

Dear Sangha,

It's time, once again, to come together for Ango training. *Ango* means "peaceful dwelling," which can be helpful to hold in mind: when we give our spiritual practice more of our time or attention, we deepen and develop our contact with the true peace of our essential nature.

Formal participation in angu begins with considering whether this a good time for you to do angu. Does the prospect sound nourishing and energizing? Or does it feel overwhelming and stressful? If it's the latter, consider why. Sometimes during stressful times, making time for our practice is actually just what we need.

This spring we'll be marking 40 years on the mountain, and fittingly, Shugen Roshi has chosen Dogen's teaching the *Mountains and Rivers Sutra* as our theme. We'll take it up in different ways throughout the spring and you might start by downloading the sutra from the angu website so you can begin to study it. It is a challenging teaching, and like most of Dogen's writings, takes patience, a generosity of heart, and a willingness to sink in and not-know. It is also delicious, offering beautiful images, palpable depth, and a passageway into mystery.

If you decide to do angu, then you'll need to register online and complete the Angu Commitment Form. Angu is intended to be both structured and flexible. We can choose what to commit to and how to intensify our practice based on the specifics of our life. Please remember that the point of angu is to engage practice and develop our relationship with the dharma, not to "be perfect" or meet a disembodied ideal we're holding in mind. If you have questions, I encourage you to reach out to your training advisor or feel free to give us a call here in the Training Office.

As part of our study of the *Mountains and Rivers Sutra*, Roshi is asking each of us to turn our attention toward the climate crisis and the present state of our planet. To support this, we'll be using David Loy's book *Ecodharma* and meeting in small groups via Zoom video conference to discuss it throughout the angu. You'll find details about how this will work as well as meeting times that you can select from on the angu website. Please explore this since it's a great way to engage this study with other sangha members.

Finally, I'm happy to share that this angu, Roshi has asked Jeffrey Gyokudo Roberts to serve as our Chief Disciple. Gyokudo has been a student since 2004, lives locally with his partner Meiju, and has been part of the Zen Kids staff since forever. It will be wonderful to have him step up and lead the angu—you'll find his letter to the sangha on the angu website.

Personally, I feel very fortunate to have this chance to join together and turn toward a teaching like *Mountains and Rivers Sutra* at this time. I can feel my whole body relaxing as I recall the opening lines: "These mountains and rivers of the present are the actualization of the word of the ancient Buddhas. Each, abiding in its own dharma state, completely fulfills its virtues."

With Love,

Shoan
Training Coordinator