



2021-2022 WINTER ANGO

Dear Sangha,

When Roshi asked me to be Shuso it came as a complete surprise. It was quite humbling that I was trusted with this great responsibility and I was nearly speechless. The next few days I was in a state of shock but that has melted away leaving a deep sense of gratitude.

Walking through the VZ door was one of the best days of my life. What made me come back was the honest response I received when asked what had brought me in. I had said I was looking for answers and the reply I received was, “you won’t find any here.” How could I not have come back with such an honest answer? I had never encountered anything like that and at the time I didn’t understand what that meant but it felt right.

Over the years I’ve been asked to take on different roles. Each had its own challenges and this, by far, is one of the most challenging. I will certainly make mistakes, but at other times things will go smoothly. It may also be difficult for me to find appropriate words or actions. This is just life unfolding, always something unexpected and always something to learn from.

The study text for this Winter Ango is “Shodoka” (Song of Enlightenment). It is so beautiful and reminds me of the Heart Sutra. After reading it I felt as though I was meeting an old friend and walking down a path I had traveled before, discovering things that had been unseen on previous occasions. Life is a journey with many forks and innumerable discoveries to be made. I was struck by this particular passage:

*“No bad fortune, no good fortune, no loss, no gain;
Never seek such things in eternal serenity.
For years the dusty mirror has gone uncleaned,
Now let us polish it completely, once and for all.”*

Is there good fortune or bad fortune? Yes and no. If not for all that had proceeded, I wouldn’t be writing this letter and serving as your Shuso.

Please don’t miss this opportunity that is offered to sit with me in harmony and to practice in earnest for whatever time may you have. I look forward to serving you over this winter period.

Gassho.

Hon Gō Brooks