



20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF ZEN RIVER IN UITHUIZEN



Congratulations to the whole international sangha! Sitting and bowing, chanting and studying, sharing our vision and working closely together for many years. It is an incredible gift from each of us to all of us—and who knows from whom and to whom far beyond our perception. It has allowed us all to grow; we have learned to seize precious opportunities for finding our position and function, while the temple and grounds have become just as much our teachers as anyone or anything else. Hurrah!

The celebration of Zen River's 20th anniversary on Sunday, September 25th, included a memorial service for Maezumi Roshi and Hojo-san; it was a milestone reunion of like-minded followers of the Way from all over the world. The anniversary was held in September so we could celebrate a service outside with lots of live music—and the weather was perfect. Officially we moved into the Uithuizen property on a chilly November 16. There has already been talk about the 25th anniversary in five years... So be prepared!

BLUEBERRY MUFFINS

<i>2 tablespoons broken flax seeds</i>	<i>75 g (½ cup) frozen blueberries</i>
<i>90 ml (6 tablespoons) boiling water</i>	<i>315 g (2 cups) flour</i>
<i>240 ml (1 cup) apple juice</i>	<i>1 tablespoon baking powder</i>
<i>125 g (½ cup) sunflower oil</i>	<i>½ teaspoon salt</i>
<i>110 g (½ cup) sugar</i>	<i>2 tablespoons sugar for sprinkling</i>
<i>1 teaspoon vanilla extract</i>	<i>12 paper baking cups</i>
<i>1 teaspoon vinegar</i>	

- Combine the broken flax seeds with the boiling water, and leave to soak for 5 minutes until gloopy.
- Preheat the oven to 190 °C (375 °F) and line a muffin tray with paper baking cups, and grease the cups.
- In a mixing bowl, combine the apple juice, oil, sugar, vanilla extract, and vinegar.
- Stir in the flax seeds and hot water.
- Stir in the frozen blueberries.
- In a separate bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, and salt.
- Using a large, shallow metal spoon or firm spatula, reach into the bottom of the mixing bowl and cut and fold the flour into the wet ingredients until just combined. Turn the bowl after each fold so that the ingredients are equally distributed. Work quickly and lightly. Alternatively, beat for a few seconds with an electric beater on low speed and finish with a few folds using a spatula, reaching to the bottom of the bowl. The batter will be thinner than usual.
- Immediately drop equal amounts of batter into the muffin cups and sprinkle the top of each muffin with an even layer of sugar.
- Bake for 18–20 minutes, or until a skewer inserted in the middle comes out clean. Take the muffins out of the oven. Wait 5 minutes, then remove and cool on a wire rack.

REMEMBERING THE ROAD TO ZEN RIVER

by Tenkei Roshi

The winter of 2001 was dark and cold and brought piles of snow. Even in April, daylight was still limited and did not seem to remain long enough for our mission. Yet the small white Toyota we had bought with our first sesshin earnings ploughed happily through the Groningen hinterland. It almost seemed to understand the roads better than we did. The destination was a small village called Uithuizen, located in the very north, a mere six kilometres from the sea. It felt like the end of the world. The e-mail we had received from the owner of the property didn't promise much but gave us just enough of an incentive to hit the road for a three-and-a-half-hour drive.

For six months already we had traversed the Netherlands – as well as parts of Belgium and Germany – almost daily, without any success. Old Groningen farms had been at the top of the list on many of our outings. Yet nothing stuck, and the last one we saw depressed all of us to the point of giving up on the north altogether. Perhaps the time was not yet right to find a place in the Dutch countryside. That would be sad, really. Most cities and towns in the Netherlands were generously endowed with Zen centres by now, and the idea was to add something new – a temple for sustained residential practice. Should we change our plans? Perhaps Rotterdam could use another venue?

Suddenly the Toyota turned into a generous parking lot along a lonely road. As I opened the driver's door, an icy wind cut through the cosy atmosphere in the car. The door almost went flying. Getting out, I automatically covered my face and looked down. But a wild flapping noise right above me attracted my attention. Who could have thought? A colourful flag with a Buddha on it greeted me, and there was even another one on the other side of the driveway. What a welcome!

