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February 2026 Newsletter

Dear Dharma Friends:

I hope that all is well.

As we enter February, we do so having just successfully completed our Midwinter Chanting; offered together at the coldest and quietest point of the year. For me there is something deeply meaningful about practicing together at this time.

If we think about it, for most, Midwinter is not seen as a season of growth, and yet, while nothing appears to be changing, importantly, everything is being prepared.

For, when we chant together in midwinter, we are not trying to make something special happen. We are simply standing together (Itai Doshin), allowing our hearts, our breath, and our intention to come into rhythm, with one another, and with life itself.

This is a very important action to take in a world that often feels fragmented and hurried, this shared rhythm matters.

For:

When we slow down together...

When we offer our voices together...

When we align ourselves not with our preferences, but with our Bodhisattva vow... something settles.

And later on, when circumstances soften, when clarity appears, or when difficult relationships shift, it can feel almost miraculous.

Yet, upon reflection what has truly changed is our coherence with all life. We have changed, and so things have changed for us.

Unfortunately, for so many in our world today, most of life is lived out of sync — rushing ahead, pulling away, constant competition and comparison, reacting from habit or fear.

Midwinter practice reminds us, despite this reality, how to stand **inside life**, rather than against it.

This is why Midwinter practice, and importantly our daily practice matters.

Not because winter or daily challenges suddenly disappear.

But because we remember, even in the cold, even in the challenge, that the Great Life still pulses within us and that we are not separate from its boundless power.

In fact, in President Niwano's February guidance he invites us to learn from the poet Kenji Miyazawa, whose life and words remind us that our Buddhist practice, and this boundless power is not something separate from everyday life, it is everyday life, when lived with active compassion and care.

Yes, many of us know Miyazawa's poem that begins, "*Undefeated by the rain...*" But what is most striking is not its literary beauty alone — but the power in its direction.

Again and again, the poem says simply: "**Go**" and engage.

*To the east, if a child is sick — **go and care for her.***

*To the west, if a mother is tired — **go and shoulder her burden.***

*To the south, if someone is near death — **go and tell him not to be afraid.***

*To the north, if people are arguing — **go and help them stop.***

Really, no heroic gestures.

Just a person, like you and me, paying attention and responding with the power of the Great Life, which is truly at each of ours' disposal.

President Niwano reminds us by pointing to Kenji Miyazawa, that this is what it means to truly live as a Bodhisattva in the real world.

Not by withdrawing from life, and not by becoming exceptional beings, but by **meeting life where it is**, with sincerity and courage.

For me, this teaching lands especially deeply in February.

Mysteriously, Winter has not yet released its grip. The cold still lingers. Energy can feel low. Patience can wear thin. And yet, this is often when we are most aware of one another, when small acts of care matter most.

Our Midwinter Chanting was not an escape from these conditions. It was a way of standing inside them together allowing our hearts to settle, our intentions to align, and our awareness to widen. And that our daily chanting, going forward, prepares us to *see*. And that seeing prepares us to *go*.

Indeed, last February (2025), we reflected on learning to meet one another with reverence in ordinary moments, in our conversations, our homes, and our shared spaces.

This February gently invites us to take a half a step more, and remember, if all of life is part of the **Great Life**, then nothing we encounter stands outside what is sacred, not exhaustion, not conflict, not transition, not the quiet needs of those that appear right in front of us, and that every encounter reveals this Truth.

Kenji Miyazawa's Poem and its vow, are importantly really not about fixing the world. Rather, it is about showing up in an active and often chaotic world without turning away.

So, as I end, perhaps this is our quiet invitation of February:

Not to do more.

Not to strive harder.

But to simply notice, not to turn away, and go.

To go where life is asking for us to go, gently and sincerely, carrying forward the rhythm we touch in front of our home altars and in our prayers. For as we know, everywhere we are, is a place of the way.

Well enough for now, thank you so much for your prayers and actions on behalf of a better world.

Wishing you the very best always!

We Are One.

Rev. James Hiroshi Lynch
Minister RKNY

