

## Retreats

by Chris Wilcox, Senior Dharma Teacher

Quarterly retreats are a familiar and intensive part of our practice at the Indianapolis Zen Center. It has been an enormous privilege attending them here over the years. The longer retreats involve 11 or 12 Zazen sessions each day, walking meditation, formal meals, work practice, interviews and kong-an drills. Structured, disciplined practice. Sitting, walking, chanting, working--just pay attention. What could be simpler?

My adventure with retreats started twelve years or so ago after I felt a strong need to go beyond my routine daily Zen practice at home. I saw a flyer advertising a talk in Indianapolis by Zen Master Dae Gak and eagerly attended. He was holding a two day retreat starting the next morning and suggested that I attend. I didn't feel ready on the spur of the moment and ducked the opportunity. I'll never get that one back. My mind wasn't ready for "just do it".

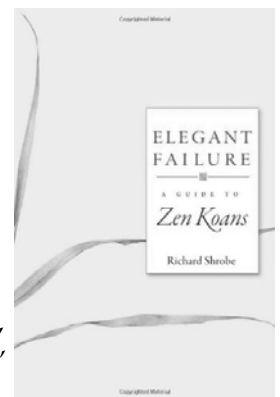
Three months later, though, I did attend one of his retreats, not knowing anything about the routine other than just sitting. The formal meals, interviews, and chants were a challenge. I got lots of answers to the question: "How dumb can I be"? Nonetheless, getting through the retreat was an exhilarating experience. Many retreats later I still have not plumed the depths of how dumb I can be, but the mistakes are less bothersome. In fact they're valuable learning experiences, helpful reminders to pay attention. The most uncomfortable retreat I've attended was great.

Even with experience there is for me always a bit of apprehension before each one. The mind playing games. Will I forget something? Will it be a long, painful session? Am I going to stumble over another kong-an? Can I get through the early morning bows, again? What if I have to lead chants? What if I have a cold? The mind throws up lots of concerns! But no retreat has ever been as difficult as my mind projected—even with mistakes, embarrassments, pain, and drowsiness. And all were rewarding.

I am retired, so I don't have many of the demands of work and family and fewer of the obstacles that younger members may have. Still, a longish retreat is a commitment of significant time that means missing something elsewhere. At first, sitting even for a day and a half, was a challenge. But somehow I showed up got through that and enjoyed the experience. And this is equally true of the longer sessions we now conduct. The experience is invariably worthwhile.

Don't make difficult or easy, just *put it all down*, and follow the Moktak and Chugpi. In trying to be present in the room, with one's attention intact, time passes quickly. My mind conducts its rebellions, but in general it gets quieter as the retreat progresses. Pains sometimes rise, sometimes die out, and sometimes not, but they seem less and less important. And the prolonged practice of attention is a priceless experience.

Quoting from Richard Shrobe's book, Elegant Failure: *Once a student asked a Zen master, "What is the Zen way?" The Zen master said, "Attention!" The student said, "And after that?" The master said, "Attention!" The student said, "And after that?" The master said, "Attention!" The student, one more time, said, "And then what?" The master said, "Attention!"*



# Abbot's letter

Robert Blender

Recently, I was putting together a time-line of major events in the history of the Indianapolis Zen Center. From humble beginnings as a meditation group that met once a week in a member's home to a Zen Center with four retreats a year, our own building with a resident and soon to have one of the only residential teachers in our whole international school—we have come a long way in 20 years!

Each step of this journey has required great courage. As we considered each action to be taken, sometimes the next step looked impossible. Incorporation—how can we ever figure it out? Finding a Guiding Teacher—in the Midwest? Renting an office space—can we afford the rent? Starting a Building Fund—with a membership of 20, we will never get there! Buying a building—what if it's not the right one or it ends up that we can't afford it? Each step had to be evaluated, and then, the frightening part, we had to proceed forward into the unknown.

Each step of this journey has required patience. Finding our first Guiding Teacher took several years, then an Interim Guiding Teacher, then we searched for our second Guiding Teacher and then our third! The Building Fund took several years of fund-raising in order to amass the cash for a down-payment, closing fees and some money for initial renovations. Finding the right building took more than ten years; I can recall a discussion with the Director in the mid-1990's in which we actually considered converting an old Hardee's on Meridian Street into a Zen Center. Korean temples have blue roofs and so do Hardee's! And, when we bought our building, the renovations were done slowly, many with in-house labor and all with donated funds. Patience was required as we sat retreats in a Dharma room with no walls!

Each step of this journey has required the efforts of many people. All of the founding members of our group have moved on to other cities, some still practice and some don't. The Building Fund which paid the down-payment on our current structure represented contributions from many, many people—some members and some sympathetic supporters. So many people have helped with the renovations of our current building! I can recall a large group that worked on the demolition of the old walls in our current Dharma Room—we all went home that day covered in gray dust!

With courage, patience and the strength of sangha, we have built a Zen Center that makes this ancient practice available in central Indiana. We have two Senior Dharma Teachers, three Dharma Teachers and two Dharma Teachers-in-Training—signs of a maturing group! Soon we will have a resident Guiding Teacher, one of the few in our international Kwan Um School of Zen. As we work and practice together as a sangha, we know that this journey will continue.



