

*Prayers*  
for  
THIS TIME BEING



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*for*  
THIS TIME BEING

EVERYDAY ZEN SANGHA  
PRAYERS

2020



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## INTRODUCTION

*An ancient Buddha said:*

“Each moment is all being, is the entire world.  
Reflect now whether any being or any world is  
left out of the present moment.”

*Uji, The Time-Being*  
Eihei Dogen Zenji



This collection of prayers, offered by the Bay Area Everyday Zen Sangha, is a record—a written glimpse—into an expression of our 2020 practice during this present moment of a pandemic affecting the entire world. As we moved quickly this year from in-person to on-line zazen and Dharma Seminars on Wednesday nights, these prayers helped to connect and remind us, to not leave any being or any world out of our Bodhisattva vows.

We dedicate this book of prayers and offer it with love and gratitude to our teacher, Zoketsu Norman Fischer, and also to our 2020 Shuso, Boku Sei Dai Jo Christopher Dumbleton.

## *A Prayer For This Time Being*

Special gratitude to the first responders and dedicated Cal Fire Team protecting Marin, Sonoma and Napa, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Francisco and in all the counties

Gratitude to the farmers and food service workers providing fresh foods and hot meals for thousands of public school children throughout CA and across the country

Gratitude to the grocery store workers and cashiers

Gratitude to the police and 911 operators who are offering us assistance and protection

Gratitude to the unnamed multitude of citizens who are donating funds to small family-owned restaurants who in turn are providing hot meals

Gratitude for all medical personnel—those on the front lines and those behind the scenes—risking their lives by providing round the clock care to coronavirus patients

Prayers for all the families gathered in Labor and Maternity centers in our hospitals to celebrate the miracle of birth and new life in a time of pandemic

Prayers to all the refugees jammed into camps who cannot go forward on their journeys or return home

Prayers for those who live in close quarters in institutions with no way to escape

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Prayers for those who have sent their children alone  
across the Border living with the fears and grief of not  
knowing if they are safe or still alive

Prayers for those who are so vulnerable in their remote  
villages without food or access to resources, medicines,  
or safety of any kind

Sorrows and prayers for those who have died during this  
pandemic, may we bring comfort to families in grief  
and shock

Gratitude for the hospice workers and chaplains  
accompanying some of the dying by FaceTime on  
cell phones

Prayers and gratitude for those who work in funeral  
homes, the ones who are washing our bodies, the ones  
who are burying and burning those who have passed  
on already

Gratitude for the croaking chorus of tree frogs singing all  
night long in honor of spring rain

Gratitude for the tender messages sent by friends, family,  
neighbors and even strangers who pass us by on the road  
with a warm greeting and a smile

Gratitude for the equanimity we can bring forward  
and share in our lives, for the equality of heart-mind  
presence, for the dropping away of delusion and tyranny  
of pettiness, and prejudice and a life constrained by our

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preferences, by our suffering of needing to be 'right'  
instead of really just not knowing, just being human....

Gratitude for all of us sitting together on this ceremonial  
network of loving relationships and deep caring for the  
well-being of all beings.

—Jaune Evans and Wendy Johnson

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*A Prayer for Difficult Times*

As I sat to try to write this prayer  
I found one of my greatest fears  
Is not just how our lives have changed  
and the pain and suffering around us  
But how we are becoming used to hearing  
of unspeakable tragedy and suffering

We know the tragedy that happened in New York  
So somehow the deaths in Texas and Florida are less  
horrendous

We know of nursing homes and prisons becoming  
Traps of sickness and death  
So when a new outbreak arises the tragedy deadens

We hear of another black murder by police  
And are drawn more to the difference and degree  
of depravity  
Than the horror of dying at the hands of those who are  
there to save us.

We like to think of health care workers as heroes rather  
than terrified human beings  
Many of whom are forced to quit or call in sick at facilities  
or nursing homes for their own safety or the safety of  
loved ones around them  
I pray for them

I know I am white and privileged  
Though I was brought up in a middle class immigrant  
community

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But I will never truly know what it is like to be a person  
of color  
Or extreme poverty

I pray for the companies committing to diversity  
I pray for the advertisers pulling their ads from  
social media  
To halt the encouragement of conflict and hate  
I pray for the users of social media  
to overcome their addictions and open to an awareness  
of the derision they are supporting

I do not know what dying is like  
There is much I cannot know

But perhaps with an open heart  
I can acknowledge  
I can share  
Hopefully I can feel  
Better yet I can love

We all can love

And I pray for us  
That our hearts are truly broken open  
To receive the suffering around us  
In our hearts and in our practice  
For the good of the world  
And transformation of ourselves

As a tool  
As a reflection of Buddha  
Awakening his compassion

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And Infinite mirror wisdom  
For the healing of us all.

—John Murray

### *A Prayer for Small Things*

A prayer for small things.

The jointed hair of a mosquito's leg before she lifts her  
body from the bite.

A prayer for small things that keep the life force churning.

The tiny wound that stings, then itches and aches.

Is simmering still, an acknowledged pain

That finally speaks

A prayer for small things.

The acts that build and build and change the world.

A prayer for small openings in the world that

re-arrange our fixed ideas:

a hunger,

a virus,

a silence,

a death

A prayer for paying attention.

The pale belly of a leaf flipped skyward.

A reminder of wind and change and all we cannot see.

A prayer for noticing. A prayer for the air.

The air itself always moving.

From breath, to breeze to no breath to *I can't breathe* to  
hurricane and back again.

A prayer for small things.

A palm that rests upon a lowered shoulder,

a knee and head bowed low.

