At this center, everyone who has become a member wears a robe for sittings. Part of the "Entering the Gate" ceremony, in which one formally enters the Sangha, includes putting on the robe for the first time (aside from trying it on).

At the Zen Center of Denver, the regular robes are brown. Those who have entered the Lotus-in-the-Flame Lay Order wear a rakusu in addition to the robe. Those who have become fully ordained members of the Lay Order wear black robes, as does one who has become ordained as a priest. In other Zen centers, it is the reverse. The regular members wear black robes and the ordained people wear brown. In still other centers, everyone wears black. At the Rochester Zen Center, the ordained people wear blue robes. So the color or the style of the robe doesn’t seem to matter much.

Why all this? Why do we wear the robe when we sit? The wearing of robes, headdresses, feathered capes, pendants, bracelets, earrings, tattoos as outward signs of religious belief and practice is as old as religion itself. And yet there are many Zen centers and other Buddhist groups that have abandoned the use of the robe. There are many groups that have never used them. There are good people in our center who are content to continue indefinitely as Friends. They sit without robes and have no wish for further involvement. This is fine. The Center is open to anyone who wishes to sit with us and who undergoes the minimal half-hour of training offered on Tuesday evenings.

By the time someone asks to become a member of the Zen Center of Denver, they have been sitting here a while and have imbibed much of the spirit of this sangha. The ceremony of Entering the Gate is really an acknowledgement of a change that has already happened. So in one sense putting on the robe is no big deal. Are robes then an anachronism? Are they just a holdover from an obsolete monastic tradition that has no place in a post-modern world? No, in the circumstances in which we live and practice, the robe is more important than ever.

As lay practitioners, we disappear into the marketplace outside the temple. A person who advances in the way is an ordinary person. But within the temple it is therefore doubly important to be clear with our practice and with ourselves. Taking the robe is making an explicit and public statement of our commitment.

Once you have entered the gate and donned the robe, when you come to the temple, you no longer just walk into the zendo and take a seat. You go to the changing room and put on the robe. There is a profound difference. Taking the robe sets you apart. It's not a matter of joining some elite group, it is not an ego thing: "Look at me, I get to wear a robe."

Putting on the robe is an act of deep humility and an act of courage. The Buddha left the palace, his home, his family, cut off his hair and donned a monk's robe. In this, he gave up everything. His commitment to the practice was total relinquishment. Taking the robe is an act of relinquishment.

Each time you put on the robe, you enter the gate and renew your commitment to practice. Putting on the robe is practice. Practice is putting on the robe.
Committees

We have several committees, made up of hardworking, selfless individuals. Much of the work is done behind the scenes and, as is typical in organizations relying on volunteers, the bulk of the work is done by a few. There are several committees that could use a little more help, and if you can take part in any of the activities listed below, please contact the office.

Altar: Needs more volunteers to replace fruit and flowers and participate in the overall care of the altars (e.g., clean incense pots, replace candles, replenish matches, incense, dowsing water and dust altars). The altars need care once every week. Francine Campone is the Chair, and if you have interest in learning how to make flower arrangements, she is happy to provide you with instruction. A sign up sheet is maintained, and posted on the bulletin board in the main entry, and the duties are performed on a rotating or periodic basis.

Housekeeping: This committee does a variety of cleaning tasks around the temple. It currently does not have a chair, and if you are interested in being its chair, please contact the office. An extensive list of cleaning projects is posted on the refrigerator in the kitchen.

Kitchen: The kitchen committee would love to have two or three volunteers to help with preparing tea and cookies on Sunday mornings, cleanup after tea and cookies on Sunday mornings, and making soup for events such as zazenkais and seminars. Contact Susan Bridle through the office if you’re interested. A sign-up sheet will be posted in the kitchen so you can sign-up for kitchen duties on specific days. Gassho! Susan B.

Office: The office would appreciate hearing from people who are skilled in graphic art and QuickBooks software. The need for these skills would be on an occasional basis. Please notify the office if you are willing to volunteer, so that when the need arises, you can be contacted directly.

Seminars: Introduction to Zen seminars are currently offered three times a year (January, April and October). George Mathews and Hoag Holmgren are the coordinators. The volunteer needs are soup maker, tenzo, and three helpers per seminar. A call for volunteers is sent via e-mail prior to each seminar or you can sign up on the sheet posted in the office. The next seminar is October 11.

Snow Removal: Those willing to assist with sidewalk snow removal are greatly appreciated. The north side (Speer Blvd.) is particularly important to keep clear as it quickly turns to ice, and becomes dangerous for those who use the sidewalk.

Use of Facility: Periodically the Use of Facility committee reviews and approves the use of our center to outside groups. A volunteer or two may be needed to assist the group meet needs they have (open the door, finding a table or locating the kitchen and restrooms, etc.) and act as an overseer around security issues. It is agreed that the volunteer can attend the event at no cost. These events consist of activities such as concerts, workshops, and meditation days. Currently the volunteer pool is in need of a few more people willing to be contacted when these events arise.

Yard: Connie Lane chairs the yard committee, and the need for volunteers is seasonal. In the spring, much work is done preparing the grounds for summer growth. Throughout the summer there is a need for lawn mowers (once per week), those willing to water plants that do not get reached by our automatic sprinkler system, and some weeding and trim work. A sign up sheet is posted on the bulletin board at the main entry. In the fall, some raking is needed.

Dana brightens and clarifies the Dharma, the Buddha Way, and with continued unfolding it brings natural authority for more brightening and clarifying.
--Aitken Roshi
from The Morning Star
Sangha Meeting and Board Elections

There will be Board of Directors elections at the next Sangha meeting scheduled on November 2 at 8:00 a.m. There are three members whose first terms expire in November, and they are eligible for a second term. They are Francine Campone, Geoff Keeton (Treasurer) and Eric Wolf. Josh Mather is also eligible for a second term, however, he will not be seeking re-election as he is pursuing a graduate degree out of town. A nominating committee is being formed as this goes to print. Please watch for notices regarding the make up of that committee, so that you know who to contact with your nomination (you can nominate yourself as well as others). If you are unable to attend the Sangha meeting, please give your proxy to a member who will be attending. A majority of the members residing within 100 miles of the Denver metropolitan area must be present in person or represented by proxy to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the members.

Talks and Discussions

The fall ango talks and discussions will be on the seven factors of enlightenment. The first one is scheduled on November 11 beginning at 7:00 p.m. with two rounds of zazen. Roshi will provide an overview on that evening, and subsequent talks and discussions will cover each factor individually. The seven factors of enlightenment are: mindfulness, effort and energy, investigation, rapture, concentration, tranquility, and equanimity. The order in which they are presented may vary depending on the resource you use. In this case, the resource is *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom* by Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield.

Dokusan Schedule

Monday Evenings: Karin Kempe, Sensei
Tuesday Mornings: Karin Kempe, Sensei
Tuesday Evenings: Danan Henry Roshi & Peggy Sheehan, Sensei
Wednesday Mornings: Ken Morgareidge, Sensei
Thursday Mornings: Danan Henry, Roshi
Thursday Evenings: Danan Henry, Roshi & Ken Morgareidge, Sensei
Friday Mornings: Peggy Sheehan, Sensei

"....I want to beg you, as much as I can, dear sir, to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."

Rainer Maria Rilke
*Letters to a Young Poet*
Zen Center of Denver
3101 West 31st Ave.
Denver, CO 80211