



Berkeley Zen Center



January–February 2023 Newsletter

New Year's Eve Sitting & Celebration

Come together with sangha for an evening of ritual, reflection, and celebration! Our New Year's Eve celebration begins at 8:00 p.m., in person and online.

Given our physical zendo capacity, the in-person program is open to BZC community only. Those attending in person should follow our health and safety protocol, including showing proof of Covid-19 vaccination and booster if you are not already on the existing list for this.

Zoom participation is open to all. Feel free to come and go or to stay for the duration as we sit and walk (zazen and kinhin) and listen as a ceremonial bell is rung 108 times.

The sitting ends shortly after midnight with chanting of the Heart Sutra. Those in person will then gather in the courtyard for hot cider, tea, and cookies beside a bonfire. Those online may meanwhile greet one another.

We will release into the fire memorial cards for those who have passed during the year. Participants are invited to release traces of the last year and offer wishes for the year to come.

If you have any questions, please contact Judy Fleischman (judy@sensingwonder.com).



Affirmation of Welcome

Walking the path of liberation, we express our intimate connection with all beings. Berkeley Zen Center is a sangha of Buddhist practitioners drawing from the Bay Area's many spiritual and cultural communities. Just as Shakyamuni Buddha welcomed people of all backgrounds to practice, here at BZC our activities embrace diversity, and are available to people of every color, every way of life and ethnic background, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, and ability. May all beings practice in safety and equality, realizing our true nature.

B Z C S C H E D U L E

January

Zendo Holiday
Monday, 1/2

Sojun Roshi Memorial and Interment
Saturday, 1/7, 11:15am

One-Day Sesshin
Saturday, 1/14

Zendo Holiday
Monday, 1/16
(except for MLK Program: 8:30–11:00am)

Board Meeting
Sunday, 1/22, 9:00–11:00am

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 1/29

February

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 2/4, 9:40am

Jizo Ceremony
Sunday, 2/12, 1:00–4:00pm

One-Day Sesshin
Saturday, 2/18

Buddha's Parinirvana Ceremony
Saturday, 2/18

Zendo Holiday
Monday, 2/20

Women Ancestors Ceremony
Saturday, 2/25, 11:45am

Beginners' Sesshin
Sunday, 2/26

For more complete and up-to-date information, please check the BZC website (berkeleyzencenter.org) and subscribe to BZC's community listserv.

Winter Sesshins

Our first sesshins of 2023 will be:

A one-day sesshin on Saturday, January 14, 7:50 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A one-day sesshin on Saturday, February 18, 7:50 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A Beginners' Sesshin on Sunday, February 26, 7:50 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

All will be led by Abbot Hozan and will be offered in-person as well as online. A signup form will be posted on the website several weeks prior to each sesshin, and the deadline for registration will be during the week prior.

These sesshins will follow a modified winter schedule similar to that used at our recent Rohatsu sesshin, with three periods of zazen in the morning followed by a dharma talk, and then three periods of zazen in the afternoon. There will be a midday break for bag lunch, rest, and work period. This streamlined schedule is intended to minimize possible transmission of Covid or other seasonal viruses.

For all in-person participants, Covid protocols will apply. We require that you be fully vaccinated and boosted, and that you wear an KN94, N95, or KN95 mask indoors. We also ask that you get tested within 48 hours of the start of sesshin (an antigen rapid test will suffice), and also that if you have any Covid symptoms such as fever, cough, etc., that you shift to online participation.

When paying for sesshin, please indicate on your check or in the PayPal note field that your donation is for the sesshin or sesshins that you will attend. The suggested donation is \$15 per day (or whatever you can afford). Mail a check to the BZC Office Manager at 1931 Russell St., Berkeley 94703, or pay through the website using the "Sits/Classes" tab on the "Donate" page. Please also consider an additional donation to Berkeley Zen Center above the

suggested fee, to help us maintain our practice.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the sesshin director, Rob Lyons, at dharmawork@yahoo.com.

Sojun Roshi's Interment

A portion of Sojun's ashes will be interred beneath his memorial stone in the Memorial Garden on Saturday, January 7, at 11:15 a.m., following Hozan's talk that morning. This ceremony will include placement of the ashes, chanting, and purifying the space with sangha offerings of fresh water.



