



Berkeley Zen Center



November–December 2023 Newsletter

Sojun Roshi's New Book

Sojun Roshi's new book—*Seeing One Thing Through: The Zen Life and Teachings of Sojun Mel Weitsman*—is scheduled for publication by Counterpoint Press on December 12. The book, lovingly assembled over the last several years by Sojun with editorial support by Ron Nestor, Kika Hellein, Raghav Bandla, Ryushin Andrea Thach, and other sangha members, features a memoir and a rich collection of edited dharma talks.

Advance reviews have been very positive. To quote from just one, Joie Szu-Chiao Chen in *Buddhadharma* writes:

“... remarkable wisdom of a humble life of practice. Weitsman's remembrances are full of charm and told without pretension, and his teachings, too, are without frills, going straight to the point and to the heart.”

Though we won't have copies of the book here at BZC until December, when they will become available in stores, you can place advance orders at one of the online booksellers. (See the book cover and ordering information on the 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

November

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 11/5

Founders' Ceremony
Tuesday, 11/7, 7:00am

One-Day Sitting/Close Aspects of Practice
Saturday, 11/11

Board Meeting
Sunday, 11/12, 9:00–11:00am

Women's Sesshin
Sunday, 11/19, 8:00am–12:00noon

Zendo Holiday
Thursday, 11/23

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 11/25, 9:10am

December

Rohatsu Sesshin
Monday-Sunday, 12/4–12/10

Suzuki Roshi Annual Memorial
Monday, 12/4, 4:30pm

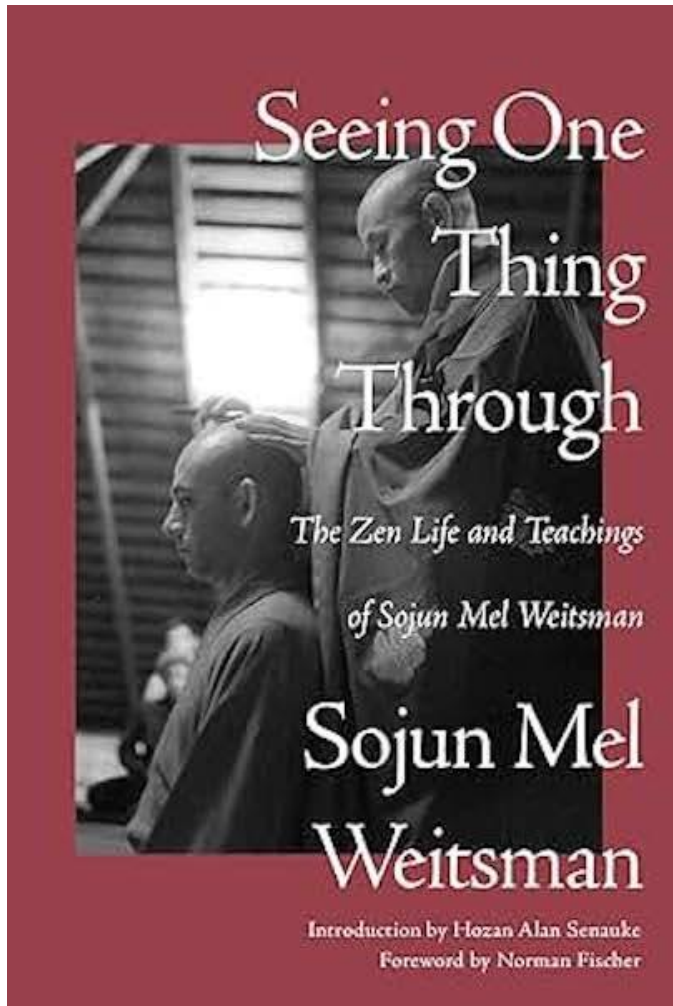
Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony
Saturday, 12/9, 11:15am

