



Berkeley Zen Center



June 2009 Newsletter

Lay Ordination

This year's lay ordination ceremony — *zaike tokudo* — will take place on **Saturday, June 13 in the zendo at 3 pm**. Receiving lay ordination from Sojun Roshi are Denise Forest, Matt Gillam, Deborah Good, and Veronica Reilly. Hozan Alan Senauke will offer ordination to Vince Nocito, Katherine Ogburn, and Jason Straub. Catherine Galloway will receive precepts from Shosan Victoria Austin. Congratulations in advance to all who have been studying and sewing assiduously with our sewing teacher Jean Selkirk.

A reception in the BZC courtyard will follow the ceremony.

Practice Period Dinner & Skit Night

On Saturday, June 6, beginning at 6 pm, the cooks, singers, poets, and actors of BZC's practice period offer a dinner and evening of entertainment to the whole BZC community. This is always one of the highlights of our Zen year. All are invited, but you must sign up for dinner on the main bulletin board so the cooks know how much food to make.

Performers are also invited to sign up on the main bulletin board for brief slots in the show that follows. Please limit your performance to no more than five minutes or two songs. That way, everyone who wishes will have an opportunity to present. If you have questions or technical needs for your performance, please contact Alan (alans@kushiki.org). The final order of performances will be arranged the evening of the show.



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.

B Z C S c h e d u l e

June

Founder's Ceremony

Wednesday, 6/3, 6:20 pm

Thursday, 6/4, 6:40 am

Practice Period Dinner & Skit Night

Saturday, 6/6, 6:00 pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 6/6, 9:40 am

Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 6/7

Lay Ordination/Zaike Tokudo

Saturday, 6/13, 3 pm

Five-day Sesshin

Wednesday - Sunday, 6/17 - 21

Shuso Hossen, Practice Period Ends

Sunday, 6/21

July

Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 7-2, 6:20 pm

Friday, 7-3, 6:40 am

Zendo Holiday

► July 4 – No Saturday Program

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 7-11, 9:30 am

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 7-12, 9:30 am

One-Day Sitting

Saturday, 7-18

Mountains & Rivers Sesshin

Friday-Sunday, 7-24 to 7-26

Kidzendo

Saturday, 7-25

Shuso Ceremony

Shuso Hossen, dharma inquiry ceremony with our shuso, Yakuso Ryushin Andrea Thach, will take place on the afternoon of Sunday, June 21, closing the BZC *sesshin* and our twentieth practice period. All members of the practice period and *sesshin* attendees are invited to take part. Precise timing of this event will be posted on the main bulletin board.

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, June 7, 2009, 8:00 – 12:00

BZC offers eight half-day sittings each year. Each includes five periods of zazen, kinhin and an informal tea. A half-day sitting is a great opportunity to focus on “just zazen” and is appropriate for beginning as well as experienced sitters. Sojun Roshi asks participants to commit to the four-hour schedule and, in support of everyone’s practice, to refrain from using scented products in the zendo. Contact June’s half-day director Stan Dewey, standewey@comcast.net or 510-528-1989, with any questions. Sign up on the bulletin board.

Men’s Shelter Dinner

BZC has offered dinners at the Berkeley Men’s Shelter on Center Street, downtown, for more than fifteen years. Two monthly dinners are cooked and served by crew of BZC friends, usually led by Lance shows on the 2nd Friday of the month and Jesy Goldhammer on the 4th Friday.

Jesy is stepping down as one of the head cooks, and we urgently need a new volunteer to do the shopping and lead the crew on the 4th Friday. Here is a brief job description Jesy sent:

A few days before, I send out an email to the volunteers to ask who will be there. On that Fri, I go to Costco, buy the food, arrive at the shelter around 5pm. Volunteers arrive sometime after that and we cook the dinner, serve it and clean it up. Christy Calame bakes cookies that either she brings or I arrange for someone to pick up at BZC. At some point after that day, I leave a receipt in the mail slot in the community room and John Mogey sends me a reimbursement check. ►



Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturday mornings for zazen from 9:30 to 10:15, then families are welcome to listen to the lecture on the sound system in the community room. It’s helpful for planning if you can let us know that you’re hoping to attend; call or email Laurie Senauke, 845-2215, or lauries@kushiki.org.

Childcare for 8:45 Zazen Instruction and Beginner Orientation may be offered by special arrangement.

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 in the community room at about 9:45, then sojourn to the zendo for the first ten minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene in the community room as usual. From time to time we offer additional activities at kidzendo.

