

Kaihan

The Newsletter of the North Carolina Zen Center

Summer/Fall 2007



*Internationally acclaimed author and teacher
Stephen Batchelor
to visit Sosen-ji for Fall Zazen-Kai*



The North Carolina Zen Center is proud to welcome best-selling author Stephen Batchelor to Sosen-ji. Batchelor will visit for two days in October, the tenth and eleventh, during the Fall Zazen-kai week, during which time he will join Sosen-ji's abbot, Sandy Gentei Stewart, in offering talks on the Dharma.

A skillful teacher and provocative speaker, Stephen Batchelor is best-known for his secular approach to Buddhism, as elucidated in his recent best-selling book, *Buddhism Without Beliefs*. Batchelor considers Buddhism to be a constantly evolving culture of awakening, rather than a religious system based on immutable dogma and beliefs. In particular he regards the doctrines of karma and rebirth as features of ancient Indian civilization and not

intrinsic to what the Buddha taught.

From the book jacket: "Stephen Batchelor reminds us that the Buddha was not a mystic who claimed privileged, esoteric knowledge of the universe, but a man who challenged us to understand the nature of anguish, let go of its origins, and bring into being a way of life that is available to all. What the Buddha taught, says Batchelor, is not something to *believe in*, but something to *do* — and as he explains clearly and compellingly, it is a practice that we can engage in, regardless of our background or beliefs, as we live every day on the path to awakening."

In addition to joining Sosen-ji for the Zazen-kai, Stephen Batchelor will be speaking locally to the general public. On the evening of Oct. 10, NCZC and the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on Garrett Road, Durham (www.eruuf.org) will co-sponsor a dinner for a small number of persons who wish to meet and talk with Stephen in an intimate setting, followed by a public talk with Stephen speaking to a larger audience. Dinner will commence at 5:30 PM and will cost \$35. Stephen's talk will begin at 7:30 PM, and donations will be accepted at the door. For more information, or to make a reservation, please contact the NC Zen Center at (919) 542-7411, or email us at info@nczencenter.org. Don't miss this opportunity to hear one of today's best-loved Buddhist teachers speak!

From "*Buddhism Without Beliefs*" by Stephen Batchelor, Riverhead books, 1997:

Insight into emptiness and compassion for the world are two sides of the same coin. To experience ourselves and the world as interactive processes rather than aggregates of discrete things undermines both habitual ways of perceiving the world as well as habitual feelings about it. Meditative discipline is vital to dharma practice precisely because it leads us beyond the realm of ideas to that of felt-experience. Understanding the philosophy of emptiness is not enough. The ideas need to be translated through meditation into the wordless language of feeling in order to loosen those emotional knots that keep us locked in a spasm of self-preoccupation .

As we are released into the opening left by the absence of self-centered craving, we experience the vulnerability of exposure to the anguish and suffering of the world. The track on which we find ourselves in moments of centered experience includes both clarity of mind and warmth of heart. Just as a lamp simultaneously generates light and heat, so the central path is illuminated by wisdom and nurtured by compassion.

The selfless vulnerability of compassion requires the vigilant protection of mindful awareness. It is not enough to want to feel this way toward others. We need to be alert at all times to the invasion of thoughts and emotions that threaten to break in and steal this open and caring resolve. A compassionate heart still feels anger, greed, jealousy, and other such emotions. But it accepts them for what they are with equanimity, and cultivates the strength of mind to let them arise and pass without identifying with or acting upon them.

Compassion is not devoid of discernment and courage. Just as we need the courage to respond to the anguish of others, so we need the discernment to know our limitations and the ability to say "no." A compassionate life is one in which our resources are used to optimum effect. Just as we need to know when and how to give ourselves fully to a task, so we need to know when and how to stop and rest.