That ancient hand that touched the earth.

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A prayer for small beginnings.

The way a body reminds us just to listen.  
To start a sentence with *I'm sorry, I didn't know.*  
A prayer for the words *please tell me more.*  
A prayer for those who tend to small things.

The ants that turn the garden soil.  
The smile to a stranger.  
The crinkled eyes above the mask.  
The struggling insect lifted from the floor.  
The backward step of one mind, one heart.  
The magic of it all.  
A prayer for small things.

-- Tracy Grubbs

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### *A Prayer for All of the Essential Workers*

Let us say prayers for all Essential Workers,  
For all the Essential Bodhisattvas who are hearing and  
responding to the cries of our whole world.  
For all the Postal Workers touching and delivering  
our mail.  
For all the Grannies and Aunties and Neighbors and  
Daycare guardians who are secretly caring for our little  
children at home while their Essential Worker parents  
must go to work.  
For all the EMTs and Ambulance Caregivers, for the Fire  
Fighters and Police, all the Drivers transporting and  
receiving us—protecting our brothers and sisters and  
children and parents, our grandparents, our newborns,  
our homeless, our beloveds, our friends.  
Prayers, prayers, and more prayers  
For the Women and Men in hospital basements laundering  
sheets and blankets for those who are sick and dying.  
For the Essential Cooks and Kitchen helpers who  
continuously feed and nourish everyone.  
For the Floor Washers, the Garbage Collectors, the Ones  
Who Clean Up Our Mess.  
Prayers to the brave Keepers and Tenders of Bodies, the  
Gravediggers, the Funeral Workers, the Ones Who  
Accompany The Dead.  
Prayers for the Subway and BART Conductors, the  
Pharmacists, the Food Store Cashiers, the Essential  
Unloaders of All Boxes and Crates.  
For all the School Teachers who are offering their lesson  
plans and love to students online so they can continue  
with their current education and not fall behind.  
For all the Maintenance Workers, Truckers, Line Workers,  
and Food Processors.

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For all the Crop Pickers and Packers.  
For all the Public Health Workers tracing and contacting,  
testing and reporting, doing their jobs despite heavy  
caseloads, despite improper or scarce tools.  
Many prayers for Dr. Anthony Fauci, for all the Physicians,  
Nurses, Social Workers, and Care Technicians who carry  
on despite the challenges.  
Prayers, many many prayers, so many prayers for so many,  
For all The Essential Workers, seen and unseen, watching  
over and holding all of us, all the time.  
Essential Bodhisattvas arising in all ten directions  
Hearing and responding to our cries in this pandemic  
world  
Throughout all space and time.

—Jaune Evans  
April 24, 2020

## *A Prayer for Our Models of Inspirations*

We come here in this time and in this way, to seek  
inspirations for these troubling times. Our desires for  
inspiration and prayers form our thoughts, our thoughts  
form our words, our words form our actions, our actions  
form our character, and our character forms the models  
that we offer to others. As we seek to be inspiration  
to others, we also build our models on the inspiration  
passed to us by others,  
From all Buddhas, From All Honored Ones, and From all  
Mahasattvas and Bodhisattvas  
From our great teachers in this lineage, both ancient, past,  
and current  
From the many great teachers from many traditions and to  
those great influences in our personal lives.  
May we take their lives as models that inspire us here, in  
this time, and in this way.  
We recognize again, in this prayer, their models of the  
Buddha that is in each of us, and of the profound  
wisdom of the Dharma that is available to all of us, and  
of the strength, comfort, and inspiration of our Sangha  
that is part of all of us.  
In the harsh reality of this world, though, much hate has  
been modeled for us. As hatred will never be ended by  
hatred returned, we pray that we can simply turn our  
backs on those models of hatred, domination, cruelty,  
abuse, separation, and harm. We leave these to wither  
under their own weight and be poisoned by their own  
content.  
Our practice has brought many of us to non-violence and  
radical acceptance. These are among the first principles  
that sustain us. But these do not breed indifference

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and do not deter us from radical actions—radical compassion, radical kindness, and radical love.

We come here to enter our world as models for others.

And what is the message we offer? For this, we recall a saying of Mahatma Gandhi, “my life is my message”. We pray that we might model and inspire by living kindness and compassion. And, as in the words of Thich Nhat Hanh may we, “be the change we seek”.

As we find our models of inspirational,

We bear witness with Quan Yin, to hear the Cries of the world.

We stand strong like Avalokiteshvara, to serve and bring relief and comfort to all in need

In all ways we model kindness and compassion.

We may not be able to do the monumental things that are needed and warranted now. But the small acts of kindness and compassion in everyday life can create miracles.

We remember this, as we bear witness to the often-forgotten un-named young girl, who came upon a man—deeply troubles, homeless, starving, and near death. Kindness and compassion came from within her and with the small frail outreached arms of a child, offered him a simple act of compassion and kindness. She offered Shakyamuni a simple bowl of rice porridge. In that way, and at that time, she changed the world. As he took this first act of compassion and kindness as a wheel that he could roll forward and pass on to others—A wheel that he rolled forward through time to those who followed him and through generations to today and to us—in this time and in this way. We pray we can take up that wheel in our lives and roll it forward as she began it and as he taught it.

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We remember a chant as part of perfect wisdom. Loosely translated. May we:

Pass over these troubling times—*Gate*

Pass through this time as we all come together—*Gate*

Pass through this to a new reborn world—*Paragate*

Go far beyond that rebirth and stand ready to face our next challenges—*Parasamgate*

We say halleluiah, amen—*Bodhi Svaha*

With this purpose, this intention and this vow, in this time, and in this way, we together repeat this ancient chant . . .

*Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha*

—Allen Frazier

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### *A Prayer For Those in the Middle of their Lives*

To those who needed all three jobs to pay the rent and now have no health insurance and don't qualify for food stamps.

To those parenting, working, teaching their children, and caring for their own parents all at once. To those who were already alone and socially isolated.

To the new graduates finding their way in a time of pandemic and recession.

To those whose careers no longer exist, many still saddled with heavy school debt.

To the chefs without kitchens, the musicians without orchestras, the artists without museums and galleries, the actors and dancers and singers and comedians without stage and audience.

To those grieving without goodbyes. And especially, to the 100,000.

More Americans lost than in the Vietnam War, more civilians dead than in the American Civil war, more than 30 times the number killed in 9/11.

To these whose deaths have gone publicly un-honored except for the 1% of names that could fit on multiple pages of the Sunday *New York Times* in 6 pt type:

...

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To Israel Sauz, 22, new father

To Nancy Ferguson, 77, true community activist

To Mario Araujo, 49, firefighter

To Lililian Kimura, 91, 13 years old in 1942 when she was incarcerated at Manzanar

To Harley Acker, 79, found his true calling driving a school bus. To Louvenia Henderson, 44, proud single mother of three

To Kamal Ahmed, 69, hotel banquet worker, Bangladeshi community leader

To Eastern Stewart, Jr. 71, veteran with a gift for peacemaking

To Valentina Blackhorse 28, aspiring leader in the Navajo nation

...

May our hearts break open.

May we listen to the truth inside us, come home to who we are.

May we "feel the weight of our feet on earth," follow the thread that "goes among the things that change."

May we seize this moment, sow the seeds of change, be warriors for justice, keep on going, "fall down/get up, fall down/get up."

We are each others' allies. We are who we've been waiting for. Let us awaken altogether.

—Jane Flint

May 24, 2020

*A Prayer for People Who Are Locked in Jails, Institutions or in Their Body or Mind*

“May all those who suffer be free from suffering.”

There are 295 countries and 7.594 billion people in this world. It is impossible to know how many of these people are locked either in jails or other type of institution. I often think of them when I start feeling impatient with the pain in my body while I sit zazen.

“May all those who suffer be free from suffering.”

*World Prison Brief* reports that they're are likely to be well over 11 million prisoners worldwide. Jarvis Masters, currently on death row at San Quentin and who became a Buddhist during his time in prison, tells that “prisoners have almost no control over their lives and no option to take the measures that would keep them safe [from Covid-19].” And a friend who has been in contact with another death row inmate at San Quentin for more than 15 years told that recently there were a few days where the prisoners were given snacks only instead of meals. If this is so in a California prison, and from reading various reports in Amnesty International or other sources, I shudder to think of other countries' prisons systems.

“May all those who suffer be free from suffering.”

Others are locked in mental health facilities, with major depressive disorder, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and others. Do they really mostly voluntarily choose this?

The diagnostic process is highly subjective. All modern societies permit involuntary treatment or involuntary commitment of mental patients. These people are almost always in the back of my mind because, as an autistic person, I could easily have been one of them.

“May all those who suffer be free from suffering.”

In many families I know in the United States and in France a relative is in a mental health institution. These events are rarely publicly discussed. As far as I can tell most have not chosen it, their parents have, or their husband or wives....If I remember correctly, Shunryu Suzuki's own daughter, Omi, was locked away and a few years after Shunryu's first wife was murdered, Omi killed herself in the locked facility.

“May all those who suffer be free from suffering.”

My final thought is for the many autistic people—and other neurodiverse individuals—who are locked in their minds, whose bodies do not express their inner reality, as well as for their loved ones and caregivers.

“May all those who suffer be free from suffering.”

—Anlor Davin

*A Prayer for Watering the Seeds of Goodness*

I pray that each and everyone of us knows that it is possible to water seeds of goodness.

Indestructible seeds that are sown into the heart of every living being and germinate in the light of awareness— both our own and that of witnessing others.

And if we do not know or keep forgetting that these seeds are there, I pray that we have the good fortune to encounter, or the clear-sightedness to reorient towards, the people and things that reflect their presence back to us.

And if we doubt that it is possible to grow these seeds into fruits such as stability, ease, contentment, integrity, patience, generosity, kindness and understanding, even under the most brutal conditions, I pray that we may take inspiration from the life stories of world-renowned people like Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King. And I pray even more deeply that we may encounter people in our families and local communities who steadfastly refuse to respond to the violence and oppression they have endured with more hatred and aggression and, in so doing, stand in and for something infinitely more powerful.

In my national and ancestral community here in Aotearoa, the land more commonly known as New Zealand since the ongoing process of European colonisation began in the 1600s, I honour Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu

Kakahi, two Maori chiefs who in 1881 led the people of the Parihaka settlement in their peaceful resistance to the forcible confiscation of their land by the British Government.

In my local, present-day community here in nearby Christchurch, I honour Farid Ahmed, a man of Islamic faith who was already living in a wheelchair and was present when Brenton Tarrant, a young Australian man holding strong white supremacist views, opened fire on the community of worship at the Al Noor Mosque on the 15th March, 2019. Losing his wife who was trying to save him and 50 other members of his community as Brenton livestreamed the massacre, Farid did not subsequently attend Brenton's sentencing in court because he knows that the liberation of his own heart and of his people will not ultimately be served by the workings of the criminal justice system. He instead chose to stay home to pray for Brenton. Speaking to a Newshub reporter about Brenton earlier this year, Farid said, "He has done horrible things. I would never support it, but I can also not ignore the fact he is a human brother. As a human brother, I have love for him and I pray to God all the time that he gets guidance."