Lay Entrustment for Mary Duryee

On Monday, January 9, at 7:45 a.m., Hozan will confer lay entrustment and offer a green rakusu to Mary Duryee/Honkyo Josu (Original Home–Calm Center), acknowledging her grounded practice and her ability to share her understanding and teach others. The ceremony will be simultaneously live in the zendo and online, and will be followed by a brief opportunity to raise dharma questions with Mary. All are invited to take part and celebrate.

Jizo Ceremony

On Sunday, February 12, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., BZC priests Hondo Dave Rutschman and Ryushin Andrea Thach will lead a simple ceremony to invoke, honor, and ask for help from Jizo Bodhisattva, one of the most important figures in East Asian Buddhism. Traditionally, Jizo is understood to be the embodiment of fearless compassion, a protector of children and travelers, of all those who are vulnerable, and of those who find themselves grieving or in hell-realms. Jizo is especially associated with abortion, miscarriage, and stillbirth.

One ancient story about Jizo is that in a former life he was a Brahmin maiden named Sacred Girl. Sacred Girl's mother died and went to hell, and out of love and devotion, Sacred Girl sold all her belongings and made offerings to the Buddha of her age. Eventually, because of her good works, she was able to see into hell and learn that her mother had been saved. But as she witnessed the sorrow and pain of all the other beings still there, Sacred Girl's heart broke and opened, and she made a great vow to work for the benefit of suffering beings until all the hells were emptied.

So whenever and in whatever way we find ourselves in hell, we know that Jizo has vowed

to be there with us.

The ceremony will take place in person at BZC. During the afternoon, we will draw, write, or sew—creating actual tangible objects as expressions of our prayers. Often those objects are red caps or rakus, which are then draped onto Jizo statues; but they can also be drawings, written messages, or anything else that feels right. There will be time for sitting in silence, and for sharing and discussion.

All are welcome to attend, especially those experiencing heartbreak and grief. The registration form can be accessed here: <https://forms.gle/oxitq3wEiLqSRpkp6>. A suggested donation of \$15 (or whatever you can afford) will cover the cost of materials. For answers to any questions, please email andrea.thach@gmail.com or hondodave@gmail.com.



Lay Ordination Sewing for 2023

Sewing your rakusu in preparation for Lay Ordination/Jukai and receiving the precepts at the end of BZC's spring practice period is an opportunity to deepen your practice and relationship in sangha. Each year, sewing-class students engage in the practice of sewing and studying the precepts together, preparing themselves to receive a rakusu/robe and a dharma name. The whole sangha celebrates and supports these new bodhisattvas, affirming their aspiration of continuous practice.

Sewing classes start in the new year. Classes are open to those who have asked their teacher for permission to participate. If you are interested in participating this year, please speak with Abbot Hozan as soon as possible (in dokusan, by phone, or via Zoom)—in addition to one of BZC's other brown-robe teachers or green-rakusu teachers, if you have a teacher-student connection with one of the latter. After you have spoken with your teacher(s), contact the sewing teacher, Jean Selkirk (sewingteacher.bzc@gmail.com).

New BZC Resident

The BZC resident group is excited to welcome the newest addition to our little band of stalwarts. Hanna Cox will be moving in to 1933½ Russell (which she will share with Joe Buckner) in mid-January. Hanna is a Cal student who has spent time at Zen Mountain Monastery in New York.

The other current residents are Helen Cheng and Preston Evers (1929), Hozan and Laurie Senauke (1933), Yoni Ackerman and Brianna McGuire (1933-A), and Ross Blum (1933½-A).

Position Changes

Over the last three years, due to Covid and our online presence via Zoom, some practice positions have been added or changed, and others have been inactive. As we move forward, we would like to appreciate the efforts of departing position holders and welcome their replacements.

Preston Evers is now the sesshin work leader. Helen Cheng will continue to be the Saturday work leader.

Nancy Suib is replacing Nancy Friedberg as head chiden.

In May, when we resumed in-person zendo practice, Diane Ritchey and Pauline Kerschen became the Saturday co-directors. Diane has stepped down to take care of personal responsibilities and Joe Buckner will now share the position with Pauline.

