



Berkeley Zen Center



February 2010 Newsletter

All-Sangha Potluck and Budget Meeting—March 2, 6:30 pm

All members are warmly invited to share potluck offerings of great food, as well as discussion—and approval—of the 2010 BZC Budget. The budget is our best effort to project the financial goals and realities for BZC in the coming year. Let's all participate in our different ways in this important process. Your presence at this meeting makes a difference! Watch the bulletin board for more details.

Beginner's Sesshin

On Sunday, March 7, BZC will offer a "beginner's sesshin," from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm. **Nyu U Ho Sho Karen Sundheim** will offer instruction in the basic forms of our practice — zazen, kinhin, service — while maintaining our ground in meditation throughout the day. There will be a lecture on zazen and plenty of time for discussion. This is a good opportunity to ask questions about our practice. Participants should bring a bag lunch, which we will eat informally in silence at midday.

Newer members are particularly encouraged to take part, but we welcome older students who can enjoy a day of sitting and model the richness of our practice. For more information contact **Karen at ksundheim@gmail.com**.

The cost will be \$15 for the day. Please see the zendo bulletin board for a signup sheet and further information.



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 February

Founder's Ceremony

Wednesday, 2/3, 6:20 pm
Thursday, 2/4, 6:40 am

Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 2/7, 8:00 am-12:00 noon

Saturday Short Program

Saturday, 2/13
Begins after zazen instruction 8:45 am

Buddha's Paranirvana Ceremony

Saturday, 2/13 after lecture

Two-day Study Retreat

Sunday-Monday, 2/14-15

Kidzendo

Saturday, 2/20

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 2/27, 9:40 am

March

All-Sangha Potluck—Budget

Tuesday, 3/2, 6:30 p.m.

Founder's Ceremony

Wednesday, 3/3, 6:20 pm
Thursday, 3/4, 6:40 am

Beginner's Sesshin

Sunday, 3/7, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

One-day Sitting

Saturday, 3/20, 5:00 am-9:10pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 3/27, 9:40 am

February New Member

Welcome to new member Carol Schmid.

Saturday Childcare

Everyone is welcome to attend Berkeley Zen Center Family Practice events, which include Saturday childcare, monthly Kidzendo, and some new Friday programs. The focus of discussions will simply be about the practice of relating to children and others raising them. You may have children in your life in any form—as a parent with children at home, grown children, or be an "aunt" or "uncle" to a child.

BZC parents are in the process of reformulating and upgrading our family programs. We will be offering more childcare on Saturday mornings—not just for 9:30 zazen, but also for lecture. Sangha members who would like to help out, or who know anyone who might be interested providing childcare (perhaps a teenage relative), please contact **Laurie Senauke** (lauries@kushiki.org) or **Greg Denny** (greg@techsperience.org, 559-8831).

BZC also offers two festive ceremonies each year where young ones are invited to participate—Buddha's Birthday in the Spring, and Sejiki in the Fall.

See descriptions of our various programs below.

SATURDAY CHILDCARE

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturdays for zazen from 9:30 to 11:15. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend—we understand about last minute cancellations—call or email **Laurie Senauke**, 845-2215 or lauries@kushiki.org.



February 6	Saturday childcare
February 13	Saturday childcare
February 19	Potluck, sitting, and discussion
February 20	KIDZENDO
February 27	Saturday Childcare
March 5	Midday sitting and discussion
March 6	Saturday Childcare
March 13	Saturday Childcare
March 19	Potluck, sitting and discussion
March 20	Sesshin-no program
March 27	Childcare, NO KIDZENDO
April 2	Midday sitting and discussion
April 3	Buddha's birthday

KIDZENDO

A program 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 at the Senauke's—1933 Russell—at about 9:30 for a meet and greet, then sojourn to the zendo for the first 10 minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene at 1933 Russell for more activities, including, possibly, formal tea and one minute of meditation, and/or free play, depending.

ZAZEN AND DISCUSSION FOR PARENTS, CHILDCARE PROVIDED

1ST FRIDAY MIDDAY—Noon to 1 pm—check calendar for dates

From noon to 1, childcare is offered in the Community Room, with zazen followed by discussion in the zendo.

3RD FRIDAY EVENING—6:30 pm to 8:30 pm—check calendar for dates

A potluck dinner for parents and children in the Community Room, followed by a brief period of zazen and a discussion about family practice, in the zendo. Childcare provided in the Community Room.

For questions about our Friday programs, contact **Marie Hopper** (510) 559-8831.



