

# Walking Mountains

“The green mountains are always walking” – *Daokai*



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*Dear Sangha and Friends,*

Spring, and work in the Zen Center gardens begins once again. I find myself moved by the work of those who have become before me; specifically, the creation of not one, but 32 garden beds – a robe in itself composed of trees planted in remembrance, a river of stones moved from near and far, the scent of forsythia and lilac blooms on the wind. How fortunate we are to have this living, breathing world of practice right outside our door.

We begin this month with Entertainment Day – Sangha celebrating Sangha. We end with two evenings in the company of bodhisattvas and the Buddha – Temple Night. As we take our vows during the Jukai Ceremony, let us not forget that the pattern of this robe is all inclusive: this Earth, and all sentient beings upon it. Please join us.

— *Joan White*

## Who's Welcoming Whom?

by **Sylvia Fagin**



This year, I had the opportunity to participate in the preparations for Great Jukai. In the weeks leading up to the ceremony, I met with the “animal realm” team to strategize what our realm would look like. We searched for pictures, purchased materials, borrowed props, and practiced right speech as we got ready for the big day. I even managed not to peek too much at the other

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## MISSION

*The Vermont Zen Center's mission is to create a peaceful and inviting environment to support those who seek wisdom, compassion, joy, and equanimity within a Buddhist context. The two-fold practice of the Center is to overcome the causes of suffering through spiritual development and to alleviate the world's suffering through outreach activities and the cultivation of a caring attitude to the earth.*

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realms, despite the fact that full-sized pieces of furniture were being carted into the Center.

In the midst of preparations, which were in the midst of the Term Student Program, the U.S. Presidential election arrived. Suddenly, the realms of existence, the importance of cutting through delusion, and the absolute necessity of devoted practice came into sharp focus. The final days of realm preparation took on a new urgency. Clarity of mind mattered more. Compassionate speech mattered more. Working for the benefit of all beings—especially those who would experience the six realms during Great Jukai—mattered more.

The big day came. A few props had fallen down, but other than that our realm was relatively disaster-free. I felt gratitude toward the other members of my realm team, who had stayed late or arrived early to make sure that we were ready for the many visitors who were soon to visit.

When my group left the zendo to begin our voyage through the six realms, I was eager. Even though I'd had a sneak peek of many of the realms, upon entering each one I experienced wonder and awe—not just at the technical execution of the scenery and props, but at the existence depicted. The violence of the hell realm, the comforts of the human realm, the arrogance of the titan realm—all brought into sharp focus the depth of practice needed



to make sense of the gift of this human existence.

The welcome of the Buddha Hall was truly awesome. The warmth, the embrace, the strength of the Sangha chanting in unison was an amazing comfort—a sustaining refuge. Here were practitioners from several countries, a reminder that our practice, our Sangha, and the Dharma is bigger than any country, any political event, any arbitrary categories of us or them.

After the ceremony, as Sangha members milled about in the link and dining room hallway, I found myself welcoming others, feeling hospitable in the way that a hostess does when welcoming visitors to her home. After all, I've been coming to the Center a few times a month for almost three years. Invariably, when I asked someone how long they'd been connected to the Center, their answer was a multiple of my three years. Twelve years, fifteen years—the “visitors” to Great Jukai were VZC veterans; I was the newbie.

“  
Who's welcoming  
whom? I wondered.  
But the answer is  
obvious: We were  
welcoming each  
other.”

Who's welcoming whom? I wondered. But the answer is obvious: We were welcoming each other. As we voiced our vows in the Buddha Hall, we became members of the Buddha's family—some for the first time, some for the tenth or hundredth. As I met new (to me) members after the ceremony, I had the good fortune to truly feel the deep welcome that the Vermont Zen Center offers to practitioners near and far. To have found this Sangha, this family, I am profoundly grateful. —

# An Evening at Fenway **by Jim Kahle**

Many of the events mentioned here took place at a baseball game, but this is not about baseball. Last summer, a former business associate was kind enough to give me some tickets to a Giants-Red Sox game in Boston. I hadn't been to an actual game in a long time. The seats were great, right along the first base line. I realized rather wistfully that this was probably as close to Buster Posey as I was ever going to get in this lifetime.

