



Berkeley Zen Center



May–June 2023 Newsletter

Spring Practice Period

In Dogen Zenji's *Eihei Koroku* this is recorded: "Dogen held up his whisk and with it drew a circle in the air. He said, 'Practice period goes beyond this.' "

For more than thirty years BZC has offered a spring practice period. In the Zen tradition the word used for practice period is *ango*, which means "peaceful abiding." This year's practice period—May 13 to June 25—will begin with an opening sesshin (including the Shuso entering ceremony) on Saturday, May 13. I have asked Sue Oehser (*Jumyo Seishin/Bright Pearl Pure Faith*) to serve as Shuso, or Head Student. Preston Evers will take the position of Benji (Shuso's attendant), organizing sangha teas and assisting Sue in various ways.

The practice period will include a Thursday evening class, a community dinner, and other activities, culminating in a five-day sesshin June 21–25. Detailed information, including signups for practice period and all events, can be found on the BZC website.

Our practice period, in the springtime when the circle of life turns in renewal, is an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the practice of living an enlightened life, to renew our beginner's mind. Dogen Zenji (*Continued...*)



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

May

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 5/6, 9:10am

Founders' Ceremony
Monday, 5/8, 7:00am

One-Day Sesshin (Open Practice Period)
Saturday, 5/13

Board Meeting
Sunday, 5/21, 9:00–11:00am

June

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 6/3, 9:10am

Founders' Ceremony
Wednesday, 6/7, 7:00am

All-Sangha Work Day
Sunday, 6/11

Practice Period Dinner
Saturday, 6/17, 4:00pm

Board Meeting
Sunday, 6/18, 9:00–11:00am

Five-Day Sesshin (End Practice Period)
Wednesday–Sunday, 6/21–6/25

Shuso Hossen
Sunday, 6/25

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

(*Spring Practice Period*, continued from page 1)
speaks of “practice realization,” meaning that our Zen practice does not aim at awakening as a goal, but rather that our practice expresses the enlightenment that is always within us and available to us. Practice period includes sitting, walking, chanting, cooking, serving, eating, working, resting—all of this is enlightened activity, woven into whole cloth by zazen.

BZC members have jobs, families, and responsibilities outside the gate. Our practice is as much in our homes and in the world as in the zendo. This is our ongoing Dharma experiment—dedicated lay practice, sitting with everything. During practice period we do have recommended requirements, but within these requirements each person creates his or her own schedule. Some will be able to do only the minimum; others who are able can extend themselves further.

Each of us must be realistic about our capacity. The important thing—during practice period and throughout the year—is to clarify and set a practice intention, then do our best to keep to that intention. You don’t have to break your bones to do practice period. But don’t be slack with yourself either. With Right Effort our practice edge comes into view. What is the Middle Way? Whatever commitment and schedule one arrives at, we are all practicing together intimately.

Not everyone in the sangha has the time and energy to participate in practice period. That is completely understandable, and everyone is welcome to come to the zendo when they can. The PP class is open to all, and sesshins will be open to non-PP participants as space allows. All of us are supporting and being supported by the practice period—peaceful abiding. These weeks together can extend throughout the year. As Dogen says, “Practice period goes beyond this.” —Hozan

Practice Period Class

This spring our practice period class will draw on the riches of Suzuki Roshi’s *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*. Beneath the warm and inviting tone of Suzuki Roshi’s words are boundless depths that appear anew with each reading. Over nearly fifty years of teaching, Sojun Roshi never reached the limits of this book’s Zen wisdom. So we continually begin again.

We will share a selection of chapters, which will be announced. Practice period members (and in fact all BZC practitioners) ought to have a copy of this book. A PDF of the whole text can also be found at this link:

<https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Zen-Mind.pdf>

Classes will be held in the zendo and online at 7:15 p.m. for five Thursday evenings from May 18 to June 15. Suggested class fee is \$50, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Practice Period Sesshins

Our upcoming practice period will begin with a one-day sesshin on Saturday, May 13, and will culminate with a five-day sesshin Wednesday June 21 through Sunday June 25.

All will be led by Abbot Hozan and will be offered in-person as well as online. You can register for the May 13 sesshin through the BZC website, or by clicking here: <https://forms.gle/WF79DJcEV75Jlguw5>. A signup form for the June sesshin will be posted on the website and listserv in early June. All sesshins will be from 7:50 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Deadline for signup will be during the week prior.

These sesshins will generally follow our winter format, with three periods of zazen in the morning followed by a dharma talk, then a midday break for lunch, rest, and work period,

then three periods of zazen in the afternoon.

A modified oryoki lunch will be served at tables in the courtyard. To purchase a set of oryoki bowls and/or to sign up for an oryoki training class, click here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSei9bsUsz0ewOBbO9by2oR-Xj5Q3X6bUnTzY1n69saxxhrrxA/viewform>

For all in-person participants, Covid protocols will apply. You must be fully vaccinated and boosted, and must wear a 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 related to the May 13 or June 21–25 sesshin. The suggested donation is \$25 per day for in-person attendees, and \$15 for online participants (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.

Midyear Fundraiser

This summer BZC will be asking for donations toward important projects for our buildings. We have a design plan to upgrade the heating and ventilation in the community room and the apartment above it. We also plan to start the longer-term project of installing double-paned windows throughout the property, beginning with the community room. This project will include removing dry rot that has accumulated over time, and will go a long way toward reducing our carbon footprint.

We are hoping to raise \$40,000, which in addition to the \$25,000 currently in the fund will allow us to do the heating and ventilation and to start on the windows. Much thanks to our Buildings & Grounds Manager, Greg Denny, for tirelessly consulting with engineers and potential contractors.

