



# Berkeley Zen Center



## November 2006 Newsletter

### Let's Talk About Our Ethics Statement

By BZC Board President Peter Overton (based on a zendo talk he gave on October 7)

I would like to invite everyone into a conversation which has been taking place within the Sangha for a couple of years, focusing on revisions of our Ethics Statement.

This discussion is now entering a new phase after the Board's adoption of a revised Ethics Statement on October 1. I am pleased that the Board's deliberations have concluded, and I now look forward to engaging with the wider community in dialogue about the Statement (in various forums) as a way to enliven our community life and practice. In fact, our upcoming "Aspects of Practice" will focus on a number of the issues which were prominent in the discussion of the Ethics Statement.

The impetus for an Ethics Statement revision came from several situations arising in the Sangha where appropriate boundaries in student/teacher relationships seemed to have not been observed, and where useful guidelines for informal resolution of disputes within the Sangha were absent or not effective. The situations I allude to have since been resolved, but the outcomes prompted a number of us to realize that greater clarity in these guidelines was necessary.

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#### Affirmation of Welcome

Walking the path of liberation, we express our intimate connection with all beings. Welcoming diversity, here at Berkeley Zen Center the practice of Zazen is available to people of every race, nationality, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and physical ability. May all beings realize their true nature.

### BZC Schedule November

#### Founders Ceremony

Thursday, 11-2, 6:20 pm

Friday, 11-3, 6:40 am

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 11-4, 9:30 am

#### Half-Day Sesshin

Sunday, 11-5

#### Kidzendo

Saturday, 11-25

#### One-Day Sitting/ End Aspects of Practice

Saturday, 11-18

#### Rohatsu Sesshin

Monday-Sunday, 11-27 to 12-3

### December

#### Suzuki Roshi Memorial

Friday, 12-1, 8:00 pm

#### Buddha Enlightenment

Saturday, 12-2

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 12-9, 9:30 am

#### Kidzendo

Saturday, 12-16

#### Winter Break

12-18 to 12-31

#### New Year's Eve Sitting and Party

12-31

**Schedule Note:** Monday, December 4, a.m. zazen will be informal. Formal zazen resumes on Dec. 4 in the evening. Although Suzuki Roshi Memorial and Buddha Enlightenment ceremonies occur during Rohatsu, all sangha members are invited. Look at bulletin board for details.

## Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. The cost is \$5 per family. Note that the childcare schedule is tentative.

Childcare is not offered if no one's planning to come, so please call Laurie Senauke the Thursday before to let her know if you're hoping to attend. For more information, call Laurie at 845-2215.



### SCHEDULE

November 4	Childcare
November 11	Childcare
November 18	Sesshin – no program
November 25	<b>Kidzendo</b>
December 2	Sesshin – no program
December 9	Childcare
December 16	<b>Kidzendo</b>
December 23	Interim – no program
December 30	Interim – no program

### KIDZENDO

A talk in the zendo for young ones three and up is offered on the third Saturday of each month (or the fourth Saturday if a sesshin is scheduled on the third). We meet upstairs at the Senauke's household (1933 Russell) for a briefing on forms at about 9:45, then sojourn down to the zendo for the first 10 minutes of lecture starting at 10:10. Afterwards, children may join the regular Saturday childcare program if they wish.

## Soji

If you come to Saturday morning zazen, and stay for breakfast, you should plan on staying for Soji, the short work period after. Eating and cleaning up go together as two sides of one practice.

And a related Soji request, from Sojun Roshi, on behalf of the weekly jikidos: They request that 2-3 people stay in the zendo during Soji after morning zazen during the week to brush off all the zabutons and fluff all the zafus. This will make the job a bit easier for those who come during the week to clean.

## Sewing Buddha's Robe

If you are interested in preparing for Lay Ordination next year, sewing classes start in the last half of January. Classes are open to those who have asked their teacher if they may participate. Before the winter break (mid-December), please speak with Sojun Mel Weitsman. After you speak with your teacher, promptly contact sewing teacher Jean Selkirk. Check the bulletin board for further announcements.

## Returning to Buddha During Oriyoki

### *Food for Thought*

There is a custom (not a rule) whereby your oriyoki practice can be a vehicle for "returning to Buddha". Traditionally, the first bowl is considered the Buddha bowl and is symbolic of the receptacle for receiving alms. The second and third are viewed as condiments. When eating, we first take from the Buddha bowl, then we take a bit from the second. We then return to the Buddha bowl, eat a bit, and then pick up the third bowl. Then we return to the first bowl, and so on. If you leave a morsel of food in the first bowl to end your eating, one could say you began and ended your meal with Buddha. Given that the bowls descend in size, their relative capacities will facilitate this. Try it next time and see how it tastes.