Lecture by Sojun Roshi

January, 1995

In his *Eihei Shingi*, Dogen tells stories about the ancestors in order to encourage the monks in their practice. In one story, he gives an example of someone who, while serving as the *Kansu*, clarified the great matter, or *Daiji*. *Daiji* means the great matter of birth and death. The term *Kansu*, or *Kanin*, is a little confusing because it has several meanings. In the old days in China, the *Kansu* was one person in a monastery who performed the duties of the Director, the Treasurer, and other administrative roles. Later these jobs were divided up into three positions and *Kansu*, instead of meaning all three positions, came to mean just Assistant Director. The name for Director became *Tusu*, and the name for Treasurer became *Fusu*.

In any case, Dogen tells the story of Master Xuanze, of Baoen monastery in Xingling City, who once served as *Kansu* in the community of Fayen. One day Fayen asked Xuanze, “*Kansu*, how long have you been with us?”

Xuanze said, “I’ve been in your community for three years.”

Fayen then asked, “You are a junior person in the monastery. How come you never ask questions?”

You see, one expects a student living in a monastery to come and ask questions. In *dokusan* the first question that a new person in a monastery traditionally would ask is, “I am new here. Will you please teach me?” This is a very humbling attitude. It means that you are putting yourself in a proper position in relationship to the teacher as well as to everyone else at the monastery, and it also shows that you are there for some reason.

So Fayen confronted Xuanze. “How come you never ask any questions? You’ve been here for three years and you’ve never said anything to me. You seem to be avoiding me, in fact.”

“Well, I don’t want to mislead you,” Xuanze said. “I must confess when I was with Master Quingfeng, I attained the peaceful bliss [enlightenment], so I don’t feel like I need to come and talk to you.”

“By what words did you enter that place?” asked Fayen.

Xuanze answered “When I asked Quingfeng, ‘What is the self of the practitioner?’ He said ‘The fire boy seeks fire.’ ”

“Good words,” Fayen retorted. “But I am afraid you misunderstood them.”

So Xuanze tried to explain. “The fire boy belongs to the fire. Fire seeking fire is just like the self seeking the self.”

But Fayen stopped him. “Indeed. You didn’t understand. If the Buddhadharma was like that, it wouldn’t have come down to this day.”

Xuanze was greatly upset by this and indignantly stood up and left. He actually left the monastery. But on his way, he thought, “Fayen is the teacher of five hundred monks. He didn’t approve of me, but what he said should be correct.” So he turned back and approached Fayen. Bowing, he apologized, “I am very sorry I got up and left.”

Fayen responded, “Well, about this question. Why didn’t you ask me what I think of this question?”

“Okay,” Xuanze said. “What is the self of the practitioner?”

“The fire boy seeks fire,” Fayen said. And at that Xuanze experienced great awakening.

This is one of Suzuki Roshi’s favorite stories. Xuanze was a good student and in a way he had some understanding. Intellectually, “the fire boy seeks fire” is not very hard to understand. The fire boy seeks fire: Buddha nature seeks Buddha nature. What everyone is seeking is their true self. Of course. And it’s right here, all the time. Xuanze’s arrogance was a block to his understanding, but when he returned and humbled himself before the teacher, the block lifted. That was the turning point. Just at the point that he could give up his arrogance, everything started to flow very nicely.

Arrogance is one of the biggest stumbling blocks for someone who is very capable, for someone who has ability and is especially good at learning. On the other hand, for someone who is always stumbling around, arrogance is not much of a problem. And for the person who doesn’t know so much and is slow and makes mistakes it’s often easier to have a good understanding.

I remember Katigiri Roshi used to say, “In Soto Zen you should be a little stupid.” There were some people who didn’t believe this. They had to find the hard way.

Selflessness and arrogance just don’t go together. Anger, arrogance, possessiveness, these are big stumbling blocks because they are “self builders.” Ego builders.

Another point is that teachers are all different. We read about fierce teachers: Deshan with his big stick and Lin-Chi with his big shout. But the fact is that all teachers are different. And when you have some expectation about how a Zen teacher is supposed to act, that can be a stumbling block to actually picking up on a teacher.

Some teachers are very noisy, some are very extraverted, some teachers are very quiet and introverted, some teachers are very subtle, and some teachers are not so subtle. So we have the whole range of temperament. Consequently, it is best not to have a fixed idea of what a teacher is supposed to look like or be like. A teacher who tries to fill out their role based on a stereotype is practicing the *art* of Zen, but not *true* Zen. One can act a certain way and take on various mannerisms and it might fit the picture of what Zen is supposed to look like. But a good teacher can be very plain and ordinary. Joshu never beat anyone; he always used his eloquence to teach.

When Deshan, who was proud of his knowledge of the Diamond Sutra, went to visit Lungtan up on the mountain, his intent was to destroy the Zen sect. Lungtan means “dragon-pool,” but when Deshan met up with Lungtan he saw just an ordinary, little old man in patched-up robes. If you saw Lungtan on the street today, you might not look twice. You might even mistake him for the janitor.

So when Deshan met Lungtan he said, “I don’t see any Dragonpool here.”

