possible. All around us, things are arising and fading. Sometimes it seems like it's all going by too fast, like everything is changing and we can't keep up. We can feel like we're being left behind.

Of course, we're not standing by while the world whizzes past us. We ourselves aren't the same people we were even a moment ago—we've breathed in and out a few more times, had a few more thoughts and insights, gotten a bit older. Impermanence is universal, and doesn't leave anyone out. Even when everything seems perfect and we have everything we want, in the next moment something changes. There's nothing we can really hold onto.

Ten days after she was born, Ōtagaki Rengetsu (1791-1875) was adopted by Ōtagaki Mitsuhasa, who worked at an important Pure Land temple in Kyoto. When she was just seven years old, she was sent to serve at Kameoka Castle, and there she learned about poetry, calligraphy and martial arts. At fifteen, she returned to Kyoto and was married to a young samurai, with whom she had one son and two daughters. All of them died as infants, and her husband soon died as well. Her four-year second marriage also ended in widowhood, and it seems that her daughter from this marriage also did not survive.

At the age of 33, she cut off her hair and became a Buddhist nun, taking the name Rengetsu (Lotus Moon). As a bereaved mother, a widow, an artist and a nun, Rengetsu would have had a highly developed sense of *mono no aware*, the deep beauty inherent in the unavoidably transitory nature of existence. She does not write about severing family ties or being detached from worldly affairs, as a nun might do. In her poem above, she enters directly into the feelings of loss and longing that come with watching the things we love, enjoy or admire come and go, arise and fade away. Over and over, we repeat the pattern of welcoming something into our lives, coming to value its presence, and suffering when it moves on. This cycle is not a distraction or disorder in our lives. It is our lives.



Somehow, in spite of our direct experience, change comes as a surprise. A longtime lay practitioner I know died suddenly last month. The unexpectedness of it made it all the more difficult for her family, friends and fellow practitioners. As her extended sangha and family organized memorials for her, I'm sure it was the last thing they would have thought they'd be doing right then. No one had anticipated saying goodbye to her—not her, not yet, not this way, not so fast.

When a loved one dies, it can feel as though he or she has moved on, moved away, and left us behind.

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## Upcoming events

### Precepts Ceremony for Kevin Kostick

*January 21, 7 pm*

The sangha, family and friends are invited to be present as Kevin formally receives lay precepts, the rakusu he has sewn himself, lineage papers and a dharma name. It's also a time for those who have already received the precepts to renew their own dedication to the Buddha Way. Following the ceremony, we will celebrate with a dessert-and-coffee reception.

### Two-day sittings

*January 19-20, February 16-17, March 16-17, April 20-21*

From 6:15 am through 8:50 pm, we engage in nearly continuous periods of zazen, chanting of the Heart Sutra, and formal meals using oryoki bowls. You are welcome to

use these days in whatever way your schedule will permit, joining us and leaving us at any point in the schedule. Two-day sittings are intended to offer both intensive practice and a wider time frame for zazen.

### Sangha meetings

*February and March, dates and times TBA*

The board of directors invites the sangha to gather for two important meetings about the short- and long-term future of MZC. In February, it will hold an informational meeting about the corporation's financial and organizational status, preparing the sangha for board elections and continuing discussion at the Annual Meeting in March. Please watch your e-mail and the website for details.

For complete and current information about our practice and events schedule, please visit us online at [www.milwaukeezencenter.org](http://www.milwaukeezencenter.org).

## Happenings

In November, Hoko, Tonen, and Tomon Marr went to Japan, accompanied by Hoko's dharma sister Shodo Spring. Hoko, Tomon and Shodo were there to do ceremonies at Sotoshu's head temples, Eiheiji and Sojiji, which marked their dharma transmission. Afterward, Tonen went on to travel with friends to Sado Island, while Hoko visited Toshiji, the temple at which she trained in Okayama.

On her return, Hoko spoke to two Comparative Religion classes at Carthage College in Kenosha.

The Alliance for Hope website requested a short dharma writing from Hoko, and the piece was posted November 10.

In December, Tônen was pleased to be able to offer the Buddha's precepts to three members of our prison sangha. Each of the men received Buddhist names that employ two characters: Tô from Tônen's name, which means "cave, or deep site of one's being", followed by a character expressing something about the receiver. At Columbia Correctional, Jeremiah Purtell received the Buddhist name Tôjo (cave + forgiving); at Redgranite Correctional, Trevor Waller received the name Tôkyû (cave + to investigate or study thoroughly); and Joshua Racine received the name Tôkin, (cave + joy). In addition, each of their sanghas celebrated the Buddha's Enlightenment.

Tonen also led Enlightenment celebrations at Fox Lake Correctional, Racine Correctional, Taycheedah Correctional and Oshkosh Correctional, where the sangha participated in

their traditional all-day Rohatsu Sesshin. All in all, about 45 persons participated in these events.

MZC also celebrated Rohatsu with a three-day sesshin that included zazen, formal meals using oryoki, and a daily dharma talk from Hoko. About eight people practiced together each day.