Walking up the driveway many memories came up. A little over six months before, Tamara and I had walked away from a Schiphol Airport baggage belt into a new fu-

ture, with two suitcases each as our only belongings. After twelve years in the US and six months in Japan, we finally came back to live in Europe again. There was a vision of starting up a temple there, but only the outlines were clear. How, where, and with whom exactly that vision would materialize none of us really knew. The Netherlands seemed to be the most likely place – particularly since my brother Stefan had invited us to stay with him and his family at first – but we did not exclude Germany or England either. There was trust though, that one day something would speak to us. And this Groningen driveway did feel auspicious.

Liz walked up with us, as well as Peter and Anjo, who had come with their Caddy. They were students of mine, ready for adventure. Although no one in our crew said anything, trying hard to save all judgments for later, we could all sense that our first impressions were in agreement: This could be the place. A massive wooden front door led to a hallway where Anne, the owner, made his appearance. As he showed us around, we often looked at each other, wondering how we ended up here. The place was different from everything we'd seen so far. It just seemed perfect. Anjo whispered in my ear several times, reminding me to double-check the price for which the property was being offered.

Money was, of course, a big issue – particularly the lack of it. There were really no funds to start with; all we had was a plan. Immediately after arriving in The Netherlands, we had started calculating. The first property we investigated – a handsome, modest-sized Christian monastery alongside the river Rhine – came with a price-tag that really seemed to be beyond our means. For weeks I had racked my brain over what kind of programme would ever allow us to finance such a place. Going by our experience in the US, I had to conclude that we wouldn't be able to make ends meet. We needed to find a place for half that price. Only then did the balance sheet cheer up and the figures



FUNDRAISING APPEAL 2022



The Zen River kitchen is situated in a perfect central location on the property. Blessed with a grand series of windows, it allows everyone working there to maintain a spacious vision—straight into the high trees and skies. Somehow this seems to have a beneficial effect on the cutting of veggies, the rising of the dough, and the boiling of rice and pasta.

Yet, the recent rise in gas prices forces us to take action. The heating bills are quite literally going through the roof. A specialist in the field strongly advised us to focus on insulating the walls and roofs, floors and windows. And the kitchen windows are next in line. Like the ones replaced elsewhere in the building, they too are in need of double-glazing. Fortunately, the kitchen windows do not need new frames—except for the two that open. Our faithful contractor De Boer can simply insert double-paned glass into the old wooden frames. So the costs will be relatively modest. Still, it amounts to an investment now of around Euro 10,000.

Could you help Zen River to realize this project? All contributions, both great and small, are very much appreciated. With thanks,

Tenkei

Bank account number (IBAN): NL72 TRIO 0212 4970 30, BIC/SWIFT: TRIONL2U

Account name: Zen River; Triodos Bank N.V., Nieuweroordweg 1, 3704 EC Zeist, The Netherlands

or via PayPal to office@zenrivertemple.org (tick the box 'to a friend')

fall into place. This gave us so much confidence that we made an appointment with the bank. Our friend Michel, who had experience in this department, would join us to do the formal talking.

I'll never forget us sitting there, telling three representatives of the bank: "We don't have money, but we do have a good plan; here it is, could you please help us?" Almost to our surprise, their reaction was serious and rather optimistic. There was only one issue, they said. Where would we find a property within our proposed budget that would allow us to run the programme we envisioned? After all, housing some ten full-time residents and lodging some thirty more participants over extended periods of time would require quite a large accommodation, wouldn't it? We looked at each other. They had a point. All we could do was to promise – perhaps naively – that we would search

hard. Now, luck was on our side: The price Anne confirmed was exactly what we had estimated we could afford!

Our gang of five stumbled behind Anne through the hallways and rooms of the building. Ten eyes grew bigger as we went. Peter and Anjo had generously welcomed Tamara and me into their tiny, lovely home in Zoetermeer, but were ready to sell it whenever we found a place for Zen River. Liz was an old friend from the US and eager to join the project. It was as if we were all looking for water and suddenly found a stream.

It took some imagination though. The building obviously needed work, and, besides that, it was still occupied by no fewer than 50 refugees from all over the world. Officially it was a hotel/restaurant, until the nearby refugee centre needed extra accommodation, and Anne had rented out all the rooms to that purpose. Refugee centres in the Nether-

TODOKE PROJECT; ZEN FREE-CYCLE



“There are thousands of Soto Zen temples and Zen Centers outside of Japan, and many find it hard to locate or purchase Buddhist garments due to their finances and geographical location. On the other hand, thousands upon thousands of unused Buddhist robes are stored in temple cupboards all over Japan... So we contacted all the Soto Zen temples in Japan to send us their surplus garments, such as kimono, samue, juban, tabi and bessu, that we can distribute to Soto Zen Temples outside of Japan for free. We plan to continue this project until 2030, the final year for SDGs (sustainable development goals), and many temples will definitely get a delivery soon. We hope this project will help your Dharma activities.”