Zendo Holiday
Monday, 12/11

Winter Interim
12/17–12/31

New Year's Eve Sitting & Party
Sunday, 12/31, 8:00pm–1:00am

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



Order from Amazon.com:

https://www.amazon.com/Seeing-One-Thing-Through-Teachings/dp/1640096191/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2OSZAXACCU11C&keywords=seeing+one+thing+through&qid=1697472386&sprefix=seeing+one+thing+through%2Caps%2C198&sr=8-1

Order from Bookshop.org:

<https://bookshop.org/p/books/seeing-one-thing-through-the-zen-life-and-teachings-of-sojun-mel-weitsman-mel-weitzman/19866570?ean=9781640096196>

Rohatsu Sesshin

Each year we commemorate the Buddha's enlightenment with a seven-day Rohatsu sesshin. This year Abbot Hozan will lead Rohatsu from Monday, December 4, through Sunday, December 10, 6:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Note the early morning start.) The sesshin will be offered in-person as well as online. A sign-up form will be posted on the website several weeks prior to sesshin. Minimum participation is 3 days, of which 2 must be consecutive. **Please register no later than Monday, November 27.**

For all in-person participants, Covid protocols will apply. We require that you be fully vaccinated and boosted. Indoor mask wearing will be optional. If you have any Covid symptoms such as fever, cough, etc., we suggest that you shift to online participation.

If you need overnight lodging, there will be spots available at the Zen Center. Please contact Cecelia Fitzgerald at shika@berkelezyzencenter.org to arrange this.

We will be offering oryoki breakfast and lunch in the zendo. It is important that all participants be trained in the oryoki forms. There will be an oryoki training prior to sesshin, details will be on the website in November. For further information please contact Sue Oehser at soehser@earthlink.net. If you want to purchase an oryoki set, contact Ellen Webb at elweb@sbcglobal.net.

When paying for sesshin, please indicate on your check or in the PayPal note field that your donation is for the 2023 Rohatsu Sesshin. The suggested donation is \$35 per day, or whatever you can afford. Mail a check to the BZC Office Manager at 1931 Russell St., Berkeley 94703, or pay via 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.

Two Rohatsu Ceremonies

Our Rohatsu sesshin always includes two annual ceremonies: the Suzuki Roshi Memorial (this year on Monday, December 4, 4:30 p.m.) and the Buddha's Enlightenment ceremony (this year on Saturday, December 9, approximately 11:15 a.m., following the morning lecture).

Those not in the zendo for sesshin at those times are encouraged to participate in these ceremonies via online zendo.

Women's Sesshin

The Women's Sesshin will be Sunday, November 19, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, with tea and cookies following.

We are delighted to welcome Mushim (Patricia) Ikeda, a founding and core teacher at East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC). Ikeda began practice at Zen Buddhist Temple in Ann Arbor, Michigan, followed by a journey of several years through the U.S. and South Korea, visiting monasteries. After settling in Oakland and having a son, she contributed a regular column on Buddhist family practice for *Turning Wheel*, the publication of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. She has taught meditation retreats for people of color, social justice activists, and women, nationally, based in the values of cultural humility and co-creative self-determination in marginalized communities. She continues to teach at EBMC.

Hannah Meara will be the doshi, and Mary Duryee will be the sesshin director. Sign-up will begin in early November and will be

posted on the website. Please direct questions to Mary Duryee at maryduryee@gmail.com