Like any real baseball fan, I got there early to watch batting and fielding practice. Exactly an hour before game time, the players headed for the clubhouse and the ground crew came out to prepare the field. There is the batting cage to dismantle. The protective screens scattered all over the field have to be removed. The infield has to be watered and raked, and the lines around home plate have to be redone. There's a lot to do.

They got right to work. It didn't take long to realize that there was a unity and a beauty to their efforts that I had never noticed before. It was kind of like kabuki, ballet, a jazz ensemble. They all had separate roles, but they were all somehow in sync. It was all a team effort. I was immediately drawn to the work taking place on the batting cage. You could tell that they had done this a million

times before, but every action was accomplished with deliberation, attention, and care. I watched the man sweeping off the foul lines. His broom was very old, and he had been sweeping with it in the same direction for a long time. The broom had a severe swept-back look to it. It reminded me of one of those old greasy ducktail haircuts from back in the 50's. It really didn't look like the most interesting work in the world, but he was totally engaged. He was one with the sweeping.

I called my friend the next day to thank him for the tickets. I ended up telling him more about the workings of the ground crew than the game (the Giants got shut out). I couldn't get it out of my mind. It was actually a few days later that I started to understand.

What was it that was special about the efforts of the ground crew? Well, obviously the working

conditions weren't bad. It was July. They were out working in the fresh air. The atmosphere was very festive, happy, playful. They were employed by the Boston Red Sox, and were working in one of the most iconic baseball stadiums in the world (Wrigley Field being the other). The simple fact of the matter was that they loved what they were doing, and they loved what they were doing it for: the Red Sox, the fans, the game of baseball. The ages of the workers ranged widely, but you could tell that many of the ground crew had been doing this for a long time.

So then what do you call it when you take work and love, and mix them together for a long time? I think it's called devotion. You know it when you see it. It was the devotion of the ground crew on the field that evening that I found so compelling.

There are lots of people who

*(Continued on page 7)*



## Festive Indian Cooking Course

Learn how to prepare a delicious and authentic festive vegetarian Indian meal in the Vermont Zen Center's spacious kitchen under the careful guidance of Manju Selinger. Manju's courses are very popular and fill up quickly as they are limited to eight people. So, if you're interested, sign up soon!

**Date:** Saturday, March 11

**Time:** 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

**Fee:** \$85 (\$75 member discount)

More information and registration is available on the Zen Center's website at [www.vermontzen.org/indian\\_cooking\\_festive.html](http://www.vermontzen.org/indian_cooking_festive.html)



## Tai Chi Course

Tai Chi offers many benefits for health, relaxation, and concentration. A Tai Chi practitioner is mindful during each posture and movement, allowing the chi energy to flow throughout the body. There are numerous medical studies demonstrating the physical and mental benefits of Tai Chi, including for many people with arthritic and neurological conditions.

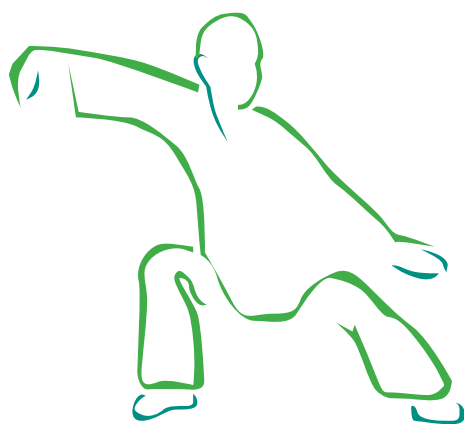
The course is conducted by Dr. Eric Berger, a long-time member of the Center and authorized teacher of Tai Chi. Eric offers several six-week courses for beginners and more advanced practitioners in Tai Chi. The next courses begin on **March 6**. Each hour-long Monday evening session includes instruction, practice periods, and questions and answers.