Childcare Schedule

June 6	Childcare
June 13	Childcare
June 20	<i>Sesshin</i> - no program
June 27	Kidzendo
July 4	Zendo holiday – no program
July 11	<i>Sesshin</i> - no program
July 18	Kidzendo
July 18 – 19	Campout – don’t miss it!
July 25	Childcare
Aug 1	Childcare
Aug 8	Childcare
Aug 15	Kidzendo
Aug 22	Interim – no program
Aug 29	Childcare

Please think about taking responsibility for this wonderful and much needed community work. Jesy would like to train a new head cook at the end of June. If you are interested or have further questions, call Alan or email him at alans@kushiki.org.

How to Sit Zazen

Posture, Gravity, and Spirit

From a lecture by Sojun Roshi, January 15, 1983

Part II (continued from May newsletter)

Zazen has two sides. One is the passive side, and the other is the active side. The passive side corresponds to awareness or being attentive—just letting things come and go. The active side is purposeful effort of body and mind, fully engaged in upright posture—total exertion and focus. The balance of these two is what we are continuously working with. The passive side allows for all difficulties. It is opening completely to everything, without trying to block anything and without trying to inhibit the difficulties and problems. It is not holding anything. The active side is the spirit of determination. It's the form side with which we maintain our posture. With the active side, we maintain our attitude of constancy, keeping a check on our activity, and returning to our original intention over and over.

The passive side goes along with gravity, while the active side provides the pull away from gravity, giving us the form which allows the spirit to be fully expressed. It's very important, in sitting practice, to maintain the form of posture—to maintain our focus, without losing concentration. When we put forth our total effort to maintain the form, and, at the same time open ourselves up completely in a passive and accepting way, then we have the perfect balance between doing and being. It's the harmony between these two which accounts for our being either comfortable or uncomfortable. Even though we may have pain or discomfort, it doesn't succumb to suffering.

Many of us cannot maintain an ideal sitting position for one reason or another. But each of us can work within the limitations imposed by our physical formations, which is what we are all doing anyway. So when we have this kind of experience, we can enjoy our life, which includes various difficulties. We can still smile and help people. It is not necessary to be the victim of our difficulties. When we are not victims, we have freedom.

Within this most confined posture, we can exist with total freedom. This is the most stable posture in which to sit for long periods of time. We're not trying to do something extreme, like putting our legs behind our ears. To sit for a long period of time, this is the easiest way.

The unity between the active and the passive, between gravity and spirit, the basic unity between things is always there. At the bottom, all things share the essence. The way to express this harmony is through zazen.

When we sit today, we should make that effort to close the gap. Within the total activity is total stillness. Within that stillness is total dynamic activity. Not, "I am sitting zazen," but "just this sitting." Putting attention on posture is the most important. "How is this mudra?" "Is it being held right?" "Is the back correct?" (given our limitations) "Ears in line with the shoulders?" "Nose in line with the navel?" "Is the chest open?" "Are the shoulders relaxed?" "Is the breath deep?" If you battle gravity, gravity will always win. So don't fight gravity, but become partners with it, giving to gravity what belongs to gravity.

Let your shoulders fall. Your shoulders don't hold you up. What kind of effort is needed to hold you up? Where is the fine line, which is just balance? When we find that balance, that harmony, then total effort seems effortless.

Appreciation

We offer deep appreciation and nine bows to John Busch, who is stepping down from an active year as BZC project manager. In the summer and fall of 2008 John planned and supervised major work on our 1933 Russell street building. Plumbing was replaced for the entire building, which involved opening up and closing walls for access in the lower apartment. Along with plumbing, the bathroom and kitchen in the Senauke's upstairs apartment were renovated. John worked hard and thoroughly to see this project to completion, even as each new task revealed other problems and challenges. We appreciate John's dedication and intelligence, his perseverance and kindness in the midst of countless decisions and crises attendant on every construction project.

SOJUN'S 80TH BIRTHDAY PARTY— SAVE THE DATE!

We will be celebrating Sojun Mel Weitsman's 80th Birthday at the Sequoia Lodge in Oakland on July 5th from 3:30 to 7 pm. This event will be open to everyone in the BZC community. Volunteers from the sangha have been identified to take the lead in accomplishing the necessary functions, and a few sangha members and other Zen centers are making donations of food and beverages. There will be sign up sheets on the CR porch for decorating/ set-up, clean-up, and preparing food. Please sign up.

Check the bulletin board for announcements. For further information contact Alexandra Frappier: afrappier1@gmail.com or Gerry Oliva: olivag@fcm.ucsf.edu.