Fall Zazen-Kai, 2007

The North Carolina Zen Center is happy to announce the dates for its Fall Zazen-kai, October 9 — 16, at Sosen-ji, the Brooks Branch Zendo. It will be a week of formal Zen practice, open to all. The Center can provide dormitory housing for up to 18 participants, and campsites are available around the zendo and along Brooks creek. Part-time participation is also welcome although preference will be given to full-time retreatants for dormitory accommodation.

The cost for the 7 day zazen-kai is \$245. This includes room and board but not the supper or talk at the Eno River UUC. In gratitude for Stephen and Sandy's teaching which they offer without charge, participants are encouraged to contribute to them according to their means.



For more information and to make reservations for the dinner or the zazen-kai, contact NCZC at 919-542-7411 or info@nczencenter.org. 50% deposits should be made by September 25th.

General Notes

The annual Rumifest, celebrating the life of the mystic poet Rumi, will be held in Chapel Hill again this year. Once again participants will be staying at Brooks Branch, from Wednesday Sept. 26 - Sunday Sept. 30. Scheduled sitting will be held as usual on Thursday, Sept. 27 and Sunday. For more information visit www.rumifest.com.

A note of welcome to Nora Haenn and Luis Melodelgado, who recently moved to the area from Tempe, Arizona where they practiced at Hakuin-ji, our sibling temple.

Those practicing at the Center will have noted Sandy's periods of absence recently. In addition to taking a bit of vacation in August, Sandy has spent most of September at Rinzai-ji in Los Angeles, in keeping with his duties as abbot. Sandy expects to be spending more time at the Center in the coming months. Please visit the website for current updates on his schedule.

Sandy will be teaching a course in Buddhist studies at nearby Elon University in January, for the second year. As he did last year, he will be asking his classroom students to attend a weekend of Zen practice at the Center, January 10-13. This weekend will also constitute the Center's Winter Zazen-kai weekend. Please contact the Center or visit the website for more information as the dates approach.

Roshi will not be coming to dai-sesshin at Sosen-ji, as he did last spring, but he invites all North Carolina students to join him in Puerto Rico in March for his yearly dai-sesshin there. Check the Mt. Baldy website for information or links concerning this retreat.

A note of welcome to the many new faces at the Thursday and Sunday sittings. Like a strong young tree, this outgrowth of the Dharma sinks in its roots and spreads its branches, and the fragrant flowers begin to open.

Please remember that there is a work practice period from 9 AM to 10 AM every Sunday. As we move into the fall there are many small jobs around the Center which will need doing, splitting and stacking firewood, raking leaves, general maintenance and care of the facility. Any contributions of time and effort are greatly appreciated.

*As for me, I delight in the everyday Way.
Among the mist-wrapped vines and rocky caves
Here in the wilderness I am completely free,
With my friends, the white clouds, idling forever.
There are roads, but they do not reach the world;
Since I am mindless, who can rouse my thoughts?
On a bed of stone I sit, alone in the night,
While the round moon climbs up Cold Mountain.*

— Hanshan

*This everyday way —
Must I go to the mountains?
Just shake hands with me.*

— Gentei

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please call or email us to let us know so we can remove you from our list.

Whenever possible we prefer to send the newsletter by email to save the postage costs. So please send us your email address. You'll also get to see the photos in color!

If your address needs updating, please send that information to us.

Please remember to check our website for up-to-date information about our schedule and upcoming events.

The Brooks Branch Zendo is currently operating on the following schedule:

Monday — Friday mornings:
6 AM — 6:40 AM Zazen, Tuesday
& Thursday followed by opportunity
for interview with Sandy

Thursday Evening:
7 PM — 9 PM Chanting, zazen,
interviews and Dharma talk

Tuesday Evening:
7 PM — 8:30 PM Zazen

Sunday Morning
9 AM Work practice
10 AM - Noon Chanting, zazen,
interviews and Dharma talk,
followed by tea

Sandy regularly attends Tuesday mornings, Thursday mornings and evenings, and Sunday mornings. Also, please note the hour of work practice before the Sunday morning session. We appreciate your help with the many small tasks which keep the Center running smoothly.

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