And in my immediate family, I honour my late grandfather, Mr. Roy Buckley, whose body bore the burden of the often gruelling and sometimes hazardous living and working conditions that countless working class bodies face on a daily basis. Without knowing a thing about mind-training disciplines, he somehow knew how to carry his ailing, painful and gloriously overweight body

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with lightness and ease. And how to not let his attention wander too far from the people and things that fed his jolly, joyful heart.

I pray that we can learn to trust that we are made of the same basic stuff as these noble folks so that we have sufficient faith to keep tending our seeds throughout both the light and dark of our lives. And I pray that we can reliably access the fruits of these seeds should our circumstances ever call us to stand in and for something greater than the forces of greed, hatred and ignorance that pervade our personal and collective lives.

—Rebecca Appelhoff

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### *A Radical Way to Live*

May we, with all others, be fully engaged with life

May we take some time to laugh, to play, to gaze at the stars

May love and kindness fill our hearts

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, “My religion is kindness”

Mahatma Gandhi is known to have said, “Where there is love, there is life”

May their words be more than just a good meme

May their wisdom provide a radical way forward

May we embrace the simplicity of their path

“The simplest acts of Kindness are by far more powerful than a thousand heads bowing in prayer” —Mahatma Gandhi

“Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible” —Dalai Lama

Our Practice is our life and our life is our Practice

May Love and Kindness be the guides to our life

And may Love and Kindness be the fabric of our Practice

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May we acknowledge our destructive emotions and meet  
them with love

May we counter our anger by offering the gift of kindness

The great Mr. Rogers said,

“There are three ways to ultimate success.

The first way is to be kind

The second way is to be kind

The third way is to be kind”

And those four lads from Liverpool said,

“All You Need is Love”

May we, with the One Heart of the World, find peace,  
healing, love, and kindness in the continuous unfolding  
of Buddha’s Way.

—Bob Andrews

## *Bearing Witness: A Prayer in Seven Parts*

You are 75, bone tired, sitting on the family sofa, as night falls sensing the empty space beside you. You stretch for the phone, holding the receiver in your left hand, you dial the hospital with your other. The 24 year old nurse who is coming to the end of her 14 hour shift, holds the hospital phone to your gasping husband’s ear. “I love you, I love you, I’m right here.” He cannot answer. You say “good night” and slowly hang up the phone. You’re weeping now. The next call is from the nurse.

Amen

Your mother with dementia has been wheeled to the window of her room in the nursing home. Bushes block your way to her window. You snap off branches, push your way through to her. The glass is cold to the touch. You make a heart shape with your fingers like you saw on television yesterday, maybe some ad. Your mother is mute, expressionless, vacant. Can she even see me?

Amen

Feel your left cheek pressed against the hot, hard pavement, feel the pressure of a knee on the right side of your neck, squeezing your carotid artery, then your wind pipe. Getting harder to breathe now. Someone, something is crushing your back, men’s voices, can’t breathe. “mama help, help”: then darkness.

Amen

It’s night time, smell and taste of smoke penetrating your mask as you stand in a line of fellow officers facing the

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protesters. The fingers of your right hand clench the pepper spray gun. You scan the protesters, sirens, smoke, sound of approaching helicopter, chaos. Then you catch a glimpse of a young man among the protesters: the son of one of your neighbors. Then you hear a commend “shoot.” You aim your pepper spray gun at the ground in front of you, and pull the trigger.

Amen

You can't sleep, you are pacing, your throat is tightening, voices in your head: “win, win,” “fire him,” “don't trust” (pace, twitter), “commander-in-chief, yes, that's me, commander-in-chief” pace, twitter, pace twitter, pace, twitter...from somewhere a whisper: “I am so scared.”

Amen

You stand at where the front door of your diner used to be. Everything is flooded, blackened, burned, broken. You are broken. You turn to leave.

Amen

You, your husband, your mother and your daughter, Annie have lived a long time in a two bedroom walk-up in N.Y.C. You are experiencing the painful loss of your mother to Covid two days ago. This mid-afternoon exhausted, you collapse on the bed to take a nap. Suddenly Annie bursts in “Mama, where is Grandma! Where is whe!” “Honey, she's with God now” you answer. “Well, tell God to give her back!”

Amen, Amen, Amen

—Martha de Barros

## *Gratitude for What Amazes*

How is it that the sun comes up to light our days, followed by a moon and stars that illuminate the night sky?  
How do wildflowers appear year after year, knowing just when to bloom?

And how did each discover its own beauty?

And birds and bees. How did they learn to sing and build nests, to make honey?

Cucumbers, eggplants, apples and watermelons; lions, tigers, dogs and cats. Elephants, giraffes, mice and gophers.

We are surrounded by mystery and not knowingness

Gratitude to Nature for these miracles and for our own being-ness

For our bodies, that bring us ecstasy and pain, tastes bitter, sweet, sour and salty. Hair: curly, straight, or somewhere in between, colored black, brown, blonde or red-- which then decides, all on its very own, to turn gray, white or just fall out. For eyes that close at night and open in the morning, allowing us to see each other and the world around us

Gratitude to our noses that sneeze, snore and sniff, that let us smell a rose, a skunk, incense or fresh popcorn, to surprises like hiccups, coughs, itches, farts, goose bumps, barfs and burps,

Gratitude to our bodies that walk, skip, jump, run, float in water

to hands that hold, caress and soothe,  
to memory whether sharp or fading,

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to minds that imagine, invent, learn, wonder, dream  
and hope  
And gratitude for the vicissitudes of aging—our wrinkled  
faces, speckled hands, waning memories, thinning hair—  
though unbidden, a blessing in their own right.  
And gratitude for a voice that expresses feelings, that can  
shout, cry, laugh, yodel giggle, weep and sing  
And lastly, gratitude for a heart that beats, aches with  
sadness, bursts with joy and ever opens with love.