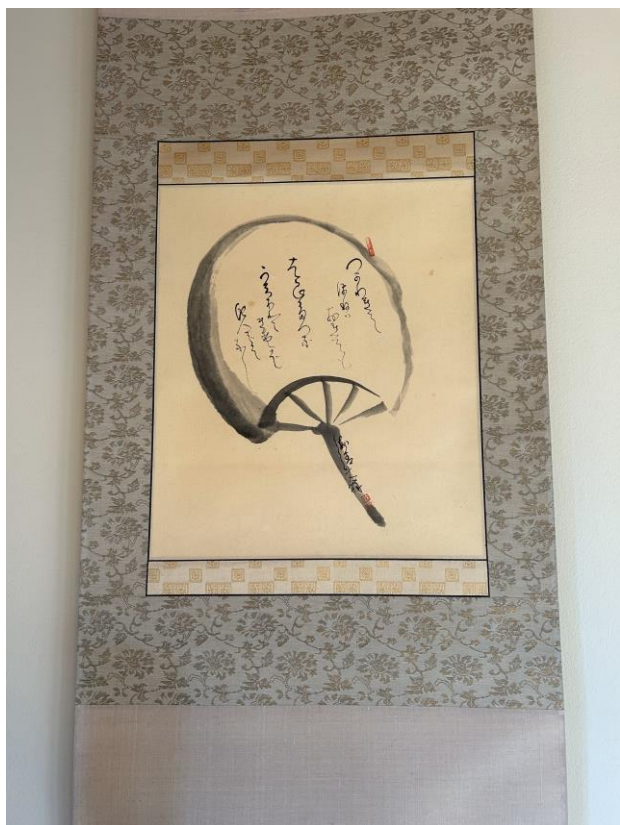
Mushim Ikeda

New Year's Eve at BZC

As in the past, BZC will host a New Year's Eve celebration consisting of an evening of zazen followed by a bonfire and refreshments on the patio. Details will be finalized closer to the event, but we anticipate zazen in both the zendo and the online zendo. Late in the evening those present can take turns ringing the densho bell for a total of 108 times. At midnight we will chant the Heart Sutra and then gather outside to read and place in the bonfire the names of those who have died this year. Refreshments will be served and good wishes shared all around.

If you wish to add names to the list, please contact Zendo Manager Preston Evers at prestonevers13@gmail.com.

“Zen Fan” by Kasumi Bunsho



During Aspects of Practice (October 14 through November 11), the BZC sangha is studying *Genjokoan*. A scroll called “Zen Fan” by the calligrapher Kasumi Bunsho has been selected to hang next to the altar. The choice of “Zen Fan” was inspired by these words in *Genjokoan*:

Zen Master Baoche of Mt. Magu was fanning himself. A monk approached him and asked, “The nature of wind is ever present and permeates everywhere. Why are you waving a fan?”

The master said, “You know only that the wind’s nature is ever present—you don’t know that it permeates everywhere.”

The monk said, “How does the wind permeate everywhere?”

The master just continued waving the fan.

The monk bowed deeply.

Kasumi Bunsho, a Zen priest, is recognized for his extensive calligraphy. Many feel that his

calligraphy expresses an energetic exuberance, reflective of his practice. He was a direct pupil of Nakahara Nantembo (1839–1925) and Deiryu Kutsu (1895–1954), both devoted Zen monks and highly recognized calligraphers.

Kasumi was born in Gifu Prefecture, in the region of Honshu in central Japan, on December 25, 1905, and died at the age of 92 on October 17, 1998. Like his teachers, Kasumi loved to paint monks begging (*takuhatsu*), which he believed was an important monastic practice of humility and gratitude. In 1943 he became the Abbot of Kaisei-ji Zen monastery, and in 1990 the 642nd Abbot of Myoshin-ji, one of Kyoto’s oldest major Zen temples.

Deiryu Kutso influenced Kasumi as they shared a similar approach to painting Zen circles (*enso*). Deiryu and Kasumi frequently brushed images in the center of their *ensos* as well as brushing their *ensos* with a distinctive and unusual gray ink. One can see the presence of gray ink in “Zen Fan.” Kasumi Bunsho signed the handle of “Zen Fan” with his pen name, Kaisei Dainin. The calligraphy on “Zen Fan” is translated here:

*When you use
it skillfully
spring comes again;
for a fan to work
you need to rely on others*

Board Changes

As the new year approaches, the Board constituency changes. We offer a farewell and many bows of gratitude to our Vice-President Hannah Meara, our long-term Treasurer Laurie Senauke, and our member-at-large Luminous Heart Penelope Thompson. All three have contributed greatly to our sangha. Hannah has researched and initiated green energy practices; Laurie has handled and reported on

our budget, overseen the Office Manager, and participated on the Finance Committee for many years; and Luminous Heart has offered her discernment and communication skills to the benefit of all.

