



RYUMONJI ZEN MONASTERY

“*You are not it, it is you!*”

These are the words of Tozan Ryokai (807-869). Tozan and his disciple, Sozan Honjaku (840-901), were two Zen monks from China. The Soto Zen lineage of Buddhism came down to present day from these two monks. The Soto Zen lineage gets its name from *Sozan* and *Tozan*. Our founding teacher Dainin Katagiri Roshi and his dharma heirs, including myself, are descendants in this long and sacred lineage.

Tozan's teaching is fundamental to seeing our life from a deeper perspective. Our true nature is more than what we see as our “self”. I can say “*I am me*”, but truly I am more than what appears as “me”. Sun, earth, environment, myriad galaxies are all manifestations of existence beyond what I call my “self”. Tozan says, “You are not it, it is you!”

With our usual notions of self, we create a gap between ourselves and *what is*. The universe has its own rhythm. It's vastly beyond our own take on things. We create a gap when we try to hang on to things or become overwhelmed when things don't go our way. Universe has its own say. It's hard to embrace what each day brings.

A few months ago my brother died unexpectedly. He was in a critical care unit for three weeks. I stayed with him some nights. I slept on a couch by his side. It was like our bedroom that we shared when we were growing up. At the end he said, “I love you . . . I'm on my way to heaven.” He died soon after that. Life has its own rhythm.

Zen master Dogen says, “If the least like or dislike arises, the mind is lost in confusion.” It's hard to be with what is. We have our own notions of how things should be, based on our notions of self. We think we are separate from what is. Tozan's point is that fundamentally there is not an independent self which is separate from the universe. The universe is us. It is our original fundamental Nature.

A few weeks ago I was in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan on the Keweenaw Peninsula. The Keweenaw sticks out into Lake Superior. They had huge rains a few days before we got there. The force of the rains swept through gorges along the hillsides. I saw an asphalt parking lot in a shopping mall that was completely undercut by the raging waters that swept through this gorge. A big section of this parking lot totally collapsed under the force of this water. This force of nature swallowed up cars and even one person who plunged to her death.

The force of Universe has its own spin. It's vastly beyond our take on things. Tozan says, “You are not it, it is you!” To live harmoniously requires allegiance and submission to the truth of constant change and the rhythm of the universe.

Life and death are the great matter. Impermanence is swift. It's the universe turning, beyond *like* or *dislike*. To pass through the waves of everyday life is the *dragon gate* (*ryu-mon*, JP). It takes courage to merge with the truth that is. Sit up into what is. Quiet your mind. The rhythm of the universe is beyond any commentary. “*You are not it, it is you!*”

Shoken Winecoff

Abbot, Ryumonji

Ryumonji Happenings . . .



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Ryumonji Dharma Heirs

During 2019, the Dharma Heirs of Rev. Shoken Winecoff, Abbot of Ryumonji, will continue to assume a greater role in the leadership of Ryumonji activities. The Dharma Heirs will assist Shoken Roshi in facilitating Ryumonji's monthly weekend sesshins, and the Winter and Summer Angos. This is an opportunity for students to experience the teachings of a variety of priests affiliated with Ryumonji.

Short biographical notes about each of the Dharma Heirs and their Sanghas are available on Ryumonji's website for your review.

2019 Ryumonji Angos

Ryumonji will hold Winter and Summer Angos during 2019. Winter Ango will begin on January 18 with January sesshin and conclude on March 3. Rev. Kyoku Lutz, a student in Rev. Shohaku Okumura's lineage, will serve as shuso. The Shuso ceremony will be held February 10, 2019.

Summer Ango will begin on June 21 with June sesshin and conclude on August 4.

Angos are open to full or partial attendance, if full time participation is not possible. If you wish to attend either Winter or Summer Ango or the Shuso ceremony on Feb. 10, please register on Ryumonji's website, www.ryumonji.org.

Ryumonji Retreats

Ryumonji hosted its annual Women's Retreat during the weekend of November 2-4, 2018. Twenty two women met to share life experiences under the guidance of Rev. Taiju Wilimek of Bemidji, MN and Rev. Myoko Demuth of Decorah, IA, who are both dharma heirs of Rev. Shoken Winecoff.

New Year's at Ryumonji

Ryumonji invites everyone to its annual New Year's festivities, beginning Monday, December 31, 2018 through Tuesday, January 1, 2019.

Year End Sesshin—Monday, December 31, 2018 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Please register by completing the on-line event registration form on Ryumonji's website.)

New Year's Eve Ceremony and Bell Ringing followed by New Year's Eve party—Monday, December 31, 2018 7:30p.m.

New Year's Day Open House—Tuesday, January 1, 2019 1:00—4:00 p.m.



2019 Ryumonji Calendar

Jan 1	New Year's Day Open House
Jan 18-20	Sesshin & Winter Ango Opening
Feb 15-17	Sesshin
Mar 3	Winter Ango Closing
Mar 9	Winter Gala
Mar 15-17	Sesshin
Apr 7	Buddha Birthday Celebration
Apr 19-21	Sesshin
Apr 27-28	Family Weekend
May 17-19	Sesshin
Jun 21-23	Sesshin & Summer Ango Opening
Jul 19-21	Sesshin
Aug 4	Summer Ango Closing
Aug 16-18	Men's Retreat
Sep 20-22	Sesshin
Oct 6	Taste of Ryumonji
Oct 18-20	Sesshin
Nov 1-3	Women's Retreat
Nov 15-17	Sesshin & Jukai Ceremony
Dec 1-8	Rohatsu Sesshin
Dec 31	End of Year Sesshin New Year's Eve Celebration



Public Sittings

Thursday Evenings

7:30 p.m.

Sunday Mornings

9:00 a.m.

For orientation to zazen

please arrive

15 minutes early

To receive future issues of the newsletter electronically, please e-mail: office@ryumonji.org

2019 Ryumonji Work Days

Ryumonji work days begin at 10:00 a.m. and conclude at 3:00 p.m. A pot luck lunch is served at noon. Work days are a great sangha activity and support for Ryumonji. Below are the dates for 2019. Please join us if you can!

Jan 5	May 4	Sep 7
Feb 2	Jun 1	Oct 5
Mar 2	Jul 6	Nov 9
Apr 6	Aug 17	Dec 14

To register for sesshin or angos please complete the Event Registration Form at www.ryumonji.org

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Decorah, IA
Permit No. 2452
Zip Code 52101

Improvement Projects

Ryumonji has completed its five year Solar Project this year. We offer our deep appreciation and gratitude to the many donors who made this possible. The solar panels and our geothermal heating and cooling have greatly reduced Ryumonji's carbon footprint.

Also there are plans to pave the front entry walkway. This is the walkway that runs in front of the monastery complex. The paving will extend from the main parking lot to the parking lot on the back side of the Kuin building. We hope this construction can begin next spring

We also want to do some landscaping to help prevent heavy rains from washing gravel down the hillside from the Kuin parking area into the garden and lawn below. As the climate warms, these washouts are happening more frequently.

Finally, we will continue our monthly work days dedicated to monastery maintenance and improvement. We are grateful for all the gracious volunteer effort that makes Ryumonji grounds look so beautiful for myriad beings.