



Berkeley Zen Center



January–February 2024 Newsletter

Sojun Roshi's Book Now Available

Our late teacher Sojun was a deep and warm presence for many of us over the years, until his death in early 2021 at the age of 91. Over the last year of his life, Sojun Roshi worked with several of his students to put together a long-promised book for Counterpoint Press.

This book—*Seeing One Thing Through: The Zen Life and Teachings of Sojun Mel Weitsman*, with a foreword by Norman Fischer and an introduction by me—is now available. It has a unique structure. The first third of the book is a series of vivid memories and sketches of Sojun's life, from his childhood to his life as an artist in the 1950s San Francisco scene; from his early years with Suzuki Roshi at SFZC to finding his way at Berkeley Zen Center. The remainder of the book, two hundred more pages, contains a well-edited selection from a lifetime of practice and dharma talks, touching on many aspects of our everyday Zen practice.

Seeing One Thing Through is available from Counterpoint, from your local bookstore, and from all the usual online vendors. To quote *Publishers Weekly*: "This treasure trove of wisdom is a welcome addition to the American Zen canon."

—Hozan



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, 1/1

Sojun Roshi Annual Memorial
Saturday, 1/6, 10:15am

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 1/7

Zendo Holiday
Monday, 1/15
(except for MLK Program: 8:30–11:30am)

One-Day Sesshin
Saturday, 1/20

Board Meeting
Sunday, 1/21, 9:00–11:00am

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 1/27, 9:10am

February

Zazenkai (Just Sitting)
Sunday, 2/4

Founders' Ceremony
Wednesday, 2/7, 7:00am

One-Day Sesshin
Saturday, 2/17

Buddha's Parinirvana Ceremony
Saturday, 2/17, 5:00pm

Zendo Holiday
Monday, 2/19

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 2/24, 9:10am

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

Sojun Roshi Annual Memorial

This ceremony will be held Saturday, January 6, at the time of our usual lecture at 10:15 a.m. Hozan Roshi will offer a short talk about Sojun. Then we will all have the opportunity to make a flower offering and to express our appreciation for Sojun's life and teachings.

Winter Sesshins

Our first sesshins of 2024 will be:

A **one-day sesshin** on Saturday, **January 20**, 6:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

A **one-day sesshin** on Saturday, **February 17**, 6:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

These two sesshins will be led by Abbot Hozan if his health allows. Breakfast and lunch will be served oryoki style in the zendo. The requested donation is \$35. Look to sign up on the website beginning three weeks ahead of time, as space may be limited. If you have any questions, please contact sesshin co-director Mark Copithorne (copithorne@hotmail.com).

There will also be a **half-day sitting** on Sunday, **January 7**, 8:00 a.m. to noon. The suggested donation for that is \$10. You can sign up by emailing the director, Gary Artim, at gartim@gmail.com. He will also be happy to answer any questions you may have.

There will also be a **Zazenkai** (a day of just sitting) on Sunday, **February 4**, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There will be eight periods of zazen plus kinhin, bowing, and eating. We will maintain silence throughout except for bells to mark meditation periods and chanting the refuges aloud at the closing. A mid-day break will allow time for sack lunches to be eaten outdoors. The fee is \$15 or what you can afford. Please check the BZC website for the sign-up link in mid-January.

For all in-person participants, Covid protocols will apply. We require that you be

fully vaccinated and boosted. Masks are optional. You should check the website or the listserv for the latest details, as the protocols are subject to change.

You can pay for any of these events by mailing a check to the BZC Office Manager at 1931 Russell St., Berkeley 94703, or you can pay through the website using the "Sits/Classes" tab on the "Donate" page. In either case, please indicate what you are paying for, so your payment is not mixed up with dues or donations.

Buddha's Parinirvana Ceremony

According to the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* of the Pali canon, at the age of 80 the Buddha announced that he would soon reach Parinirvana, or the final deathless state, and abandon his earthly body. After this, he ate his last meal, fell ill, and died.

Each year we celebrate Buddha's transition with a ceremony where we all can make offerings and chant in honor of this occasion. This year the ceremony will take place Saturday, February 17, at 5:00 p.m., as the closing of our sesshin on that day.

Lay Ordination

On Saturday, November 18, five members of the BZC sangha received Lay Ordination (*Zaiko Tokudo*) from Abbot Hozan and Ryushin Andrea Thach. This ceremony takes place once a year at BZC. For those participating, it is a joyous culmination of many months of sewing and precept study. For those attending, it is an opportunity to reaffirm our vows. We welcome these friends into the lineage of Shakyamuni Buddha and Suzuki Roshi's family. Great thanks to Sewing Teacher Jean Selkirk, along with Kabir Nabi; to Laurie Senauke for directing the ceremony; to Yoni Ackerman for

baking cookies; and to many other sangha members who helped to make this ceremony happen.

