



Berkeley Zen Center



March–April 2022 Newsletter

Reopening

Dear Sangha,

Thank you for your patience and your practice. With significantly declining Covid infection rates in Alameda County, BZC plans to open for in-person and Zoom weekday zazen at 6:00 a.m., beginning on Monday, March 14. As part of a staged reopening of zendo practice, Tuesday through Friday we will offer an hour of zazen followed by service. The 6:00 a.m. program on Monday morning will be 40 minutes of zazen followed by service. (Monday morning talks will continue to be on Zoom at 8:00 a.m., following Zoom-only zazen at 7:30.)

Zazen will be physically distanced, with a capacity of 24 people sitting in the zendo. For the present, wear an N-95 or KN-95 mask and follow any City of Berkeley health protocols during zazen and chanting service. Windows will be open, so dress warmly, according to the weather. A monitor will be at the zendo door, checking the list of vaccination-registered members and helping you find seating. Please note that should we experience another wave of Covid, any or all of these protocols will be revised.

(Continued on next page...)



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

March

Community Picnic

Saturday, 3/5, 12:30–4:00pm

Women's Sesshin

Sunday, 3/6, 8:00am–noon

Founders' Ceremony

Tuesday, 3/8

Board Meeting

Sunday, 3/20, 9:00–11:00am

Sangha Meeting & Budget Approval

Sunday, 3/20, 7:00pm

One-Day Sesshin

Saturday, 3/26

April

Founders' Ceremony

Thursday, 4/7

Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Saturday, 4/9

Board Meeting

Sunday, 4/17, 9:00–11:00am

Note: BZC continues to offer many other events and activities, but during the pandemic these have mostly been via Zoom and have tended not to be planned as far in advance as usual. For more complete and up-to-date information, please check the BZC website and subscribe to BZC's community listserv.

(Reopening, continued from page 1)

Many of you responded in the fall that you would like to come to the zendo, and have sent us your vaccination info. We are reaching out again and ask you to send a photograph of your vaccination and booster card to Helen Cheng, BZC Office Manager, at bzcofficeanager@gmail.com.

The Zoom-only program will continue on the schedule we have been following, including weekdays and the Saturday and Monday morning programs. (There will be a sufficient time after Monday morning zazen to return home to participate in the program on Zoom.) As we iron out the process of morning practice in person, we will include noon and afternoon periods in the zendo as in the past. Please see the BZC website for further details and the latest protocols.

See you in the zendo at last!

Bowing deeply,

Hozan

BZC Community Picnic

Come out for a BZC community picnic! Please save March 5, 12:30–4:00 for a BZC social gathering at Live Oak Park, Picnic Area #2 in Berkeley. The site is next to the Berkeley Art Center at 1275 Walnut Street (across the street from the main part of Live Oak Park).

Everyone in the BZC community is welcome. Please bring yourself and something to eat or drink to share. The site is wheelchair accessible. Vaccination status will not be checked, and masking is optional.

For any questions, please contact Heather Sarantis at heathersarantis@gmail.com or 415-730-4515.

Women's Sesshin

Our annual spring women's sesshin will be Sunday, March 6. The schedule will be 8:00–12:00 and will include periods of zazen, kinhin, a service, and the reading and discussion of a text. The sesshin will be led by BZC women practice leaders.

The suggested donation is \$15 or whatever amount works for you. 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. Be sure to indicate on the payment that it is for the women's sesshin.

For questions or to sign up, please contact Leslie Bartholic at lbartholic@comcast.net.

One-Day Sesshin

We will have a one-day sesshin on Saturday, March 26, 7:50 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The sesshin will be via Zoom. For further information, please contact the sesshin director, Blake Tolbert, at sesshin@berkeleyzencenter.org.

Koan Class

Ellen Webb, Ryushin Andrea Thach, and Ron Nestor will present a class on three koans from Thomas Cleary's translation of *The Book of Serenity*. The class will meet via Zoom on four Thursday evenings, March 17 through April 7, 7:15–8:45 p.m.