Sangha Work Day

Please save the date and join us for our All-Sangha Work Day on Sunday, June 11. The day will open with coffee and pastries at 8:00 a.m., then zazen from 8:15 to 8:40, work circle at 8:45, with work starting at 9:00. Lunch will be provided by our tenzos from noon until work circle at 12:45 p.m., and we'll wind up with informal zazen at 3:45–4:00. Mary Duryee will be the work leader for the day.

Please come and join the festivities of caring for our temple property. Whether you are here for part or the entire work day, all who enter through our gates reap the benefits of our efforts!

Buddha's Birthday Party



Buddha's Birthday Ceremony (April 8)



Birthday cake bakers Peter Overton & Mary Duryee

Coming-of-Age Program

BZC is offering a Coming-of-Age program for youth ages 12–14. Participants will receive a basic introduction to Buddhist teachings, learn about mindfulness, precepts, and meditation, and celebrate their journey toward adulthood.

The program will meet one Sunday a month for two hours from September 2023 through June 2024. For more information, please contact Marie Hopper at marie_hopper@sbcglobal.net.



Sue Oehser and volunteers preparing Baby Buddha's bower

Washington Shuso

This winter, BZC's Ryushin Andrea Thach was invited to be the shuso teacher for her long-time student Iku Shun Desiree Webster at Red Cedar Zen Community in Bellingham, Washington. Desiree led an enthusiastic, buoyant, and deep eight-week practice period and shuso class that was appreciated by all.



Ryushin and Desiree

Invitation to Attend

Did you know that all BZC members are invited to attend Practice Committee (PC) and Board meetings? PC meetings are held every Monday 8:40–9:30 a.m. Members with practice positions review upcoming events and assess recent past events, thereby providing feedback and improving processes as needed. New ideas are discussed and implemented when appropriate. Every voice heard is important and valued. To attend, contact BZC coordinator Carol Paul, who will email you the Zoom link prior to the meeting.

Board meetings take place one Sunday per month, 9:00–11:00 a.m. The Board discusses BZC financials, building projects, legal issues, and much more. Dates are listed in the newsletter. If you'd like to attend, please contact Board president Karen Sundheim, who will email you the link prior to the meeting. Also contact Karen if you'd like to see the minutes from previous Board meetings.

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.

Saturday Speakers, 10:15 a.m.

May 6:	Ben Connelly
May 13:	Abbot Hozan
May 20:	Sue Oehser
May 27:	Susan Marvin

June 3:	Abbot Hozan
June 10:	Sue Oehser
June 17:	Abbot Hozan
June 24:	Abbot Hozan

Monday Morning Talks, 8:00 a.m.

May 1:	Open Discussion of "Many Communities One Sangha"
May 8:	Simone Brumis
May 15:	Sue Oehser
May 22:	Peter Overton
May 29:	Zendo Holiday

June 5:	Open Discussion
June 12:	Ron Nestor
June 19:	Sue Oehser
June 26:	Zendo Holiday

Friday Afternoon Talks, 5:45 p.m.

May 5:	Sue Dunlap
June 2:	Sue Oehser

Maha Ghosananda—What Is the Most Important Thing?

My “talk” this month is about an encounter with the great Cambodian teacher Maha Ghosananda—an excerpt from my new book Turning Words: Transformative Encounters with Buddhist Teachers (Shambhala, 2023). This piece was the basis for a lecture I gave at BZC on March 25, 2023. (Hozan Alan Senauke)

In the Autumn of 1992 about forty of us, mostly from across Asia, took the night train from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, freezing all night in the excessive air conditioning, eventually arriving in Chiang Mai at dawn. Open vans took us to Wat Umong, the “tunnel temple” at the foot of Doi Suthep to the west of the city. This was my first trip to Thailand, and my first International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) conference. The friends I traveled with and met there have been my close dharma brothers and sisters ever since.

An aging monk, diminutive and somewhat androgynous, took center stage in his orange robes. He spoke briskly, in low tones. The smile on his face was audible. This was the first time I heard Maha Ghosananda, Cambodian patriarch in exile, teach.

Later, I met with Bhante Ghosananda numerous times throughout the 90s—both at INEB conferences and in the Bay Area. Bhante traveled alone, and his students and supporters often did not know where he was or where he was going. From time to time someone would call and ask if I had seen Bhante: “We think he is headed to San Francisco.” And he would indeed show up in a day or two, completely calm, laughing easily, walking, floating two inches above the ground, and always moving forward.

Back to Chiang Mai in 1992. Maha Ghosananda made himself comfortable sitting on stage. He beamed at the assembly and asked, “What is the most important thing?” He called on young monks, on elders, on the INEB notables. Each threw out a good answer and each was met with a disappointed nod of the head. This went on for twenty minutes. Finally, Bhante said, “The most important thing is eating.” In his book *Step by Step* Maha Ghosananda explains:

Life is eating and drinking through all of our senses. And life is keeping from being eaten. What eats us? Time! What is time? Time is living in the past or living in the future, feeding on the emotions. Beings who can say that they are mentally healthy for even one minute are rare in the world. Most of us suffer from clinging to pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings, and from hunger and thirst. Most living beings have to eat and drink every second through their eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and nerves. We eat twenty-four hours a day without stopping! We crave food for the body, food for feeling, food for volitional action, and food for rebirth. We are what we eat. We are the world, and we eat the world. . . .

Time is also an eater. In traditional Cambodian stories there is often a giant with many mouths who eats everything. This giant is time. If you eat time, you gain nirvana. You can eat time by living in the moment. When you live just in this moment, time cannot eat you.

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE
for the July–August issue is
Friday, June 16.

Please submit items to
knabb@bopsecrets.org.

Berkeley Zen Center
1931 Russell Street
Berkeley, CA 94703