**Time:** Mondays 6:30-7:30 p.m. for those who have taken a minimum of 5 prior courses with Eric. The class from 7:30-8:30 p.m. is for anyone.

**Dates:** March 6, 13, 20, 27, April 3, 17

**Location:** Vermont Zen Center

**Fee:** \$100 for the six classes



More information and registration is available on the Zen Center's website at [www.vermontzen.org/taichi.html](http://www.vermontzen.org/taichi.html)

## Lovingkindness Course

Lovingkindness, or *Metta bhavana*, is an ancient Buddhist meditation leading to the development of unconditional love and friendliness. Through the practice of metta, we become more empathetic, considerate, kind, forgiving, and in general, happier people.

Dharman Rice, a Zen Buddhist priest, offers a six-week course in Lovingkindness Meditation at the Vermont Zen Center, beginning **March 1**. Each hour-long Wednesday evening

session includes meditation instruction, practice periods, and discussion. Please note that the first class is a half hour longer than the other classes. Class size is limited. *Skype or Zoom participation is possible for those who do not live in Vermont.*

**Time:** Wednesdays 7-8 p.m. (The first class is 7- 8:30)

**Dates:** March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, April 5

**Location:** Vermont Zen Center

**Contribution:** \$100 for the six classes





More information and registration is available on the Zen Center's website at [www.vermontzen.org/lovingkindness.html](http://www.vermontzen.org/lovingkindness.html)

# March 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Metta Course 1	2 PM ZAZEN	3	4
Roshi on Break						
5 Sangha Entertainment	6 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Finding Your Seat Meeting Tai Chi Course 1	7 PM ZAZEN	8 Metta Course 2	9 PM ZAZEN Chanting	10	11 Festive Indian Cooking Course
Roshi on Break						
12 Taped Teisho	13 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Tai Chi Course 2	14 PM ZAZEN	15 Metta Course 3	16 PM ZAZEN Workshop Prep	17	18 Workshop Sesshin Deadline
Roshi on Break						
19 Teisho	20 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Tai Chi Course 3	21 PM ZAZEN	22 Metta Course 4	23 PM ZAZEN Sitting and Ceremony Prep	24	25 Ceremony Workday
26 Ceremony Workday	27 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Tai Chi Course 4	28 Temple Night	29 Metta Course 5	30 Temple Night	31	

# April 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Ceremony Workday
2 JUKAI 	3 ZC CLOSED Finding Your Seat Meeting Tai Chi Course 5	4 AM ZAZEN TUE-FRI Sesshin Set up	5 Metta Course 6	6 PM ZAZEN Sesshin Set up	7	8 Sesshin
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Vermont 7-Day Sesshin 4/8-15 <span style="color: red; font-weight: bold;">ZEN CENTER CLOSED DURING SESSHIN</span>						
16 Zen Center Closed	17 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Tai Chi Course 6	18 PM ZAZEN	19 ROSHI IN CR	20 PM ZAZEN Chanting	21	22 CR
23 Taped Teisho	24 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI	25 PM ZAZEN Chanting	26	27 PM ZAZEN	28	29 CASA ZEN GREATJUKAI 
30 Taped Teisho	Costa Rica 5-Day Training Program					

# Entering the Buddha's Family

## Spring Jukai Ceremony

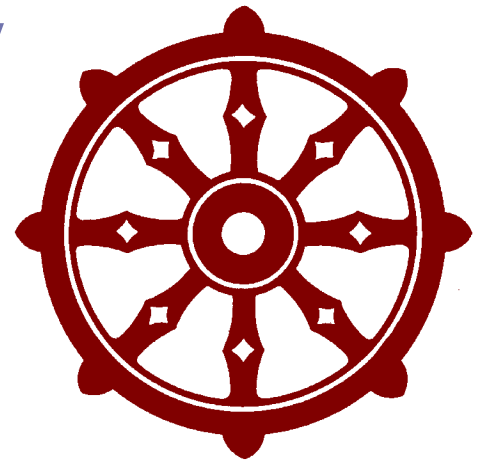
On Sunday, April 2, we commemorate the Buddha's "real" birthday with a Jukai Ceremony at 10 a.m. Prior to the ceremony, starting at 9 a.m. there is a one hour sitting. Dokusan will not be offered that day.