Blake Tolbert and Mary Beth Lamb have been the online tech hosts for both sesshins and the Saturday programs. They will continue to offer their support as well as train others who can fill this need.

Rob Lyons has assumed the sesshin director role, beginning with onsite sesshins in May.

Greg Denny has replaced Rob Lyons as project manager, assisted by Mary Duryee.

Yoni Ackerman has replaced Hannah Meara as shika (welcoming overnight guests).

Jonathan Koltz is assisting Abbot Hozan with his many tasks, including online dokusan scheduling.

Marian Yu is now caring for the Memorial Garden altars, replacing Amaselu Meyer, who served in this position for many years.

Nick Robinson has replaced Bill Graves as librarian.

Deep gratitude to all of you for your dedication! 🙏

MLK-Day Neighborhood Engagement

On Monday, January 16, BZC will commemorate the MLK holiday with an 8:30–11:00 a.m. program of zazen, reflection, and neighborhood service.

After a short period of zazen (8:30–8:45), Hozan will give a brief talk on the legacy and dharma of Dr. King. This will be followed by a period of discussion in which we will have an opportunity to discuss these themes and to explore ways BZC can engage with our neighbors on issues of diversity and inclusion.

At 10:00 a.m. sangha members are invited to serve our neighborhood, particularly focusing on the often-neglected east end of our block. We'll let our neighbors know of our plans, and they will be welcome to join in if they wish. Details of this day's activities will be shared on the BZC website and listserv.

Welcoming the Hungry Ghosts

On Saturday, October 29, the BZC community gathered in-person and online to celebrate the traditional Soto Zen ceremony of Sejiki.

In this ceremony of nourishing all beings, we do something very strange and very important: we call ghosts. We invite spirits from all worlds to come. We welcome them, treat them with kindness and respect, and feed them cookies, rice, and fruit arrayed on a colorful altar.

We're especially interested in beings that are: lost, hungry, scared, angry, confused, restless, left out, excluded, distressed, ignored, pushed away. Beings we can see or imagine, and also those we can't.

When we take care of these lost beings, we're also taking care of ourselves, of all the lost and hungry and scared and restless voices in ourselves.

One thing to notice is that when we do that,

when we reach out to beings that are angry or scared or in pain, it's important to be careful. My children, Ella and Leo, who joined other children in participating in this ceremony, suggested that it's like being the person who feeds the lions at the zoo. We too, when we are lost or hungry or scared, can hurt people. We can lash out and cause pain.

So in this ceremony we do a couple of things to make sure that we're careful, that it's all right, that damage isn't done. We're together with our friends, keeping an eye on each other. It's easier to be brave when we're with our friends and with the Buddhas.

When we bow to the Buddhas, we're sending respect and also asking for help. This is a wonderful thing that we get to do.

—Dave Rutschman



Introduction to Zen

Abbot Hozan will offer a five-week “Introduction to Zen” class on Thursday evenings, 7:15–8:45 p.m, from January 12 to February 9. This class will explore the history of Zen by way of five pivotal figures in our tradition: Bodhidharma, Huineng, Dongshan, Dogen, and Suzuki Roshi. Each of these figures has left us a living legacy of Zen practice.

Class materials will be available online. The class will have space for 30 participants in the zendo, as well as online access. For registration, see the BZC website. For further information, please contact class coordinator Ryushin Andrea Thach (andrea.thach@gmail.com). Suggested donation for the class series is \$50, or whatever you can afford.