Hozan's ordinees:

Jamie Kimmel—Shinkai Monsei (Deep Ocean, Hear the Essence)

Jim Erb—Hoshin Jogen (Dharma Heart, Manifest Source)

Ryushin's ordinees:

Pauline Kerschen—Fuba Jien (Wind Horse, Self Circle)

Greg Hertz—Waki Ekan (Harmonizing Vessel, Ceremony Mirror)

Evan Vreeland—Chikuin Ryumon (Bamboo Seal, Dragon Gate)



Lay Ordination, 2023

Lay Ordination Sewing for 2024

Sewing your rakusu in preparation for Lay Ordination and receiving the precepts is an opportunity to deepen your practice and your relationship with the sangha. Each year, sewing-class students engage in the practice of sewing and studying the precepts together in

order to prepare themselves to receive a rakusu/robe and a dharma name from their teacher. The sangha celebrates and supports these new bodhisattvas, affirming their aspiration for 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, as soon as possible please speak with Abbot Hozan (in dokusan, by phone, or via Zoom) or one of BZC's brown-robe teachers or green-rakusu teachers. After you have spoken with your teacher, contact the sewing teacher, Jean Selkirk (sewingteacher.bzc@gmail.com).

MLK Day Neighborhood Engagement

On Monday, January 15, BZC will commemorate the Martin Luther King, Jr holiday with an 8:30–11:30 morning of zazen, reflection, and neighborhood service. The day's program is still under development, but our tentative schedule is:

- 8:30– 9:00 am — Zazen
- 9:00–10:00 — Reading the words of Dr. King and discussion based on his teachings and those of other teachers of equity and liberation.
- 10:00 — National Karma Repentance Ceremony, based on the Bodhisattva Ceremony. There will be an option to include personal repentance.
- 10:30 — Participants gather for neighborhood work: cleaning up the traffic barrier area on Milvia, and making bag lunches for our unhoused neighbors.
- 11:15 — Reconvene at BZC for a closing circle.

Baika Workshop

Rev. Shinryu Okuma, a special teacher dispatched by Sotoshu in Japan, will offer a Baika workshop live in the zendo on Wednesday, February 14, at 5:40 p.m. “Baika” is a beautiful expression of Soto liturgy, performed by priests and laypeople alike. A form that dates from the early 1950s, it combines ancient melodies with Zen words.

I participated in a short workshop with Rev. Okuma in Los Angeles several months ago, and found his teaching light, uplifting, and very clear. For more background on Baika, see this link:

http://dharmalight.weebly.com/baika.html?fbclid=IwAR2CfGBUwmfzn4pP_alpp2phKrx_1kMKcoCeCPJD4aSqQwDL0Sv1-yv-j2M

We anticipate strong interest in this workshop, so there will be a sign-up on the BZC website around the third week of January.

—Hozan

Founders' Scroll

The scroll hanging in the BZC zendo during Rohatsu was created by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. It is carefully stored in the Founders' Altar and is used in the Founders' Ceremony each month.

Suzuki Roshi calligraphed the names of the three Zen founders: Shakyamuni Buddha (in the middle), Bodhidharma (on the right), and Dogen Zenji (on the left). It is believed that he created these scrolls for the Zen satellite sitting groups associated with San Francisco Zen Center in the late 1960s—Kannon Do Zen Center in Mountain View, Genjo-ji Zen Center in Sonoma, and Berkeley Zen Center.

Ross Blum adds his memory of the scroll: “When I arrived here in 1987, the scroll was in a paper box loosely rolling around inside. On my request, Belinda Sweet, who gifted many

other scrolls to BZC, special-ordered a fitted box from Japan for this scroll. When this beautiful box arrived, she demonstrated the traditional way of wrapping the ribbon around the scroll, making a butterfly knot to securely place it inside the box.”

Here are two quotes from *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* that express the spirit of Zen calligraphy:

“Not trying to make something skillful or beautiful, but simply writing with full attention, as if you were discovering what you were writing for the first time; then your full nature will be in your writing. This is the way of practice, moment after moment.”

“When you do something, you should burn yourself completely, like a good bonfire, leaving no trace of yourself.”

—Debra Callahan



Current Weekly Schedule

Many of our programs are now open to a limited number of in-person 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.

Saturday Speakers, 10:15 a.m.

January 6: Abbot Hozan
January 13: Judy Fleischman
January 20: Abbot Hozan
January 27: Mushim Ikeda

February 3: Abbot Hozan
February 10: Mary Duryee
February 17: Abbot Hozan
February 24: Luminous Heart

Monday Morning Talks, 8:00 a.m.