—Ruth White

## ■ *Meta Metta Sutta* ●

This is what should be contemplated and held lightly in  
these tumultuous ● times.  
Let one be strenuous, upright and sincere,  
Without fear, persistent in practice and joyous.  
Let one not be subsumed by the threats in our mind,  
Let one not take upon oneself the burden of one truth,  
Let one be resolute in pursuing the Dharma,  
Let one be patient sheltering at home.

May all beings be healthy. ●  
May they be joyous and live in safety.  
All living beings, whether Black or Brown, yellow  
or white,  
In mansions or bungalows or roadside tents,  
citizen or immigrant,  
cis or trans,  
police or protester,  
Democrat or Republican,  
May all beings be happy.

Let no one deceive themselves by demonizing another  
with different views.  
Let one listen, intently, to the fear and suffering expressed  
as intolerance,  
even as this causes the arising of our own greed, hate  
and delusion.

So with a boundless mind should one attempt to  
appreciate the causes and conditions that underlie  
misplaced thoughts, words and actions  
to deeply see into one another—to see the light, and the  
potential for good.

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May we use this practice, right here and now,  
to open up the heart and free the mind,  
With the realization that they are us, is you and me.

So let one practice in these times  
breathing an infinite goodwill toward the whole world,  
eating and drinking, working or resting, whether in person  
or online,  
During all one's interactions with oneself or others,  
let one follow the way ●wholeheartedly and with  
gratitude.

Not holding to fixed views,  
Returning to full awareness,  
Complete in loving-kindness, ●  
One who practices in this way will be fully engaged in the  
living and dying. ■

—Neal Shorstein

## *Everyday Zen Sangha*

### *Prayer*

We hold in our hearts the families and friends of African  
American men and women who died at the hands of  
law enforcement officers.

We hold in our hearts the people of color who have  
grown up treated as second class citizens.

We hold in our hearts people of color denied  
opportunities for a better life.

We hold in our hearts the disproportionate number of  
African Americans who live in our jails and prisons,  
some only because they could not afford competent  
legal defense.

We hold in our hearts the families of loved ones who die  
alone in quarantined hospital rooms from the covid 19  
virus.

We hold in our hearts the covid patients who said goodbye  
to their families on their iPhones.

We hold in our hearts those who have spent months alone  
confined to their homes.

We hold in our hearts the 20 million of people who are at  
great financial risk due to the sudden loss of their jobs.

We are grateful for those who dare to stand up for the  
rights of people of color to live safe and joyful lives.

## PRAYERS

We are grateful for those who have recorded violence against African Americans so the world can witness and challenge a culture of fear and hate.

We are grateful to those who wear masks and maintain social distance for the benefit of all beings.

We are grateful for the health care providers who, at great personal risk, tend to the hundreds of thousands of patients sick with covid 19 virus.

We are grateful for all those workers who support the efforts of those health care providers.

We are grateful for those who spend hours daily sewing masks and gowns for those health care workers.

We are grateful to those who at minimum wage deliver our groceries, and medicine.

We are grateful for our Buddhist practice that teaches us compassion and generosity.

We are grateful for our sangha that provides support and friendship.

—Steve Gross

## *Prayer*

- 1- Prayers to all the children and parents grappling with the uncertainties of returning to school in the coming weeks. They are faced with serious health, academic, and emotional consequences regardless of what decisions are made.
- 2- Prayers and support to our teachers who are also struggling with difficult and complex decisions weighing what is best for their students versus what is best for their own health and their families health, and how to balance that with simply making a living.
- 3- Support and prayers to all the small business owners and their employees who have lost their businesses or are struggling to hold on as the pandemic surges continue.
- 4- Gratitude and thanks to all the historians, podcasters, authors, and news media for teaching me and many of us about our deeply unjust racial and economic U.S. history starting over four centuries ago.
- 5- Thanks to the hard working investigative reporters and journalists shining the light on ongoing political and social upheavals occurring in the US and throughout the world.
- 6- Gratitude and prayers to the many legal teams who have worked tirelessly for years, and especially these past three years, to call out and prosecute the harmful and unjust attacks on environmental protection regulations, civil rights, voting rights, immigration rights, and fighting the death penalty.

## PRAYERS

7- Prayers and gratitude to the many people, especially the young people, who continue to protest against racial and economic oppression of black and brown people—your energy, passion, and commitment is a model for us all.

And an essential reminder of our gratitude and appreciation for the Earth—this colorful sphere orbiting the Sun

Gratitude to her blue oceans where life first evolved, where currents circulate and drive our climates, where phytoplankton live and generate most of our atmosphere's oxygen.

Thanks to the white clouds swirling in the atmosphere and delivering water across the planet, shading the planet's surface, and embellishing our sunsets

Gratitude and wonder to our brown rocks that provide the very ground surface we stand on, the soil all life needs, that contains the petroleum energy sources we selfishly depend on, and the landscapes we cherish

Thanks to the green plants that generate oxygen, sequester carbon dioxide, provide habitats and food, and shade our homes

Gratitude to Earth for evolving countless life forms from the earliest single-celled bacteria to trilobites, fish, mice, whales, cactus, and cottonwoods. And yes, thanks to the spiked coronavirus that has paused the chaos of humanity, crashed global economies, and is teaching us about interconnectedness, humility, and uncertainty, and is forcing us to face our ugly social inequalities.