—*Konjin Gaelyn Godwin, Director of Soto Zen Buddhism Int'l Center, Japan*

lands relocate every five years, and this one was nearing the end of its term. There were people everywhere: watching television, pottering about in the kitchen, or just hanging around. Many of them looked lost and a deep sadness hung in the air. Still, wherever they had come from and whatever they had gone through, they had found a place to take refuge. We would do the same. In the midst of a world of suffering, Buddhists take refuge in their practice.

Our first visit left us all a little dazed. When we stepped outside, the fierceness of the wind seemed to remind us that this really was the end of the world. The northern coast of the Netherlands is beautiful if you like empty space with no frills. On the very edge, it looks like there is nothing beyond, only the unknown. What better place for a Zen temple? It felt remote though, several hours from the great urban areas of Amsterdam and The Hague. Would any members of our budding community be willing to travel that distance on a regular basis? Even for many Dutch people, this was foreign land. We decided to have lunch and gather our thoughts. The local bar we ended up in proved to be the perfect place for imagining the future. After coming back from the restroom, I looked around and realized we were on the right track. Some mysterious voice was calling us to these northern regions.

In a flash, I remembered a brief incident during a sesshin in the Netherlands in 1992, when the sangha was going through a major transition. We had moved out of our first residential centre in Bar Harbor, Maine, and were planning to set up a monastery in Europe. It proved difficult to find a suitable property, and this kept the sangha in limbo for quite some time. We had followed Genpo Roshi around Europe, traveling from one retreat to the other. During that sesshin, I unintentionally gazed around the zendo. Focusing on one of the participants' backs, it suddenly hit me

that it was me who had to look for a place and establish such a centre. It felt as if that person's back had spoken to me and had, completely unexpectedly, revealed something very important. After zazen I ran over to see Genpo Roshi as he was leaving the zendo. While I was trying to communicate what had happened, he looked me straight into the eye and said that the very same idea had come up for him during that last sitting period. Time stood still for a moment. Many years had to pass before my vision started to manifest itself, and today seemed to be the day.

As we were driving back home after our first visit to the Uithuizen property, the atmosphere in the car was charged with new energy. Upon returning to Zoetermeer, we called the bank to report our find. Their response was very congenial, even congratulatory. Just as well, because Peter and Anjo had put their house on the market not long before, and it had suddenly sold. The revenues would make up half of our starting capital, so it meant that we could move ahead. But the sale happened more quickly than we anticipated and moving ahead also meant moving out – in fact, moving out fast! Yet changing our residency to the new accommodation would not be possible straight away. Word had come from Anne that the sale of the property had to be postponed. His plan of relocating the refugees for their last year of residency in town to a building nearby had failed. So, we had to practice patience and find an in-between station to bridge that period.

The bank also had an unexpected hurdle in store for us. Since we opted for a minimum sum as a down payment, the deal required a dozen guarantors – people who were willing to reserve a sizable chunk of their savings for ten years as a backup in case things went wrong. To our surprise, overcoming this hurdle took only two weeks, which boosted our confidence tremendously. Meanwhile, our membership

grew steadily, as did the enthusiasm for the idea of setting up Zen River Temple in the northern countryside.

Zoetermeer, a commuter town close to The Hague, had served us well for nine months, and we had actually come to love it. Zoetermeer literally translates to "Sweet Lake." And since Tamara and I had lived for years with our teacher Genpo Roshi in Salt Lake City, we often said that we had moved from Salt Lake to Sweet Lake. After two weeks at my brother's house in Den Bosch, and the three following months at the house of our dear friends Hank and Frits in The Hague, we were invited to Peter and Anjo's house in Zoetermeer, which became the first official residence of Zen River Temple.

To everyone's surprise, Zoetermeer even accommodated us quite quickly with our first proper meditation hall: a classroom in an old school nearby. There we could test-drive the precious Buddha statue that our dear master and mentor Hojo-san had sent over from Japan. In fact, the statue had arrived before we did, and we often felt as if it showed us the way. This beautifully carved wooden Buddha seemed to exude the same generosity as the one who gave it to us, and finding a proper home for it became a major objective for our mission. The statue just deserved it, as did Hojo-san, who had welcomed us so heartily in Kirigayaji, his temple in Tokyo.