## Ongoing Well-Being List Revealed

Many people wonder about the folks on the well-being list whose names are recited during service twice a week. If you placed someone on this list and would like to share information about that person with the sangha, look for the new binder entitled, "The Merit of our Well-being Services is Dedicated to," on the patio bulletin board shelf. Information, a picture, or anything else you would like to share can be left there for all to see.



## Rohatsu Sesshin

**R**ohatsu Sesshin begins at 5:00 AM, Monday, November 27 and ends at 3:30 PM, Sunday, December 3 (all other days end at 9:10 pm). Attendance requirement is a minimum of three days. Turn in registration forms to the Sesshin Director's mail slot by Wednesday, November 22, to verify that you are sitting. Turning them in sooner helps with planning. Carefully consider your intention, so that cancellations occur only for illness and emergencies. If you have questions about sesshin or sesshin attendance, speak with the Sesshin Director, Bob Rosenbaum, 601-0454, before 9 pm (brosenbaum1@mac.com).

Leave jewelry, scents, cell phones, watches, and pagers at home. Bring clothes to sit in and to work in. The sitting fee is \$25/day for dues-paying Members and Friends and \$30/day for others. Leave checks marked "Rohatsu" in the kitchen porch door donation slot. Please pay in advance.

If this is your first multi-day sesshin, please contact the Sesshin Director. It is helpful to participate in a one-day sesshin first. If you plan to stay at BZC over night, contact the BZC Shika (to be announced; check the sign up sheet).

## Oryoki Instruction

Oryoki instruction will be offered Saturday, Nov. 25, 11:30 am in the zendo. Both beginners and people with experience are encouraged to attend. Any questions contact Marie Hopper,

## Praying for Peace

We have begun dedicating our evening service on Wednesdays to world peace. We are chanting the Metta Prayer, which Maylie Scott wrote, and the En Mei Jukku, with an eko of dedication provided by Alan. May all beings know no one as an enemy. May no one suffer from war, hunger or indignity. May our mutual understanding heal the earth and ourselves.

## SAVE THE DATES

### Estates and Trust Planning Informational Gathering

In response to requests made at the Planned Giving Meeting sponsored by the BZC Board in June, the Board will be offering a follow-up meeting on Sunday, November 12 at 2 pm. A local wills and estate lawyer will join us for an educational seminar and to answer general questions, from sangha members on estate planning, wills and trusts. Refreshments will add to the enjoyment of our time together. Watch the bulletin board for details. If you have questions, contact John Rubin, 339-7068 or Andrea Thach, 420-0902.

### Board of Directors Meeting

The next BZC Board of Directors meeting is Sunday, December 10, 9:00 am, in the Community Room. All sangha members are invited to attend.

### Jikidos Needed

Twice every week, the zendo is given a thorough cleaning by sangha members who sign up for a specific week. It doesn't take long, since the space is already so clean! There's plenty of room on the sign-up sheet (back porch of Community Room). Head Jikido Shelley Brock (sybrock@earthlink.net) will be thrilled to give you a quick training. This is a wonderful way to support our temple and experience the quiet peace of the zendo. You may sign up as an individual or team up, either to work together, or to split the week.

*motes cling to blue  
dust broom, then shimmer, shaken over  
cool morning grass*

**Shelley Brock**



# Let's Talk About Our Ethics Statement

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As I was recently considering all of this, some basic questions arose for me: Why do we have an Ethics Statement? What need does it serve? One response is that the Statement is a way for us, as a Sangha and semi-public institution, to act responsibly in representing where we stand on ethical issues, and to deal with problems as they arise.

But more importantly, we are doing what Buddhist communities have always done; formulate expressions of the precepts which are



specific to the circumstances and culture of a particular community at a particular time. Our ethics statement can be seen as an expression of the 16

Bodhisattva precepts. So the Statement is both an explanatory document as well as an expression of Buddha's teaching.