## *Everyday Zen Sangha*

Deep gratitude to this planet, all 4.5 billion years of its existence. The enormity of this geologic time, with nine zeros after the decimal point, puts my impatience, our impatience, my suffering, our suffering in a wider perspective. Somehow, perhaps with the help of imagination, embracing geologic time softens the blow of the unspeakable transgressions humans have inflicted on the planet and on each other.

Earth has thrived without us for the vast majority of its existence and thankfully will thrive again once we are gone.

—Maya Elrick  
July 22, 2020

*Prayer*

May all children of all races, genders, tribes and nationalities be free of suffering and the causes of suffering: hunger, abandonment, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, illness, disability and living as refugees.

May all children of all races, genders, tribes and nationalities have happiness and the causes of happiness: birthdays, a loving home and family, friends, plenty of food, flowers and trees, time to play and have fun, good schools and loving teachers.

May we all grow in love and kindness toward all children.  
May we learn to cherish and care for them, find the energy and will to keep them safe and free from danger.

Just as a mother guards over her only child with her own life, let us cultivate a boundless love for all the children in the world and do whatever we can to help them thrive and flourish.

—Jane Swigart

*Prayer for Emergence*

I take refuge in Buddha, immersing body and mind deeply in the way, awakening True Mind. I take refuge in Dharma, entering deeply the merciful ocean of Buddha's Way. I take refuge in Sangha, bringing harmony to everyone, free from hindrance.

I pray that I remember that Buddha emerges from silence and stillness. May we emerge continuously from that place in our effort to be open to the boundless intense suffering of our planet. May we always work to expand the boundaries of the suffering we are able to meet and respond to. And we pray that our eyes remain always open to the suffering within us, and that we meet that peacefully, with energy and patience as well.

May we always cultivate generosity, morality, patience, vigor, mindfulness and wisdom. When hindrances arise to such practice, may we realize that we are free to drop our hindrances.

Despair often raises its head for me, these days and I may not be alone in this. I keep thinking of Mary Oliver's well known words:

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine  
Meanwhile the world goes on...

Meanwhile the wild geese...call to you (the traffic noise, police sirens, wind in the trees outdoors call to you)

Call to you...over and over...announcing your place in the family of things.

—Michael Gelfond

*Prayer For My Sangha*

May we always choose justice over racism, equality over sexism, unity over classism, and dignity for all. And may we approach those who've made another choice with warmhearted mind, realizing a great deal of pain brought them to that place.

May we know the causes of suffering so that we will know how to avoid suffering. May we greet the face we see in the mirror each morning with a warm, loving smile.

May we be able to see a tall Golden Buddha in a blade of grass so that we can experience the joy of practicing respect

This one's especially for Christopher, our Shuso. Whether it's clean or not, may we all clean the bathroom until we can do it without any idea of clean or dirty.

May we work for the things we care about in a way that will lead others to join us. May we remember that so often things in life which we regard as impediments turn out to be great good fortune.

And now for lovers of the cryptic...

If you think you're escaping, you run into yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home.

And lastly, love loves to love love.

—Laura Stillman

*Prayer for the Sangha Studying the Lotus Sutra*

I call on Maitreya. The next Buddha will be Buddha of the Sangha—

This sangha is readying itself. Having entered the way of becoming,  
may it continue on this difficult, impossible, and necessary path.

May all individuals be healthy and strong, even when sick and dying,  
each life adding to the health and strength of the whole community.

May all individuals achieve equanimity of emotions, even while fear rides rampant and anger rages unchecked,  
each effort supporting the equanimity of the whole community.

May all individuals achieve liberation of mind, even while disturbing thoughts and horrifying images intrude,  
letting go what does not serve the freedom of the whole community.

May all individuals open their hearts fully, even to difficult people and enemies,  
relinquishing all labels and categories of others—no them—  
strengthening the ties among us without limiting what is us, who is us,  
opening, fully, to oneness.

## PRAYERS

May all individuals find faith in the Way we have chosen,  
even while knowing we can never understand what it is  
we seek to understand,  
but in our searching can find each other.  
And know love for all beings.

May our sangha join hands with all sanghas past present  
and future.  
May we develop skillful means to help all beings awaken,  
beginning with becoming compassionate listeners,  
attuned to every word, spoken and not spoken, hearing  
the heart.  
One by one by one by one.  
May we ourselves be released from suffering, awaken, one  
by one, one with one, all together.

What is the taste of the Tathagatha's words?  
Innumerable flower petals floating down upon us?  
The 80,000 bodhisattvas among whom we sit?  
The carriage drawn by the immaculate white oxen waiting  
for us to board?  
The Great Unrecognizable that has lifted us up, revealed  
itself, and set us right?

We will try to save all beings and we will fail.  
We will try to save a few and we will fail.  
We will try to save ourselves and we will fail.  
And for that reason, may we banish all doubts, including  
the flicker of last doubts,  
and redouble our efforts together, persist in saving  
all beings,  
joyfully studying the Lotus Sutra.

## *Everyday Zen Sangha*

Maitreya, bless us, as we bless you, and bless all beings  
everywhere.

—Pamela Reitman  
October 21, 2020

## PRAYERS

### *Prayer for the Times*

As we attempt to comprehend and to hold the collective pain and grief brought on by Covid and the racial injustice and oppression born of white supremacy,  
We pray for healing and peace.