Koan Study Group

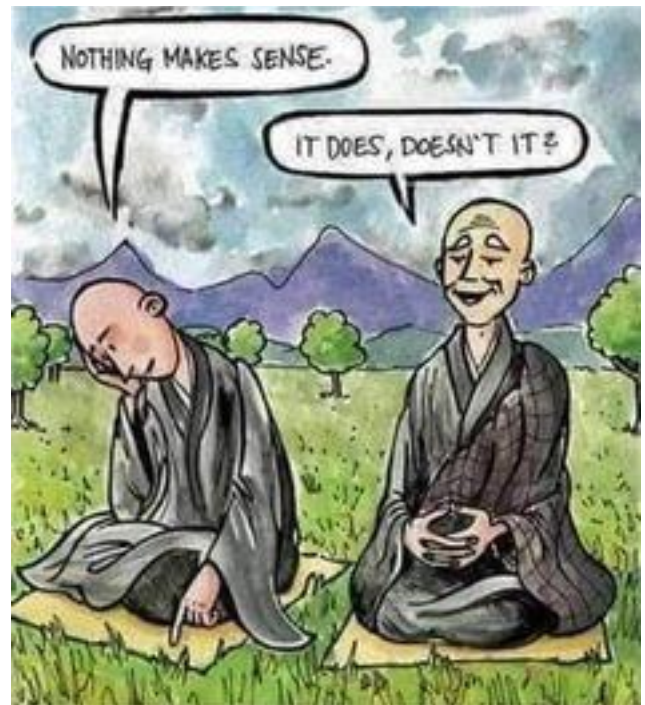
Ryushin Andrea Thach, Ellen Webb, and Ron Nestor will be offering an ongoing koan study group beginning Wednesday, February 1. We’ll meet once a month on the first Wednesday evening from 7:15 to 8:45 p.m. We’ll be using *The Book of Serenity* translated by Thomas Cleary, as well as commentary on each case by Yamada Koan Roshi, a contemporary Zen teacher. *The Book of Serenity* is the koan collection most closely associated with the spirit of our Soto lineage.

We have found these koans both compelling and difficult in their variety of tone, emphasis, and interpretation. The stories in them are based on actual Zen practitioners and teachers who mostly existed in the Tang dynasty (roughly 600–900 A.D.). *The Book of*

Serenity was created in the twelfth century by Hongzhi, who chose the koans to include and created a verse to accompany each one. Wansong provides commentary alongside the koans. His comments run the gamut from critical to humorous, and often seem quite modern. All the koans deal with nonduality in some way, but the devil is in the nuances and the details.

We’re aiming for something between a class and a dharma group. There will be no fee. We’re hoping that participants continue to show up because of their interest. We will start out on Zoom. An announcement and link will be available in the week before the first session, as well as an earlier reminder.

If you would like more information, please contact Ellen Webb (elweb@sbcglobal.net).



New Study Group Forming

Ryushin Andrea Thach will be leading a new study group beginning after the first of the year. We will start with works translated and/or commented on by Shohaku Okumura Roshi. The group will meet monthly for an hour and a half, on a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, and be either in-person or hybrid, depending on interest.

A study group is an opportunity to study the dharma in a more detailed and rigorous way than in class and lectures. As a group, we share our practice-experience in our life and deepen our relationships both to the dharma and with each other.

Participants are asked to commit to stay with the group for a year, or for the duration of the current text we are reading.

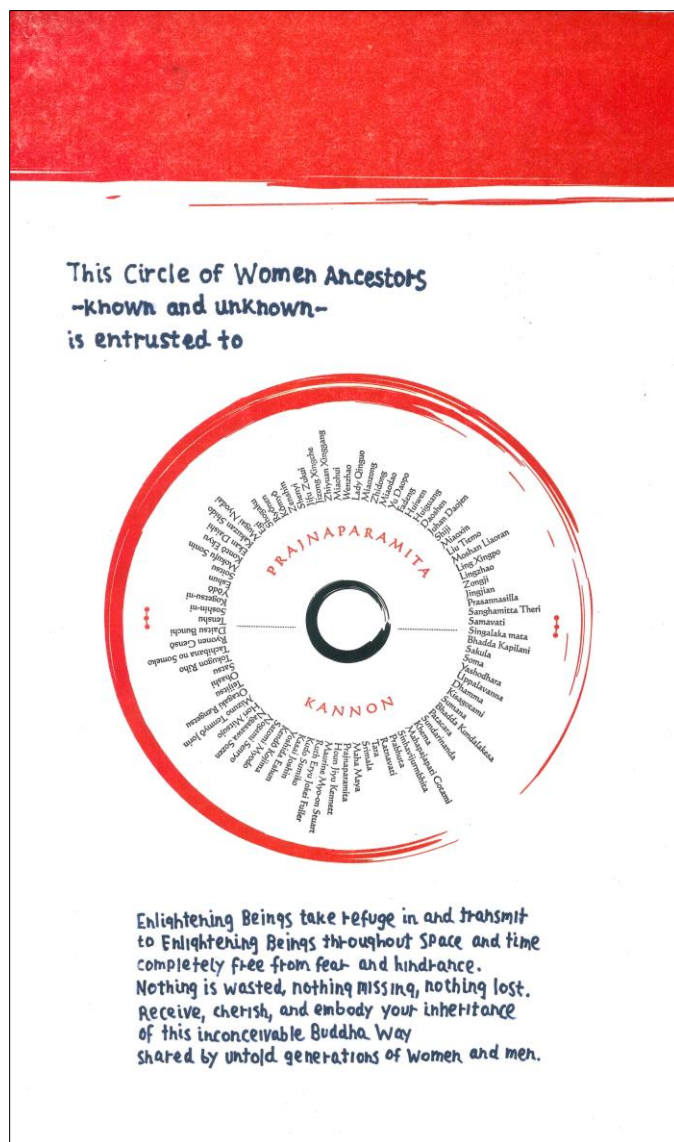
If you have questions or are interested,
contact Ryushin at andrea.thach@gmail.com.



