

*Meeting ourselves and meeting the other: then, there's the light.*

*Enkyo Roshi (from A Winter Sesshin)*

Dear Sangha,

I am attempting to write this letter to you as we are encouraged to do in open sozan or council, concisely and from the heart. What is rising up for me at this moment is immense gratitude for the gift of being part of this sangha for 17 years, a community in which I could learn, grow, and be challenged, while also being supported. In short, being loved. The Village Zendo is part of me in ways that I cannot even begin to fully describe and comprehend, and the gifts I receive continue to reveal themselves.

When Shinryu Roshi asked me to be Shuso for the summer Ango, I was filled with both dread and joy. Dread because I carry a part within myself that never believes I am good enough or up for the task. Joy because it also means that I get to spend more intimate time practicing with all of you and being part of the fabric of our community in new ways. I am grateful for our practice that supports the part within me that knows that I have everything I need for this life.

Our study text this Ango is the Heart Sutra, a chant that I love reciting with the community. It takes a deep dive into the true nature of our reality, encouraging us to move from our fixed ideas about the world towards compassionate interconnectedness. I can't imagine a time where we have a greater need for these teachings, as we sit in the midst of so many crises, from climate change, to the threats to our democracy, to the immense suffering of so many people in our country and around the globe. May we reach deeply into our hearts together this practice period, a time of peaceful dwelling, to create together a place of healing for this broken world and the broken places within ourselves. Whether you can make it to Wisdom House or will be practicing at home, I am equally looking forward to being with you.

With love and gassho,

Torei