We are happy to welcome Rob Lyons, our current Sesshin Director and former Buildings and Grounds Manager, as incoming Vice-President. Erna Andre will be bringing her unique skills to be our new Treasurer; and former Recording Secretary Jonathan Koltz will be a new member-at-large. We are glad to welcome Simone Brumis as our incoming Recording Secretary.

And finally, much gratitude to Dan Jackson and Ellen Webb, who will begin their second two-year terms as at-large members.

BZC Sangha Study Weeks at Tassajara

BZC was fortunate to be able to send two groups for two different weeks to Tassajara. Sangha members joined Tassajara residents for morning and evening zazen periods, meals, and the morning work period. Afternoons were open for studying together and exploring Tassajara. These were rare opportunities to experience the monastery since it was closed to guests as the result of the pandemic.



June-July group

One group, led by Ryushin Thach and Susan Marvin, attended June 27–July 2 and studied Sojun Roshi's forthcoming book, *Seeing One Thing Through*. Also at Tassajara that week were sangha members from Ancient Dragon Zen Gate (Chicago) and Queer Dharma, led by Tova Green and Lisa Hoffman.

The second group, attending September 5–10, was led by Ikushin Gerry Oliva and Josu Mary Duryee, and studied Hongzhi's *Cultivating the Empty Field*, translated by Taigen Dan Leighton. Sangha members from A Single Blade of Grass (Brooklyn) were also at Tassajara during that week. This was also the last week study groups were able to be at Tassajara, as the monastery transitioned into a two-week work period in preparation for the fall practice period.



September group

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. This is how they 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).

Branching Streams Flow on in the West

The biennial Branching Streams conference was held in late September, hosted by Santa Cruz Zen Center. This year's gathering was the best yet, a breathtaking exchange of questions, ideas, and aspirations.

Branching Streams originally started twenty years ago as an opportunity for small temples and sitting group leaders with a strong affiliation with SFZC to share experiences and to support each other. More recently, sanghas with leadership trained in the Suzuki Roshi lineage have been invited to send up to three members of their choosing, including newer practitioners and other community leaders or emerging leaders. This year only Ryushin was able to attend from BZC.

At this conference, Branching Streams adopted an "Open Space" format. Using the topic loosely defined as "Transitions," anyone of the 60 attendees from 30+ different sanghas could raise a topic for discussion and facilitate it. Together we explored the experience of imagination and art in expressing the Dharma; engaged in an intergenerational discussion of "Why is Tassajara necessary?" (as a prerequisite for becoming a priest); shared our

efforts to express "the path of the Bodhisattva" in the world; spontaneously created a ceremony for healing pain around Climate Change; and discussed neurodiversity, making sanghas accessible, aging and medical aid in dying, and much more. Former Santa Cruz poet laureate Danusha Lumiere shared her poetry and helped us write our own; we shared our no-talent talent and ended with a Fall Solstice ceremony. We left not so much with information, but filled with ideas, intimate connection, and newly imagined ways forward to create Zen in America.



Suzuki Roshi's Japanese Zen has fully manifested its North American identity in its third generation. Perhaps you'll see your face in the crowd at the next meeting?

Your Donations at Work!

Thanks to generous sangha donations, major work has been completed in 1929 Russell, the apartment above the Community Room. There is now a heat pump and a complete ventilation system, including ducting, registers, and thermostat. None of this existed before. Also, those smelly and noisy gas heaters in the Community Room and apartment above have been removed, and the openings have been dry-walled.