This collection of 100 koans or cases is the koan collection most associated with our Soto lineage. We're aiming for interactive class discussions of these three provocative cases, which can be understood from different points of emphasis. We'll supply a scanned copy of Cleary's text and Word files of excellent commentaries by Koun Yamada. For those without printers we will have paper copies

available on the bulletin board shelf at BZC. *The Book of Serenity* is also available from booksellers and online.

The three cases we'll be working with are case #12 (Dizang Planting the Fields), case #20 (Dizang's Nearness), and case #36 (Master Ma Is Unwell). Studying koans in this way is not the same as the Rinzai practice of working with one's teacher and trying to embody the koan, so we want to be clear about the difference. However, we have found it to be rich and helpful in clarifying the essential points of Zen practice.

Cost for the series is \$40 or what you can afford. More information will be posted on the BZC community listserv as we get closer to the dates. All are welcome.

Sangha Meeting and Budget Approval

All BZC members and friends are warmly invited to bring a cup of tea to the online zendo and join this meeting on Sunday, March 20, 7:00 p.m. We will hear committee reports, review the 2021 financial report, discuss the Board-recommended 2022 budget, and consider our 2022 fundraising goals. The budget is our treasurer's best effort to project the financial goals and realities for BZC's current year. After discussion, the budget will be submitted for approval by those in attendance. We look forward to seeing you!

Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Buddhists throughout the world celebrate Buddha's Birthday. We follow the Japanese tradition of symbolically bathing the baby Buddha, represented by a small statue ensconced in a flower-covered bower. This year's ceremony will be in the courtyard on Saturday, April 9, following a short talk by

Abbot Hozan. Due to the uncertain path of Covid we cannot at this point predict the kind of participation this year's ceremony will offer, whether on Zoom or in person. Watch for announcements in early April.

If you would like to help decorate the bower at 7:45 a.m. on April 9, please email Hannah Meara (hmeara@gmail.com). School-age children are welcome to participate. The seven people who sign up first will be asked to take part in person. All children and adults must be fully vaccinated and wear masks.

Spring Practice Period

Our annual spring practice period will begin with a one-day sitting on Saturday, May 7, and continue through a five-day sesshin and Shuso Ceremony on Sunday, June 19. Whether you are sitting in the zendo or at home, Abbot Hozan invites each of us to increase our commitment to practice for these six weeks, while tending to our work, family, and other obligations.

Before the pandemic, Sojun Roshi invited Enzan Chotoku Gary Artim (Round Mountain/Clear Genuine) to be shuso or head student. After a two-year postponement, Hozan has renewed this invitation for Gary to serve as shuso.

In the Soto tradition, a new abbot's first practice period with a shuso is a kind of confirmation of his or her position. With our spring practice period Hozan takes this step.

There will be a Thursday night class with Hozan (subject to be announced).

Due to our Covid protocols, in-person attendance will be limited, and the usual schedule of events may be revised. For a detailed practice period calendar and application form, please check the BZC website after April 15.

Sangha Weeks at Tassajara

Tassajara Mountain Zen Center is a Soto Zen monastery, founded by Suzuki Roshi, in the Ventana Wilderness area east of Carmel.

Tassajara provides two three-month intensive monastic training periods each year. During the rest of the year the monastery provides shorter term opportunities to experience Zen practice and to explore this wild and beautiful setting.

Every summer Tassajara provides an opportunity for sanghas in the Suzuki Roshi lineage to practice together as part of a “Sangha Week” work/study program. Teachers from sanghas can bring a group of seven to ten participants (including the teachers).