## Calendar of Events

Feb 5, Saturday

Heart Kyol Che  
Retreat

9 AM to 4:30 PM

*\$20, lunch provided,  
registration required*

Mar 3, Thursday

Public Dharma

Talk 7:30 PM with

Linc Rhodes, JDPSN

March 4,5,6

3-Day Retreat with

Linc Rhodes, JDPSN

Mar 12, Saturday

Foundations of

Zen Class

1 PM to 4:30 PM

*\$60, registration req'd*

Apr 9, Saturday

One-day Retreat

9 AM to 4:30 PM

Apr 9, Saturday

Buddha's Birthday  
Celebration

4 PM

*Disclaimer: All events are subject to change. Please contact the Zen Center at 317-921-9902 or by email at [director@indyzen.org](mailto:director@indyzen.org) before coming to an event. All events take place at the Indianapolis Zen Center, unless otherwise noted.*

# Heart Kyol Che One-Day Retreat

On Saturday, February 5, the Indianapolis Zen Center will host a one-day Heart Kyol Che retreat to coincide with the mid-point of the 3-month Winter Kyol Che in Providence, Rhode Island. This Heart Kyol Che also includes consulting interviews with Senior Dharma Teacher Robert Blender. Attendance is limited to twenty participants, so please register early by using the form at [www.indyzen.org](http://www.indyzen.org) or by e-mail to [director@indyzen.org](mailto:director@indyzen.org). The retreat starts at 9 am and lasts until approximately 4:00 to 4:30 pm. The fee for this retreat is \$20, lunch included.

For more information – 317-921-9902 or [director@indyzen.org](mailto:director@indyzen.org)

## Foundations of Zen Class

*Saturday March 12th*

Do you want to know more about meditation and Zen practice? Are you interested in knowing more about the history and philosophy of Zen? Do you want to start a daily personal practice or refresh your practice? The Foundations of Zen class addresses all of this and more.

The fee for this class is \$60; pre-registration is required. Use the registration form at [www.indyzen.org](http://www.indyzen.org) or email [director@indyzen.org](mailto:director@indyzen.org) to reserve a spot.

### Excerpt from “Hair Grows on Wide Teeth”

*by Zen Master Seung Sahn*

Why did Bodhidharma come to China? Joju said, "Hair grows on wide teeth." But when someone else asked Joju the same question he said, "The cypress tree in the garden." Why are the answers different? Joju, like any great Zen Master, gets many different kinds of students. Because of this there are different kinds of teaching. It's the same with taste — everybody has slightly different taste. Some like ko chi chang, some catsup; some like sweet and some like salty. That's our tongue; our tongues decide. Everyone is a little bit different. When thinking appears, then like and dislike appear. When like and dislike appear, action appears. So, if you cut off all thinking, then everything is no problem. But if you are attached to your thinking, then you are attached to like and dislike. I like this, I don't like that. Then you will have a problem. Then suffering will appear. Originally there is no suffering, but you make like and dislike so... suffering. Your thinking makes that. So, if you cut off your thinking, then any place, any time...no problem! Try that, put it all down. Only action is very important. Most people are only thinking, thinking, thinking, but Zen means not attached to name and form. Completely put it down, everything, then... Boom! One point appears. Then correct function appears. Correct function is a correct human being.

## Buddha's Birthday Celebration

*Saturday April 9th*

*at 4:00 pm*

The celebration starts off with bathing the baby Buddha ceremony (with a flower offering for the kids) and is followed by cake and ice cream. Family and friends are welcome.

## Practice Schedule

### Monday

6:30 p.m.

*Special chanting*

7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

*Evening bell, chanting, sitting*

**Tuesday** Source Yoga, Fishers

8:15 p.m.-9:15 p.m.

*Sitting, walking meditation, chanting*

### Wednesday

6:30 p.m.

*Orientation to practice*

7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

*Evening bell, chanting, sitting*

### Sunday

8:30 a.m.

*Orientation to practice*

9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

*Bows, morning bell, chanting, sitting,  
Dharma talk, discussion & socializing*



*Kwan Seum  
Bosal  
at Indianapolis  
Zen Center*

Also known as  
Avalokitesvara in  
Sanskrit,  
the bodhisattva of  
compassion

## About the Zen Center

The Indianapolis Zen Center offers authentic Zen practice in the lineage of Zen Master Seung Sahn and is a member of the Kwan Um School of Zen ([www.kwanumzen.org](http://www.kwanumzen.org)). Membership is \$25/month for individuals and \$35/month for families. Becoming a member supports both the Zen Center and Zen practice in the community. Members receive a monthly calendar, the local and Kwan Um newsletters, discounts on retreat fees, and have the right to vote at the annual meeting.

**For more information**, call 317-921-9902, email [director@indyzen.org](mailto:director@indyzen.org) or access our Web site at [www.indyzen.org](http://www.indyzen.org)