Lungtan answered, “Well, this is it. You have arrived.” And then the two went into Lungtan’s hut and talked late into the night, discussing the Dharma. Deshan was very impressed with Lungtang. Finally, it was time to go to bed and Lungtan said to Deshan, “Well, it’s dark outside, so I will give you this lamp so you can see where you are going.” He lit a paper lantern and handed it to Deshan. But as Deshan took the lantern and began to leave, Lungtan blew out the light and in the utter darkness, Deshan was enlightened.

This is a very subtle teacher who leaps like a tiger. Be careful of these subtle teachers.



**Half Day Sitting
Sunday February 7, 2010
8:00 AM – Noon**

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 beginners 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 February’s half-day director, **Ann Kennedy, at 510-649-9432 or at kaimon@earthlink.net**, with any questions.



**Reading Dante’s Inferno
A Course Introducing
The Divine Comedy led by Albert
Dragstedt and Patrick McMahon**

Who wants to make that perilous journey to the underworld alone? Let’s go in company, for a series of discussions of the first canticle of Dante’s three-part epic poem of *The Divine Comedy*. Beginning Tuesday, February 10, we will meet twice a month, every other Tuesday, through April for 6 meetings. **Place: Home of sangha member Naome Dragstedt, 893 Glendome Circle, Oakland** (in the Glenview district of Oakland, off Park Blvd).

Just as Dante was guided by another familiar with the terrain, the Latin poet Virgil, we will have the guidance of Albert Dragstedt and Patrick McMahon. Albert has been teaching at St. Mary’s college for many years in their Great Books program and chairs the classics department. Patrick brought together the “Dharma Salon,” a number of whose participants are from BZC. He’s also taught in the BZC study program, Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*.

The class is free of charge. Please contact **Patrick at 639-4866, mcahab@comcast.net**, to receive a more complete prospectus.



Practicing with Injury, Disability, and Illness

A series of three workshops by Chikudo Lew Richmond and Sei Shi Alexandra Frappier

Dates: February 27, March 6 and 13

Time: 12:30 to 2:00 p.m.

Place: Berkeley Zen Center

Cost: \$30 for the series of 3 workshops

A sign-up sheet will be posted by February 1 on the Bulletin Board.

This series addresses questions such as: What will happen if my life collapses from a chronic disability, or a sudden accident or illness? How will I continue to practice Zen when my body is damaged and my mind is overtaken by fear of what the future might bring? Exactly what is Zen practice or Buddhist practice in the face of catastrophe? What will it look like in my particular case? How will I stay connected to the Sangha if I can't leave my house or participate in the usual way? These are just some of the questions I have asked myself.

When the Tibetan teacher Thrangu Rinpoche, was asked what happens to practice and wisdom when a person has Alzheimer's, he responded, "The sense faculties and mental processes are damaged, but the underlying Buddha nature is unchanged." Lew Richmond commented, "These words provide a strong hint as to what this Buddha nature might be, and what its qualities are. One of them, according to the

teachings, is luminosity." (as cited in *Fear of Dementia*, December 27, 2009, <http://agingasaspiritualpractice.com/2009/12/27/fear-of-dementia/#more-517>)

We'll talk about other practices in Buddhism that do not depend on a formal sitting posture, specifically:

- Metta (loving kindness from the inside out)
- Mindfulness of various kinds (4 foundations of mindfulness)
- Tonglen (sending and receiving compassion, a method on how to relate to pain)

These are practices needed for people who are seriously ill. They need to use the power of their Buddha mind to support them in their illness. They need to generate a wide compassion for themselves.

This series of classes will attempt to redefine what practice is to overtly include whatever physical difficulty one has, so that one doesn't feel excluded from practice because their body and mind are unable to do the prescribed forms. We will use a Council format which encourages open disclosure and confidentiality, bringing forth our personal struggles and fears, hoping to create a safe transforming environment that we all can share.



From the Tenzo

Cooks are needed for our Saturday morning program and for upcoming sesshins. Every meal we prepare has a “head cook” and then one or several “assistant cooks,” depending upon numbers. If you’ve been thinking about cooking for our group but need a little encouragement or a chance to practice with someone, please speak with Naome Dragstedt or Gary Artim, our co-tenzos. Either one will be happy to work with you one (or more) mornings in the kitchen as you learn the ropes. A sign-up sheet for cooking is posted on the bulletin board outside the kitchen. Anyone may sign up to be an assistant. After you’ve assisted for awhile and feel comfortable in our kitchen, you may want to try being head cook for a Saturday morning. And after you've done that a few times, you might like to try being head cook for a sesshin. Our tenzos have many recipes and tricks to share with you as you find your way into kitchen practice. We encourage all seasoned cooks to sign up for at least one day of sesshin head-cooking each year. We need your energy and innovation in support of our sesshin practice!

–Naome Dragstedt, Tenzo



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