This year BZC will offer *two* opportunities for our sangha members to participate in this program: July 1–7 (led by Ryushin Andrea Thach and Susan Marvin) and August 12–19 (led by Ikushin Gerry Oliva and Mary Duryee). For part of each day we will join the summer monastic schedule of sitting and working mornings. The daily program includes 5:50 a.m. zazen, 6:50 service, 7:15 Soji (short work period), 7:30 breakfast with other guest students, 8:30–noon work assignments, and noon lunch with students.

The rest of the day will be structured by each group and will include periods of reading and discussing the teachings of Suzuki Roshi and Sojun Roshi on various aspects of the Dharma. We will also have the opportunity to explore the wonderful hiking trails and to enjoy a soak in the warm mineral baths. In the evening we will join the rest of the guests for dinner and then sit the final zazen period of the day.

The cost for this will be approximately \$80 per day. We will plan to drive down together if possible. If we can’t drive all the way to Tassajara because of parking constraints, there

is a stage from Carmel Valley to the Center for \$65.00 round trip.

If there are more than eight people who want to join a particular week, priority will go to those who can stay for the entire week. Others are encouraged to book separately for the time they are able to attend and are welcome to join all activities. Registration for those not coming for the full week opens on February 15.

For more information about the July 1–7 week, contact Susan (lai_hang@yahoo.com) or Ryushin (andrea.thach@gmail.com). For the August 12–19 week, contact Gerry (gryoliva@gmail.com) or Mary (maduryee@icloud.com).

BZC and Climate Change

Our relationships to our changing climate are complex. There are many folks at BZC who are thinking about, affected by, or acting on climate change through their work or in their free time. Some of us met a few weeks ago at a climate-themed Zoom meeting in January; others have undoubtedly been in conversation for years.

This short regular column will be a place to uplift these climate conversations, programs, and actions, so that members of BZC can find new ways to engage with climate change. This month, we’d like to focus on the topic of eco-grief.

Eco-grief is a psychological response to environmental degradation or climate change. Another commonly used term is climate anxiety, or “solastalgia” — a sense that your home is changing for the worse, or disappearing, as you live in it. These topics have been in the news lately, notably in the *New York Times* article “Climate Change Enters the Therapy Room” and the *New Yorker* article “Mapping

Climate Grief One Pixel at a Time.”

The first step in coping with eco-grief is to speak with others—to share with them the very real sadness you are experiencing. That’s why we’d like to introduce an upcoming program (dates TBD)—possibly a class, group, or workshop—dedicated to processing and coping with eco-grief, led by BZC member Judy Smith and others. Please keep an eye out for more information!

One of the best ways to make creative use of eco-grief is by taking collective action on local climate change issues. Our next column will focus on how to get involved in the Bay Area climate advocacy landscape. We are developing a Getting Started in Climate Advocacy workshop to take place some time in the coming months.

If there is a climate topic, memory, or meditation that you would like to share or see in this column, please reach out to bmcguire442@gmail.com.

BZC Online Schedule

Though we are hoping to phase in more in-person activities in the coming months, we are continuing to offer the following programs on the Zoom platform. To take part in any of these public programs, go to the BZC website (www.berkeleyzencenter.org) and click the “Enter the Zendo Now” link.

Zazen Monday–Friday:

- 6:00–7:00 a.m.
- 7:30–8:10 a.m.
- 5:40–6:20 p.m.

(See Calendar for special Monday morning schedule.)

Chanting for All Who Are Suffering:

Tuesdays, 8:15–8:45 a.m.

Well-Being Service:

Wednesdays, 8:10 a.m.

Wednesday Night Drop-In:

See BZC website for details.

Saturday Program:

Zendo opens: 8:30 a.m.

Zazen: 8:40–9:20

Service: 9:20–9:30

Kinhin/break: 9:30–9:40

Zazen: 9:40–10:10

Lecture: 10:15–11:15

Zazen Instruction is offered every Saturday from 8:40–9:20 a.m., but via a different link. Go to the BZC website and click “Zazen Instruction.”

Saturday Speakers, 10:15 a.m.