January 1: Zendo Closed
January 8: Open Discussion
January 15: MLK Neighborhood Engagement
January 22: Evan Vreeland
January 29: Blake Tolbert

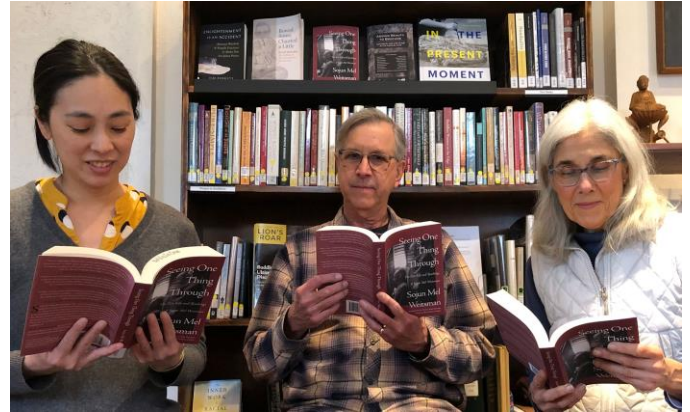
February 5: Open Discussion
February 12: Jake Van Akkeren
February 19: Zendo Closed
February 26: Hax Baker

Friday Afternoon Talks, 5:45 p.m.

January 5: Kevin Souza
February 2: Ed Herzog

Library Hours

The library will be open for browsing from 11:30 until noon on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month. Library staff will be available to help you find books and answer any questions you may have.



Librarians Helen, Nick, and Maria Teresa



Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony (December 9, 2023)

BZC Position Changes

Many helping hands keep a Sangha vibrant and running, and this is how BZC continues to manage the many tasks and functions at our temple.

In deep appreciation we express our gratitude to those who have filled the positions below over the past one or two years. And we welcome those who will now fill these positions.

Note: A complete list of all positions is posted on the patio bulletin board.

<u>Position</u>	<u>Incoming Position Holder</u>	<u>Outgoing Position Holder</u>
Art Coordinator	Debra Callahan	Juliayn Coleman
Bathroom Attendant	Marley Alexander	Dan Jackson
Board Recording Secretary	Simone Brumis	Jonathan Koltz
Bulletin Boards	Preston Evers	Genpo Senauke
Co-Zendo Managers	Preston Evers & Gerry Oliva	Hannah Meara & Genpo Senauke
Half-Day Sitting Leader	Gary Artim	Mark Copithorne
Health/Safety Coordinator	Pauline Kerschen	Ellen Webb
Kitchen Keeper	Cecelia Fitzgerald	Brianna McGuire
Newsletter Distribution	Gen Fujioka	Joe Buckner
Saturday Directors	Margaux Winter & Joe Buckner	Pauline Kerschen & Joe Buckner
Sesshin Directors	Colleen Busch/Mark Copithorne	Rob Lyons
Shika (helps overnight guests)	Cecelia Fitzgerald	Yoni Ackerman
Sunday Sesshin Manager	Helen Cheng (<i>new position</i>)	-----
Work Leader (Saturdays)	Yoni Ackerman	Helen Cheng
Work Leader (Sesshins)	Genpo Senauke	Preston Evers

*If you are interested in learning how you can volunteer at BZC,
please contact Carol Paul at caroljpaul@yahoo.com.*

Acceptance

During our last sesshin the word acceptance came up. I didn't think so much about that before I began practicing zazen. During my early years as a novice, there were times when zazen was excruciatingly painful. Suzuki Roshi was always encouraging us to sit still and not move. Our zazen periods were 40 minutes, just like now. At that time, in the early sixties, his students were mostly novices. He had only been here for five years when I came. Sitting zazen for one period once or twice a week was a significant experience for me. Then I came to my first Saturday morning, which was a longer program. After the first period and kinhin, everyone sat down again. I thought, "They are going to do this again?" I said to the fellow next to me that this was really painful. He said that yes, it always is.

But somehow I kept coming back. I knew that even so, there was something else going on that I was not able to explain. So coursing through a 40-minute period of zazen, when the pain would arise I would hope that the bell would ring and save me from my suffering. My whole life at that moment was waiting to be rescued. Saved by the bell! I simply could not be where I was. But in fact, I had no alternative because my intention was to stay through the 40 minutes. Sometimes, just when we thought the bell would ring, Suzuki Roshi would say in his soft voice, "We will sit ten more minutes." We're bursting at the seams, how are we going to do this for ten more minutes? But we did. This was our basic training.

Suzuki Roshi taught us the meaning of acceptance: We must open ourselves to each sensation and become one with it. If you try to escape you will suffer. But it is not so easy to be one with the pain, because of the embedded associations of our discriminating mind. Most of us have to go through the painful process before we can truly open up and be free from our conditioned responses. Instead of shutting down and resisting, we open up and accept whatever appears, and instead of narrowing our borders we allow them to expand and include whatever appears. It is counterintuitive. Instead of gritting our teeth and clenching our fist, we relax our jaw and open our hand. Suzuki Roshi would encourage us by saying that those who have the most difficulty and see it through will have the most benefit.

As soon as an "uncomfortable" feeling arises and we don't "like" it and don't "want" it, we form an attachment and begin to suffer. Wanting to hold on to a "good" feeling, it is painful when it leaves. So in this sense, acceptance means letting go, or freedom from attachment, which is the bedrock of practice. There is no special state of mind to attach to and no special feeling to desire and no special self to hang on to. This can be called bliss.

—Sojun Mel Weitsman
(from *Seeing One Thing Through*)

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE
for the March–April issue is
Friday, February 16.

Please submit items to
knabb@bopsecrets.org

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