Okumura Roshi holds photos of his teacher, Kosho Uchiyama Roshi (left) and his teacher's teacher, Kodo Sawaki Roshi.

Women Ancestors Document

A document honoring women ancestors will be conferred to members in a simple ceremony on Saturday, February 25, at 11:45 a.m. If you are interested in receiving this document, please contact Hozan's assistant Jonathan Koltz (jonkoltz@gmail.com).



Dokusan and Practice Discussion

Meeting regularly with a teacher is a wonderful opportunity and a key part of our Soto practice. Abbot Hozan has regular dokusan hours online and in person. To arrange online dokusan with him, use his online calendar: <https://calendly.com/asenauke/dokusan> or contact abbot's assistant Jonathan Koltz (abbot.assist@berkeleyzencenter.org). Hozan is also scheduling dokusan in his office Wednesday and Friday mornings and Wednesday afternoons. To sign up for one of these times, see the monthly dokusan calendar to the right of the zendo door.

BZC priests and senior students are also available to meet with members. Practice leader contact information can be found by scrolling down this page of the BZC website: <https://berkeleyzencenter.org/teachers/>

Chiden Orientation and Review

Please join head chiden Nancy Suib and Abbot Hozan for a chiden review and training in the zendo on Wednesday, February 22, 3:30–5:00 p.m. This is a wonderful and fulfilling opportunity to deepen your practice of mindfulness in attending to the aesthetics of the altar.

A deep bow to all past and present chidens for their service. We hope that you will join the new chidens, and members interested in becoming a chiden, for this orientation and review.

For further information, please contact Nancy (nancysuib@gmail.com).

The Bag Lunch Project

The Bag Lunch Project began in response to the increasing numbers of homeless people on the streets as the pandemic hit in 2019. This fall we stopped offering lunches in downtown Berkeley because the good news is there has been an effort to house more and more folks. We have continued to make and deliver 20 bag lunches twice monthly to the Women's Day-time Drop-In Center on Acton Street. WDDC has worked with at-risk families for 30 years, presently serving an average of 150 women and children each month in a variety of ways. Our recent drive to collect umbrellas and ponchos for WDDC brought in generous donations by many Sangha members. Thank you so much for your continued support. This, along with the support of the BZC Board, allows us to continue our very small project.

As the year draws to a close and you make your year-end contributions, please consider one to The Bag Lunch Project. You can do this by going to the BZC website's "Generosity" page. Please note what your contribution is for. If need be, send a note to Helen, the office manager, at bzcofficeanager@gmail.com.

If you would like to join The Bag Lunch Project, please send a note to Susan Marvin at lai_hang@yahoo.com. We'd be happy to add you to the group!

—The Bag Lunch Project
(Preston, Mira, Tom, Penelope,
Maria Teresa, Laurie, Susan)

Saturday Speakers, 10:15 a.m.