When it was time to leave the US in 2000, we had followed Genpo Roshi's advice to accept Hojo-san's invitation to live and work in Kirigayaji for six months. Hojo-san was the younger brother of Maezumi Roshi, and was always totally committed to the same cause: the transmission of the Dharma to the West. The unexpected death of Maezumi Roshi in 1995 had only made Hojo-san's determination stronger. Our stay with him in Kirigayaji made for a highly formative period in our Buddhist education, as the Japanese counterpart of our training in the US. Hojo-san also introduced us to many other Buddhist masters, artists, and scholars, not only in Japan but also in countries including China and Bhutan, and these priceless connections still continue to develop.

Leaving Zoetermeer was a dive into the deep end. We just risked that everything would fall into place when we moved up to the north and that the purchase of the property would go according to plan. Luck was with us again, and we found a perfect home in Holwierde, some 25 kilometres from our destiny in Uithuizen. We ended up living and practising there for a little over one year, which gave us the chance to prepare ourselves for the big jump, and to see who would join. Anjo and Peter were the first fully committed students, together with Liz – but others followed suit rather quickly and often unexpectedly.

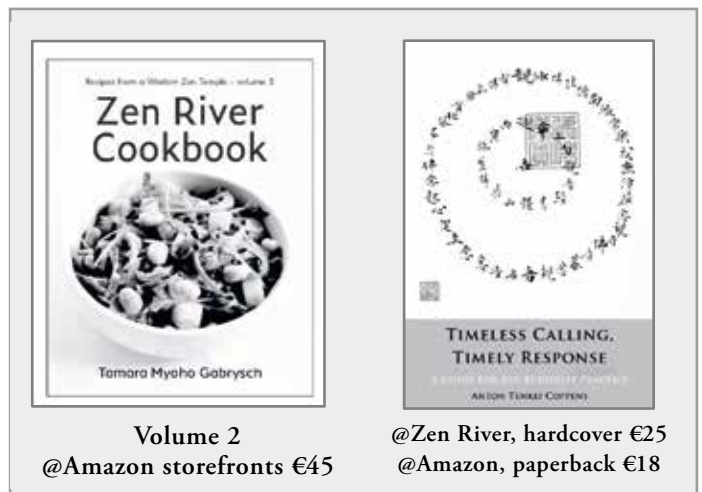
The Sangha is one of the Three Treasures, and in that part we have been blessed beyond imagination. Setting up a monastery doesn't only involve real estate, after all. It also requires a group of aficionados that can work together as a team – even if they need to change roles or are replaced by others over the course of time. It also required me to take on responsibilities that weighed much more heavily than I had anticipated. In fact, starting to work so closely

with students and watching them go through the ups and downs of daily practice has often felt like going through my own training with my teacher all over again.

After overcoming several unforeseen obstacles, we finally moved into the Uithuizen property in November 2002. One thing was certain from the start: this was the end of our nomadic life. In order to study with Genpo Roshi, we had travelled far and wide, following him on his extensive European retreat tours, and living with him in different places in the US. In fact, I had met Tamara in 1988 on the way to his first residential practice centre in Bar Harbor, Maine, and since then we have worked together in more places than I can mention here. That free-flowing format had suited us well. But now it felt like the right time to settle and put down roots, and Uithuizen really seemed to be the right place to do so. When Tamara saw the kitchen she was convinced, and she has been a happy Tenzo (head cook) ever since, developing a personal style that literally serves many people.

Since we lived in Japan in 2000, the European department of the Soto School became very active, which made it easier for us to go through the temple training in Japan that is required for becoming a fully qualified Zen priest. In my case, this was still a rather provisional affair, but later it became more institutionalized. Tamara and several of my successors have been able to fulfil this requirement by joining official Ango training at Toshoji in Okayama. Moreover, as Zen River kept developing, we managed to have it registered as a Soto Zen missionary temple. As a result, there is a lively exchange of students in both directions, which has been a great inspiration for developing an extensive residential training programme.

The Uithuizen property was not, of course, built as a Buddhist temple, but over time all the different rooms have found their own role in accommodating our Buddhist practice. Some of the energy that we've put into renovating the property starts to shine back. Dogen Zenji describes Zen practice as a way to forget the self and to be enlightened by all things. In my experience, the temple is a living work of art, which can communicate with us loudly and clearly. To decide on the location for the new zendo, I felt like asking the back garden for guidance. When we finally found the right spot, we all circumambulated the ground plan many times to bless the soil. Now it is as if the building has always been there.