March 5:	Denkei Raul Moncayo
March 12:	Judy Fleischman
March 19:	Karen DeCotis
March 26:	Abbot Hozan
April 2:	Karen Sundheim
April 9:	Abbot Hozan
April 16:	Mary Mocine
April 23:	Abbot Hozan
April 30:	Marie Hopper

Monday Morning Talks, 8:00 a.m.

March 7:	Open Discussion
March 14:	James Kenney
March 21:	Lisa Nelbach
March 28:	Liz Horowitz
April 4:	Open Discussion
April 11:	Preston Evers
April 18:	Christian Evans
April 25:	Ross Blum

Friday Afternoon Talks, 5:45 p.m.

March 4:	Mira Queen
April 1:	Judy Smith

No Gaining Idea

Suzuki Roshi often said we shouldn't have "a gaining idea" or any idea of attainment. A student once asked him why anybody would do zazen if they didn't have a gaining idea. He said, "You still have one gaining idea." "What is that?" the student wanted to know. He replied, "That's a secret."

Recently we completed a class series on the Three Doors of Liberation—Emptiness, Signlessness, and Wishlessness. These three practices appear in early Buddhist teachings, but are more commonly found in the Mahayana. In contemporary Buddhism, the late master Thich Nhat Hanh frequently taught on these. The third door—Wishlessness or Aimlessness—has a particular resonance in our Zen tradition. It is a rich vein of practice in Soto Zen, from Dogen through to Suzuki and Sojun Roshi. Scholar Edward Conze offers this gloss on Wishlessness (*apranihita* in Sanskrit):

The word *apranihita* means literally that one "places nothing in front," and it designates someone who makes no plans for the future, has no hopes for it, who is aimless, not bent on anything, without predilection or desire for the objects of perception.

Late in his life, Sojun Roshi lectured on the Three Doors of Liberation, and said this about Wishlessness:

Wishlessness means letting go and appreciating. Letting go and being able to appreciate everything around us just as it is. To accept myself just as I am. This is called virtue. Everyone has their own virtue, which is not the same as value. Value is comparison. We stop comparing ourselves to others.

In our Soto Zen practice, wishlessness or aimlessness is expressed as "no gaining idea" (*mushotoku* in Japanese), hammered home by Suzuki Roshi and Sojun, who drew their wisdom from the ancestors and from their own life experience. In *Shobogenzo-Zuimonki* Dogen Zenji offers this advice, his approach to wishlessness, no gaining idea, and the heart of Buddhist practice:

Simply do good without expectation of reward or recognition, be truly gainless, and work for the sake of benefiting others. The primary point to bear in mind is to drop your ego. To keep this mind you have to awaken to impermanence.

"Awakening to impermanence" might sound like a gaining idea—the quest for enlightenment or attainment. Maybe this is even the "secret" Suzuki Roshi spoke of. But our teachers are clear that awakening is not a goal. Rather it is always right here, if only we can let go of our goals and aims. In fact, it is a "losing idea"—losing our self-centeredness and attachment to ego. This is such a simple shift, but maybe it is not so easy. This point is pivotal in the Heart Sutra when Avalokiteshvara says to Shariputra:

With nothing to attain, a bodhisattva depends on prajna paramita
And the mind is no hindrance.
Without any hindrance no fears exist;
Far apart from every perverted view one dwells in nirvana.

Chanting this daily, week after week, year after year, still I hear the call of those gaining ideas.
Sometimes they whisper in my ear, sometimes they roar like a diesel. I confess that I am only a
foolish human. Like so many of us, I am just walking up and down in the world. Fortunately, there is
a well-traveled path to follow. If one follows the path and the practice, it leads right through the
wilderness of gaining ideas. In faith, it leads to freedom.

—Hozan Alan Senauke



The Year of the Tiger
(Sumi-e painting by Kazumi Cranney)

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE

for the May–June issue is
Friday, April 15.

Please submit items to
knabb@bopsecrets.org.

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