As we see families torn apart and separated by sickness and death, unable to be by the sides of those they love in their final hours,  
We pray for the love that binds.

As we listen to a 12 year old black boy sing from his wounded heart  
“I just want to live”  
We pray our ears, eyes, minds and hearts open fully and remain so.

As we witness the bravery and commitment of hundreds of thousands of healthcare workers,  
We honor them all and pray for their health and well-being.

As we hold the weight of the untimely deaths of Ahmaud Abery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and way too many other Black lives, the crushing weight of 400 years of suffocation of Black, Brown and Native Americans,  
We pray for the end of these injustices.

We pray for the strength, wisdom and courage to create a better world for all, for this earth and all that inhabit it.

“We hold these truths to be self evident...”

—Christopher Dumbleton

### *Prayers and Praises*

Prayers and praises for all human beings who are struggling to tap whatever inner and outer resources we can find to help ourselves and our communities through these dark times.

Prayers and praises for the lawyers who relentlessly fight for justice and equality—especially for lawyers who are working night and day to reunite children and parents who have been so brutally separated at our borders.

Prayers and praises for every African American who has survived hellish centuries of American racism. And for people of all colors who have persevered despite discrimination, injustice and inequality.

Prayers and praises for every white person who is willing to recognize and take responsibility for our collusion, conscious and unconscious, in perpetrating racism.

Prayers and praises for musicians who compose and perform music that our feet cannot resist and so we must dance. Prayers and praises for poets who open our perspectives on the suffering and confusion of being human and reveal its hidden beauty.

Prayers and praises for the comedians who take the madness and heartlessness of our current president and transform it with their wit and fearlessness into jokes, cartoons and skits that make us laugh. Yes, let us be grateful for each smile, chuckle and belly laugh.

## PRAYERS

Prayers and praises for people of all ages who are working to protect the coming election and our democracy with calls, postcards, letters, money, songs, zoom meetings, texts, emails and prayers.

Prayers and praises for the redwoods who comfort and inspire us with their strength, silence, dignity and beauty.

Prayers and praises for the sun that returns every morning to shine upon the earth regardless of what we humans have released into the atmosphere.

Prayers and praises for the earth who remains receptive to the sun's blessings regardless of what we humans have released into the atmosphere.

Prayers and praises for our beautiful planet that is suffering  
In ways we never could have imagined. May we pray each day for some wisdom, some miracle, some collective shift in consciousness that can preserve and restore what remains of the natural world.

Prayers and praises for every act of tenderness, kindness, unselfishness, caring, gratitude and generosity. Let us pray that they will exponentially increase.

—Naomi Newman

## *Prayers for a Divided Nation*

Blessings on the red states, and the blue states, and the purple states.

And on the people of the red, blue, and purple states.

Blessings on the citizens and the non-citizens,

the documented and the undocumented,

the incarcerated, the formerly incarcerated, and the

not-yet incarcerated.

May they be happy, may they be peaceful, may they be free.

Prayers for the enfranchised, and the disenfranchised, and the not-yet enfranchised.

For the citizens who go to their polling places and the ones who vote by mail.

For the ones who wait in line for hours and the ones who are dropped from the rolls.

Blessings on the used-to-be voters and the not-yet voters,

On the undecided voters and the ones who don't think their vote matters,

And on the people who want to vote but can't.

May they be honored, may they be represented, may their rights be protected.

Blessings on the people who are making signs and the people who are in the streets.

And the ones who are in their study groups.

And the ones who are writing letters.

And the ones who are volunteering their time.

And the ones who are giving of their resources.

May they join together, may they learn from one another, and may they make a difference.

## PRAYERS

Blessings on all the people,  
Of the north and the south and the east and the west,  
Of the plains and the mountains and the coasts and the  
swamps.  
Prayers for the listeners of NPR and the listeners of Fox  
news,  
For the followers of Rachel Maddow and the followers of  
Rush Limbaugh.  
May they open their hearts, may they open their minds,  
may they find ways to be in community and to repair the  
nation.

For everyone within these borders and beyond these  
borders.  
May they be happy, may they be peaceful, may they be free.

—Cynthia Schrager

## *Everyday Zen Sangha*

*These thoughts were inspired by the teachings of Suzukl Rochi,  
Norman Fischer, Move On.org., Ruth Bader Ginsberg and James  
Joyce.*

### *Prayer for Seeing Goodness and Bee-living*

Beloveds everywhere and especially our beloved  
community

May we relax and deeply feel the true vision of our hearts

We are surrounded everywhere by pure, deep, authentic  
goodness

Let us open our heart's eye which feels and includes  
everything

- how many fixated views have been loosened by Sue's amazing writing
- how many lives and families comforted and peaceful passings brought by what Martha has founded and nourished
- how many people ravaged by AIDS were embraced, healed, loved by Jaune's gallant work
- how many people worldwide have met the Dharma and entered the path through the talks recorded and distributed by John
- how many young lives and minds of wonder were opened by Kathie's decades of dedicated teaching
- how many lives were warmed, delighted, illuminated by the wondrous art of Naomi
- how much sight improved by Neal's tender care

## PRAYERS

- how many families sheltered by our Shuso's decades of work
- how many students were met and encouraged by the sensitive support of Rondi
- all of us are here tonight in this configuration because of the endless diligence of Andrea
- how many people has Robin nourished by her delicious food, kind words and warm friendship
- how much pure fun, warm camaraderie and deep relationship has Jeff brought over his decades of service
- how many families have been reconciled and children protected by Judith's watchful love
- how much communication and access provided by Laura's diligent work
- how many have found their way, felt deeply included and known by Chris's life-giving Dharma
- how much calmness and clarity and care does Jane bring even to our gathering tonight
- how many families at the bedside have been loved and grounded and released by Ren
- what immense fields of practice made possible by the careful attention of Mary Ann and Steve
- and whether or not he knows to believe in his own mind, how many lives, communities, even nations have been turned toward the light by Norman's unstoppable all-pervading commitment