Dharma Group Opening

An ongoing Dharma Group meets every other Monday in the Community Room from 9:30 to 11 am. We study and discuss a book, and are about to begin a new one: *Dancing With Life: Buddhist Insights for Finding Meaning and Joy in the Face of Suffering*, by Phillip Moffit, a member of the Spirit Rock Teachers' Council. The group would welcome new members. Please contact Meghan Collins, at mismeghancollins@att.net, or 510-215-2263.

DUES REMINDER

In addition to deepening our practice during the current Spring Practice Period, it's a good time for all members and friends of BZC to make a brief review of whether you're up-to-date on paying dues.

As a reminder, a new dues schedule was made effective January 1, 2009 – the first dues increase in more than ten years. The new rates are \$40 per month for members and \$30 per quarter for friends. As in the past, dues can be paid monthly, quarterly, or annually. Discounts from the new dues schedule continue to be available when ability to pay the full amount is a problem. Please contact BZC Treasurer, John Rubin, or Office Manager, John Moge, to discuss discount arrangements.

Dues are nearly 40% of the tight BZC 2009 operating income budget. They are clearly our biggest income item. While it's a difficult financial year for most of us, your ongoing generous support to keep all of the BZC activities operating at full strength is much needed and appreciated.

B Z C C A M P O U T

On the weekend of July 18 - 19 we will have our annual BZC campout for members, families, and friends. The campout will be in Tilden Park, a mere 20-minute drive from BZC, at a beautiful spot close to hiking trails.

We'll start in the afternoon on Saturday, have a potluck dinner and then a campfire, wake up to birds singing, and a breakfast is provided. It's all over at noon. Folks can come just for the evening or just for the morning if you don't want to sleep over. Details will follow closer to the time. For more info, talk to Katherine Ogburn at klo999@yahoo.com or Laurie Senauke at lauries@kushiki.org.



Sojun would like to find a volunteer to transcribe lectures. Thank you for considering this. Please contact him if you are interested in this practice.

SUMMER SUTRA STUDY: Dialogs from the Perfection of Wisdom

Beginning Thursday, July 9, Laurie Senauke will teach a four-week class on the Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines. As we have been doing, we'll recite the sutra, but this year with a difference: we will split into two or more groups and recite the words of the different characters in the sutra, to really bring these conversations to life.

The class meets from 7:15 to 8:45 each Thursday evening. We'll meet in the community room most nights, though on July 23, we'll meet in the zendo. Unlike most of our classes, you can come to all or some of the sessions, to accommodate your summer recreation plans. The cost is \$5.00 per class. See our interview with the class instructor. ►



Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines Interview

Ron: Can you give us a brief description of the time, place, and process in which this sutra came to be known?

Laurie: My understanding is that it's one of the first Perfection of Wisdom sutras, which are among the earliest Mahayana literature, so this is a very early Mahayana sutra. The Perfection of Wisdom sutras got bigger and smaller from this one. So there's one that has twenty five thousand lines and the Heart Sutra and Diamond Sutra are the very short. There's a legend that Nargarjuna went down to the Naga kings under the sea and received the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, which the Nagas had received from Shakyamuni Buddha when he was alive. Other Mahayana sutras like the Lotus and Avatamsaka Sutras came later.

Ron: In what era did they appear?

Laurie: This particular sutra appeared around 100 BC.

Ron: What's in the 8000 Lines that isn't presented in the Heart Sutra? For instance I read a section where it says one who disparages the sutra will go to the hell realms.

Laurie: I don't remember that. Along with Shakyamuni Buddha, Subhuti, and Sariputra, some of the Gods are key players. It's all about emptiness, but in a rather different style than the Heart Sutra. At one point the Gods say something like, "What the fairies speak we understand though mumbled, but this we do not understand at all." And Subhuti responds, "That's because nothing at all has been explained."

Ron: Now we really don't understand!

Laurie: In another part someone asks, "If there are no Bodhisattvas, then who goes on the arduous journey through the ten stages to enlightenment?" Subuhti says, "I do not look for someone who goes on an arduous journey. On the contrary, we form the notion of ease." And somewhere he refers to the Bodhisattva as "Well placed because without a place to stand." Maybe the sutra is about how to thrive in that place of "no place to stand."

Ron: You've said you plan to have people in your class take the different roles in reading aloud. How will that work?

Laurie: There's a narrator, there's the Buddha, Shariputra, Subuhti, and a few other people who speak. My idea was that we would divide into groups and try to re-enact it.

Ron: We don't have to put on costumes?

Laurie: More like a Greek Chorus! I hope it works. We'll see.

Ron: Thank you, Laurie.

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