Our Center has two Jukai ceremonies each year, one in April and one in November. It is customary to take Jukai as often as possible. Each time you participate, your resolve to practice and realize the Buddhadharma grows stronger.

During the ceremony, participants take part in a repentance ceremony, then take the Three Refuges, the Three General Resolutions, and the Ten Cardinal Precepts.

Jukai also entails making an **anonymous** monetary donation to the teacher, called an *incense offering*. This traditional gift represents the practitioner's desire to support the teacher's work in propagating Buddhism.

Jukai is one of the most solemn rituals we observe at the Center, so



please be sure to wear a clean and pressed robe if you have one. If not, wear dark, solid-colored clothing or borrow a robe from the Center. *Children of all ages are especially welcome to come to spring Jukai, which honors the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha.*



## Temple Nights

Tuesday, March 28 and Thursday, March 30 from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. are Temple Nights at the Center. This takes the place of regular sittings, and there is no dokusan on those evenings.

At Temple Night people of all ages come to sit informally, offer incense, chant, and do prostrations before Buddha and Bodhisattva figures set up on special altars. Participants often walk around the zendo looking at the many different figures. The sitting, though informal, is focused and deep.

Anyone who has been to a Temple Night can attest to the strength of concentration that builds up through the night. The sari-covered altars are beautifully decorated. Seated upon them, the figures not only remind us who we really are, they also help us express gratitude to and reverence for those who have transmitted the Dharma.

(Continued from page 3)

work hard, and there are many people who work hard and with enthusiasm. It's probably fair to say that there are fewer people who are devoted to what they do; people who actually love what they're doing, and love what they are doing it for. I admired the efforts of the crew, and the devotion they displayed. There was an important element, however, that was missing from their efforts, and that element was meaning. Truth be told, in the grand scheme of things there is nothing more meaningless than the outcome of a baseball game.

This cannot be said about our efforts in the Dharma. On the back of the han it reads, "Great is the matter of birth and death. Life slips quickly by. Time waits for no one. Wake up! Wake up! Don't waste a moment." Who am I? Why is there suffering? What is the meaning of my life? These are fundamental questions that we work hard to try to resolve. Our efforts are not only for ourselves, but for all sentient beings. After all, we have vowed to liberate all beings on countless occasions after sittings and chanting services.

Evidence of devotion is not hard to find at the Vermont Zen Center. It is found in the gardens, in the kitchen, in the zendo. We have this beautiful Center that affords us countless opportunities to work hard with enthusiasm and love. We have the examples of Roshi and the Sangha to teach us and inspire us; to see what devotion truly looks like. We have the teachings of the Buddha and Ancestors that help bring meaning to all of our life's activities. We are very fortunate. —

## Sangha Entertainment

**T**ime to dust off your instruments, bring out the games, loosen the vocal chords, brush up on your Tango – it's Sangha Entertainment day on **SUNDAY, MARCH 5**, and all acts are welcome. Bring your family and friends for a morning of music, fun, games, and vegetarian pot luck fare. Kelly Story is the coordinator for this event; please give her a call if you want to perform. If you'd just like to

sit in the audience, that's fine too! Informal sitting beforehand (no dokusan that day). The entertainment begins at **10 a.m.** Hope to see you there!





## Vermont Zen Center

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*Today only*

*Walking in the spring,*

*And no more.*

*— Buson*

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## Workdays for Temple Night and Spring Jukai

**Saturday, March 25 and Sunday, March 26** are workdays to set up for Temple Night. We will also have a work night on **Thursday, March 23** to begin setting up altars. Please lend a hand if you can to turn our Center into a beautiful temple for devotions on Temple Nights.

On **Saturday, April 1**, we will be taking down Temple Night and setting up for Jukai which is on Sunday.

Workdays begin at **10 a.m.**, though if you'd like to arrive



earlier that's fine too. Members often start working at **9 a.m.** Lunch will be provided on all weekend workdays.