Your name goes here

Perhaps our hearts have lost track of the written announcement (better than the verbal ones of the Lotus Sutra) of our Buddhahood inked on a piece of white silk that includes our Buddha name—you may be wearing it tonight

## *Everyday Zen Sangha*

And maybe we have forgotten to notice that being unaware of our deep goodness, our Buddhahood, in no way prevents us from awakening the same goodness in others

We really don't have to go here and there for practice or follow long dusty roads away from home as these embodiments of compassion keep engulfing us from all these sources

May our delusions end

- that we are far away from goodness—that mountains and rivers are blocking contact with our radiant expression of it
- may we be liberated from the delusion that we have to earn our way or that our self criticizing, self doubting thoughts are any more than thoughts

Maybe we are ready to relax into goodness being us

May we awaken to our true nature as bees

We are covered with the pollen of goodness, from all that we have received, and we bring it to every person, place, being that we encounter

And we come together in our hive tonight—each one in their own hive cell, distinct in contribution, united in making the honey that nurtures future generations, bee-ings yet to come—honey that is made from the goodness we gather, the goodness we spread that's then gathered by others in a beginningless and endless cycle

## PRAYERS

For the sake of all who have come before us and for all of us sharing the busy, buzzy global hive and those who will receive the honey in the future, we bring our full bee-ing

—James Flaherty

## *Everyday Zen Sangha*

### *A Prayer*

This is a prayer for our times, times of great hope and times of great fear.

May we be ever grateful for all the blessings we share together. We share something with everyone, even if its only our ability to breathe. May we find something in common, even with those we disagree with.

May we be open to loving ourselves, with all our faults as well as our good points. Consider our strengths as possible weaknesses and accept ourselves in totality.

May we open our hearts to all those who are suffering realizing that fear of this pandemic can be as debilitating as Covid itself.

May we realize the vastness of our open hearts, the vastness that has room for everyone.

This is strangest of times, as Dickens said “It is the best of times and the worst of times.” There is great promise just around the corner; a time of great hope, of mending and of the opportunity to do something, anything for our planet.

Finally, may we all enjoy our Thanksgiving with a heart of great gratitude.

—Jishi Jeff Bickner

## PRAYERS

### *We Pray*

We pray tonight for George Floyd, for his family and his friends, and for all who were affected by his brutal killing, in ever widening circles, big enough to wrap around the world.

George Floyd is the name of one man who was murdered nine days ago, and today the name of George Floyd stands also for the countless innocent Black people who have been wounded or killed by white racist violence, both structural and personal.

May George Floyd rest in peace. May we who are alive not rest in peace while such hatred and racism hold sway in our country.

We pray for our hearts to keep breaking, as we understand that we are all one family.

May we reach out to each other, and may we find ways to hold each other, even in this pandemic time when we can't hold each with our arms of flesh.

May we have the courage to break down the walls of our privilege and enter the suffering beyond, even in this pandemic time when we shelter in place to protect ourselves and others.

We pray for broken hearts; we pray for a willingness to feel uncomfortable, even though we are not used to it.

May our practice remind us of the joy of our deep connection.

## *Everyday Zen Sangha*

May we trust our good intentions.

May we have the imagination to work for change even when it seems impossible.

May we add our voices to the great up-rising of the many voices now insisting on change.

May we love and care for ourselves and each other, even when we hesitate, even when our courage falters.

May our practice of stillness and attention, in our precious sangha and at home, nourish our action in support of our suffering world.

—Sue Moon

## PRAYERS

### *Eko*

May we awaken Buddha's compassion and luminous  
mirror wisdom,  
Chanting the Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo for  
Protecting Life,  
we dedicate the merit, and wholeheartedly devote and  
entrust ourselves:

to seeing each person and thing as a shining jewel in  
the vast web of interconnection,  
to hearing each sound as the cry of the universe calling  
us to wake up to love,  
and to knowing the ancient pulse of the one heartbeat  
of the world in the turnings of day and night,  
and in the planet's vibrant life force manifest in the  
radiant light and ever deepening dark of these  
autumn days.

It is us and we are it.

And in these times we especially dedicate and devote our  
hearts and our Bodhisattva vow:

to the quarter million Americans who have died from  
the coronavirus, with no sure end in sight,  
to all those who have died, and are suffering  
everywhere in this worldwide pandemic,  
and to the fear, helplessness and heartbreak of their  
loved ones.

May we collectively ignite our intention to not turn away.

## *Everyday Zen Sangha*

To the well being of the earth, our home, and to all  
animate and inanimate beings caught in a growing web  
of climate events that threaten our very survival.  
May we work to restore peace and balance and commit  
ourselves daily to the healing of our world and the  
welfare of all beings.

To all those seen and unseen, the health care workers and  
essential workers, who are risking their lives to save us.  
May we cultivate and actively express thanks for their  
profound and life sustaining generosity.

To those experiencing the pain and division of racial and  
socioeconomic disparity,  
and to all ensnared in circumstances beyond their control  
who are struggling to survive.  
May we find the courage to ensure that everyone receive  
what they need to be happy and to thrive.

With full and tender hearts we bow with gratitude to this  
path of living with and for all beings.

May all Beings find peace and healing through  
Buddha's Way.

—Chris Fortin