January 7: Abbot Hozan
January 14: TBA (sesshin)
January 21: Abbot Hozan
January 28: Ellen Webb

February 4: Abbot Hozan
February 11: Laurie Senauke
February 18: TBA (sesshin)
February 25: Gary Artim

Monday Morning Talks, 8:00 a.m.

January 2: Zendo Holiday
January 9: Mary Duryee Lay Entrustment
January 16: MLK Neighborhood Engagement
January 23: Nathan Britton
January 30: Myosui Erna Andre

February 6: Open Discussion
February 13: Andrea Henderson
February 20: Zendo Holiday
February 27: Stephanie Solar

Friday Afternoon Talks, 5:45 p.m.

January 6: Gensan Kristopher Thompson
February 3: Judith Ragir

Current Weekly Schedule

Many of our programs are now open to a limited number of in-person masked attendees. If you are interested in attending, please send your vax and booster information to the Office Manager (bzcoffice manager@gmail.com) AT LEAST ONE WEEK BEFORE YOU ATTEND (if you come sooner than that, also bring your vax card and ID with you).

Our programming varies between in-person-only, online-only, and hybrid. See the BZC website (berkeleyzencenter.org) for details.

Looking Back, Stepping Forward

Welcome to 2023 and the turning of the season, the return of light. What will come our way this year is unknown. The pandemic still wanders at will; its course is uncertain and compels us to stay flexible in so many of our activities.

The last three years—marked by the pandemic and by Sojun Roshi's illness and death—have spurred us to let go of customary patterns and plans, to adapt, to bow to grief and loss, even as we move forward. The Berkeley Zen Center sangha seems to be adept at making these changes. I think this is the deepest legacy of our late teacher: in the spirit of zazen simply to be a true community, a beloved community; to remain flexible and capable of an appropriate response as conditions continually change.

I am now about two years on as BZC's second abbot. While I had a very long apprenticeship as tanto and vice-abbot, nothing I had previously encountered prepared me for the changes we have had to reckon with. I want to emphasize that I have never felt alone or overburdened by the zigs and zags of the Covid years. Senior students, residents, and long-time practitioners carry so much of the day-to-day responsibilities of our temple life. I am deeply grateful to all. As for Sojun, he spent fifty years preparing us to meet uncertainty, even to welcome it. He showed us how to lean into zazen practice and cultivate ordinary mind.

Over the last years, I feel I've been mainly trying to support the practice and community. Not everyone agrees about what this should look like. Should our Covid protocols be looser or tighter? Should we return to our prepandemic schedule more quickly? Are we at risk of losing the practice legacy carefully crafted by Sojun over many years? As a community, how should we be responding to a societal call for a deeper commitment to equity and inclusion? There are other questions.

My response to such issues has been to listen deeply and hear the inner voices of Sojun and our ancestors. To be patient and nonreactive, to try and see the other side of things. When possible, to take the time to build consensus for major decisions. Honoring these principles, much of my energy has necessarily been focused on administration and organizational process. In the coming year I plan to get help sharing these tasks. I'll say more about this early in the year.

If I can share some of the administrative responsibilities, I'll have more time as abbot to focus on the dharma. I'd like to do more teaching and studying with people. This would include classes, informal teas, ongoing study groups, etc. Starting in January I will expand my dokusan hours online and in-person. It is important for us to train and refresh the Soto Zen forms, which include basic zendo activity and comportment, the proper way to do various service positions, how to chant, how to bow, and so on.

The practice we have inherited is always a work-in-progress. Many of us have seen small shifts over the years. Like Sojun, I prefer to make changes slowly, honoring what our ancestors carefully carried here from China and Japan. Then the pandemic drove us out of the zendo we love and into the unexpected and challenging land of Zoom. Now, as the pandemic's effects are more diffuse, we have had to create a "hybrid" practice—in-person and online—which is very challenging.

What next? We don't know, but we do know how to practice together. On that ground, which is the meeting place of faith and action, I believe we will step forward from the top of a hundred-foot pole.

—Hozan



*2023 is the Year of the Rabbit. In Chinese culture
the rabbit symbolizes mercy, elegance, and beauty.
Sumi-e by Kazumi Cranney*

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE

for the March–April issue is
Friday, February 17.

Please submit items to
knabb@bopsecrets.org.

Berkeley Zen Center
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