**A**s I was preparing my talk, I looked into some of the early commentary on the minor precepts as preserved in Theravadin tradition. It is important to note that all of these "rules" focus on how Sangha members are connected to the wider community, and how they are connected to each other. Our ethics statement is intended to support the continuity and vitality of the community. But in order for it to be useful, we need to view it as the way we are connected, rather than as "rules" which we can either succeed or fail at following. The overwhelming tendency in our American culture is to relate to the latter perspective, which quickly devolves into apportioning blame to oneself or others when behavior deviates from the "rules."

So I am hoping that our wider discussion of these issues will shed light on the ways in which we are connected; how we can support each other's practice, how we feel as we speak, what needs of ours we can make clear to others, and what can we request of each other. I also think that it will help to remember that our Sangha is extremely unusual from the perspective of

Buddhist history, insofar as we are a predominantly lay practice community where women and men practice together. We need to accept that the precepts we develop will deal with sorts of relationships well beyond the monastery walls in which Buddhist practice mainly developed.

**I**n 21st century America, in a predominantly Judeo-Christian cultural scene, with a certain Berkeleyish post-modern twist to it, we are working out how we are connected through perceived differences (to name a few) in status, power, gender, and sexuality. For instance, in the long discussion of how to delineate appropriate boundaries in teacher/student relationships, consideration has been given to the problems of people of unequal status and power in the Sangha when they become involved sexually. There have been no catastrophic outcomes of such relationships in our immediate Sangha, but the recent history of American Zen groups is filled with discouraging, less fortunate, instances.



Raul Moncayo spoke on this general topic in a recent Monday talk, offering perspective on different models for dealing with sexuality in unequal power relationships that we are familiar with: therapist/client, teacher/student (academic), and supervisor/supervisee (at work). In each of these, our culture and society is working toward an appropriate balance, personal autonomy, and social responsibility. Of course, in the therapist/client context, the boundaries are very clearly drawn, and are even now sanctioned by the law. In each of these settings, there is a certain bottom line, based on the aims and goals of the people involved. From this perspective, our Sangha's priorities are to promote each individual's continuity and deepening of practice.

The relationships between teachers and students at BZC are complex, primarily because we embrace the notion that "everyday life is the

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## Ethics Statement

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way," in a practice setting that often brings teachers and students together in formal and casual ways. Certain aspects of these relationship (such as power and sexuality) are pervasive, though they may not be obvious in informal relationships.

Therefore, we have concluded, as stated in our revised Ethics Statement, that priests and senior students who give lectures and offer practice instruction, will refrain from sexual relationships with Sangha members. Also, recognizing that situations may arise in which people will find themselves wishing to pursue such relationships, we provide for a process of review of the priest's or senior student's role in the community under these circumstances. The aim of such a process is not to punish, but to support and encourage everyone involved, the individuals who wish to form a relationship, and the Sangha generally. I would like to emphasize here that there are numerous examples of how strong relationships between partners, married or not, are a great benefit to the Sangha.

I am hoping that we will open to this discussion in a frank and warmhearted spirit, knowing that as we enter into dialogue we may differ, and that each of us "has each other's back" so to speak. It will help to remember that what we are talking about is how we are connected.

**NOTE:** The BZC Newsletter invites sangha members to submit short articles or other items of interest. Send to: [ehertzog@lmi.net](mailto:ehertzog@lmi.net). Deadline is the 20th of the month.



# PEOPLE

Nine deep bows (in the kitchen and the zendo!) to **Karen Sundheim** and **Alexandra Frappier** for two years devotedly doing the Tenzo practice position. Taking over from them are long time BZC students **Peter Carpentieri** and **Paul Ridgway**. In the realm of "cascading transitions," we also want to thank Peter for his stint as Kitchen Keeper; taking over for him is **Nancy McClellan**. Paul is passing on the Librarian position to **Greta Pearson**. Karen is now a Practice Leader, and Alexandra will become one of the Practice Committee "members-at-large".

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Many thanks to **Dean Bradley** for surmounting numerous obstacles to finish the shed/deck project on the back entrance to 1933. And to Project Manager **Greg Denny** for construction on the inside of the shed. We're glad to have this key element of our garden storage available again.

\* \* \*

**Jake Van Akkeren** has been overseeing oryoki instruction at BZC for a few years; taking over for him in this role is **Marie Hopper**; thanks to both.

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And a final deep bow to our boundlessly productive Sewing Teacher, **Jean Selkirk** (also our Audio Archivist). Jean has done so much to organize, explain, and share the wonderful practice of Nyoho-e sewing, which has been passed on to us by our women ancestors in Japan, via **SFZC Abbess Blanche Hartman**.

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