On December 6, Tonen attended the annual luncheon of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, which this year honored Dr. Lakshmi Bharadwaj, an active member of the Milwaukee Association for Interfaith Relations, the organization from which Tonen recently stepped down as Chair, and which now has a new name: Interfaith Conference Committee on Interfaith Understanding.

Cedar Rapids (IA) practitioner Carol Anderson and her new Shiba Inu puppy Bo made a weekend visit to MZC in mid-December. Carol served as jikido for Sunday morning practice and reconnected with sangha members with whom she had practiced at the annual Great Sky sesshin in southern Minnesota. Hoko later conducted a modified baby blessing ceremony for Bo (short for Bodhidharma), welcoming him into the greater sangha.

At the end of December, Hoko made a brief trip to Minneapolis to sing baika at the funeral of longtime lay practitioner Karen Van Auken. Lay and ordained practitioners from around the midwest gathered to remember and celebrate her life.

## Annual Appeal: *Strong start, not done yet*

On Tonen's retirement in September 2011, Hoko arrived to take up the reins on an interim basis for two years while MZC continues its planning and discernment about its future. The availability of support from the teacher's fund made this possible. There is now about a year of financial support remaining in this fund, and if MZC is to keep a dharma teacher in place, the fund must be replenished.

In addition to leading the 24 hours a week of scheduled practice at MZC—not to mention responding to community requests for a Buddhist leadership presence for college classes, interfaith work and other events—MZC's teacher is also responsible for the day-to-day administration of the temple. Without someone in place to manage practice and daily affairs, MZC cannot continue to operate at its current level. MZC's annual fund appeal went into the mail in early November, and response has been steady. As of this writing, about \$2300 has been raised, on par with last year.

It's an important time in MZC's history and development. If you have not yet sent in your gift of financial support, it's not too late. You can also give online by visiting our website and clicking *donate* at the upper right of the screen.

## The one left behind *from page 1*

It seems that while he or she has changed in a very deep way, we are still here, still the same, going on with the day to day routine. Yet when we look closely at the reality, we see that we and our loved one are changing together—not in the same way, but not alone. Since impermanence doesn't leave anyone out, we continue this dance of change together. We can't be left behind.

That means that our relationship with our loved one also continues to grow and change. We have the opportunity to value his or her presence in our lives in new ways as we continue to develop and mature. New insights can emerge about the ways we connected and communicated, what we learned from each other, and the aspects of our loved ones that we've internalized and now embody, continuing to make them available in the world. We can appreciate the beauty of our time together—beautiful *because* it is fleeting.

—Hoko

## Saturday schedule set to change

Beginning in January 2013, MZC will try out a new schedule on regular Saturday mornings:

7:30 Zazen  
8:10 Kinhin  
8:20 Zazen  
9:00 Service  
9:30 Dharma book discussion  
10:30 End of practice

The new schedule is in response to the changing attendance patterns of the sangha, and is designed to make it easier for those attending the weekly dharma book discussion to sit with other sangha members on Saturdays. As always, practitioners are welcome to come to any or all of these activities as their lives permit.

During two-day sittings, we will follow the traditional schedule, which starts at 6:15 am and includes formal breakfast, temple cleaning, and a dharma talk instead of the book discussion. The complete two-day sitting schedule is available on our website.



*Don't forget  
to order your*

*MZC  
Moments  
2013 Calendar!*

*featuring images  
of Milwaukee Zen  
Center and haiku  
from Hoko Kamegis*

*Available now at MZC's online gift shop:*

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# **milwaukee zen center**

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## **ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

### **What's new at MZC?**

Find out on the *What's New* page of our website.  
Events, visitors, photos, activities, and more.  
Go to [www.milwaukeezencenter.org](http://www.milwaukeezencenter.org) and  
click on *What's New*.

### **Weekly practice schedule**

#### **Wed-Fri morning**

6:15 zazen  
6:55 kinhin  
7:05 zazen  
7:45 service  
8:00 end

#### **Wed-Fri evening**

6:30 zazen  
7:10 kinhin  
7:20 zazen

#### **Saturday morning**

7:30 zazen  
8:10 kinhin  
8:20 zazen  
9:00 service  
9:30 dharma book  
discussion  
10:30 end

#### **Sunday morning**

8:20 *Introduction  
to Zazen*  
9:30 zazen  
10:10 kinhin  
10:20 dharma talk  
11:00 informal tea

See our complete schedule of practice and activities at  
[www.milwaukeezencenter.org](http://www.milwaukeezencenter.org)

### **Contact MZC**

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### **I want to be a member of MZC!**

- Sustaining: \$30 or more per month
- Supporting: \$25 or more per month
- Maintaining: \$10 per month
- Contributing: any affordable monthly amount: \$\_\_\_\_\_

### **Eiheiji incense for sale**

**Or buy online!**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Qty.</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Tax*</i>	<i>Total</i>
Short (5.5")		\$8.00	.45	
Long (10")		\$8.00	.45	

Shipping:  
\$4.00 for first two boxes of incense,  
plus .50 per box thereafter.

\* Only Wisconsin residents need include applicable sales tax.

- I'd like to make a one-time contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
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- Please change my mailing address.
- Please send this newsletter by e-mail instead of on paper.

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