ZEN RIVER TEMPLE

WINTER ANGO 2022–2023

November 19–February 25 Winter Ango
November 19–26 Rohatsu Sesshin, 7-day
Nov. 26, 11:30 Hossenshiki for Esho des Etoiles
December 10–15 Gyōji Week
December 21, 20:00 Concert Tutti Cantano
Dec. 27–Jan 1 New Year Sesshin, 5-day Part 1
Jan, 3–7 New Year Sesshin, 4-day Part 2
January 14–15 Intro Weekend
January 14–19 Gyōji Week
January 27–29 Bodhidharma Weekend Sesshin
Feb. 11–12 (tentative) Young Minds Weekend
February 18–25 Ango Closing Sesshin, 7-day

SPRING INTERIM 2023

March 18–23 Gyōji Week
March 24–26 Rakusu Sewing Weekend
March 31–April 2 Weekend Sesshin
April 8–12 Easter Gyōji Week
April 22–27 Sakura Spring Sesshin, 5-day
May 6–11 Gyōji Week

SUMMER ANGO 2023

May 20–Aug. 19 Summer Ango
May 20–25 Falling Flowers Sesshin
June 3–8 Gyōji Week
July 1–6 Young Minds Seminar
July 8–13 Gyōji Week
July 22–Aug. 19 Summer Month Long Sesshin

ZEN BOAT GRONINGEN

Study & Speech, Introduction classes, etc.:
www.zenrivertemple.org/zen-river-boat-groningen

AT OTHER LOCATIONS

Nov. 3 - 6 Sesshin with Senko on Holterberg
Jan. 5–8 Sesshin with Senko on Holterberg
Feb. 1–5 Sesshin with Jifu in Havelte

The Zen River Sangha developed simultaneously with the property. I often walk around the buildings and grounds, look at whatever has been done or donated, and thank every hardworking and generous soul personally. In some ways, the temple is just an excuse for Sangha members to work together and to get to know themselves, as well as others, in a very practical manner. The whole project is still in full progress, and in the past twenty years, Zen River has branched out to other locations as well, thanks to the efforts of my successors. Peter, and his late wife Anjo established a Zen temple in the Pyrenees, while Jorge

founded Zen groups in Madrid and Lima. We also inherited a beautiful houseboat in Groningen that now functions as a city Zen centre led by Simon and Helma. Robert, Ingrid, Hans, and so many others have proved themselves indispensable as well. Fortunately, there are said to be 84,000 Dharma gates, so there are many ways to keep the Dharma alive. Different people at different time periods need different formats, and we just have to find out what works best – with respect for tradition and a healthy sense of experimentation. ❀

Edited by Taian Davis and Gyosei Overbeek

WINTER ANGO SHUSO



Zen River is happy to announce that Izzy Esho des Etoiles will be the Shuso (head monk) for the upcoming winter Ango. Esho grew up in New York City, where she trained as a professional musician and teacher. She also studied at the Indiana University School of Music. Esho was working as a violinist

in Vermont when she met fellow musician Muho Proskauer, who introduced her to Zen and Genpo Roshi in 1994. That November, she moved to Kanzeon Zen Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. She also met Roshis Tenkei and Myoho, who lived there at the time. Genpo Roshi gave her Jukai and the Dharma name, *Esho* (Wisdom Blossoming), and ordained her in 1998. She is the proud mother of a nineteen year old son, Samuel.

While living in Salt Lake City she started learning the taiko (Japanese drum) and received a Master's in Social Work from the University of Utah. Esho also practised Zen with Musho Roshi at Two Arrows Zen, before coming to Zen River in June 2021. Since then, she has combined her violin and taiko skills into the services and given several workshops in the latter.

Due to Minegishi Sokan Roshi's schedule, the Hossenshiki ceremony will take place on Saturday, November 26th at 11:30. Everyone welcome!

MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

Live-stream Zazen Sundays and Tuesdays
Right Speech Class via Zoom, Sat. 16:30 hrs
Study Class via Zoom, Sundays 11:30
River of Zen Class via Zoom, Mon. 20:10
Dokusan via messenger or Skype, weekly
Access to all Dharma talks during sesshins, 11:30
Online Lectures with guest teachers

Registration: zenriver@zenrivertemple.org