Next on the agenda: we will begin replacing Community Room windows with secure, energy-saving double-paned windows. Since these are quite expensive, we will do a few at a time as our budget allows. Check out the photos below of work accomplished. Huge thank-yous to Greg Denny as Project Manager; to Mary Duryee for her wisdom and guidance throughout; to residents Helen Cheng and Preston Evers for their patience and collaboration during months-long preparation and several weeks of disruption during the actual work; and to Cheryl Gordon for keeping focus and preparing for the windows replacement.



Bag Lunch Project

The Bag Lunch Project has made and delivered about 500 lunches over the past year to the Women's Daytime Drop-In Center at 2218 Acton Street in Berkeley. Additionally, thanks to the generosity of many at BZC, we have collected and/or purchased personal care items in our drives for the women and children whom the center serves. Twenty lunches twice monthly does not really put a dent in the call to end hunger and homelessness; still, this small effort does make a difference in the lives of those families being helped. We are told repeatedly how much the women enjoy our lunches and how grateful they are for our efforts.

WDDC's mission is to help empower homeless women and children for a brighter future. To that end, they offer drop-in services including to-go meals, groceries, and hygiene products Monday through Friday 9am–2pm through their service window.

WDDC offers housing resource services to unhoused participants over the phone as well; they are also the North County Housing Resource Center (serving Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville families).

If you would like to support this project at BZC, please send a check to BZC or use the Generosity button on the website. *Please be sure to note that your contribution is for The Bag Lunch Project* (or, alternatively, contact office manager Helen at bzcoffice manager@gmail.com to let her know).

If you would like to help shop, make sandwiches, put together bags, or drop off lunches at the center, please contact Susan Marvin. Each task takes about an hour, and we would be most happy to have you join us.

Preston, Mira, Gary, Luminous Heart,
Emily, Tom, Bob, Laurie, and Susan

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.

November 4:	Karen Sundheim
November 11:	Carol Paul
November 18:	Abbot Hozan
November 25:	John Busch

December 2:	Gary Artim
December 9:	Abbot Hozan
December 16:	Ross Blum
December 23:	Zendo Holiday
December 30:	Zendo Holiday

Monday Morning Talks, 8:00 a.m.

November 6:	Open Discussion
November 13:	Fulani Offutt
November 20:	Tom Painter
November 27:	Peter Enyeart

December 4:	Open Discussion
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Friday Afternoon Talks, 5:45 p.m.

November 3:	Ryushin Andrea Thach
December 1:	Daniel Perlman

Bodaisatta Shishobo: The Bodhisattva's Four Embracing Dharmas

Part 1: Giving*

Several years after returning from China in 1227, Zen Master Dogen created the first Japanese Soto Zen monastery, Koshoji, in the southern reaches of Kyoto. There he found the right setting to practice, teach, write, and develop a monastic community devoted to his zazen-centered approach to Zen. But the social climate of Kamakura Japan, which saw the full flowering of new and popular forms of Buddhism, including Zen, Shin, and Nichiren schools, was marked by feudalism, political tensions, and civil strife which even played out among rival Buddhist sects.

In May of 1243, very likely in the midst of internecine violence among Buddhists, Dogen Zenji wrote “Bodaisatta Shishobo” — “The Bodhisattva's Four Embracing Dharmas” — the 28th fascicle of his masterwork *Shobogenzo* — presenting it to his community as guidance for how to respond skillfully to their difficult circumstances. At the top of their minds, no doubt, was their imminent removal from Koshoji to the wilds of Echizen Province, where Dogen founded Eihei-ji — Temple of Eternal Peace — in the remaining ten years of his life. By late July 1243 they were gone from Koshoji. I can only imagine what a wrenching departure that was. I think of this today, as war burns through Israel and Gaza, playing out as a nightmare, extending decades of intergenerational trauma. There must be an alternative to cycles of hatred and violence.

Shishobo** presents four direct methods of social interaction, four ways we can embrace each other. These four Dharmas are: Giving or *Dana*, Loving Speech, Beneficial Action, and what Dogen calls Identity-Action, more accessibly translated as Cooperation. These were already ancient practices in Dogen's time. The four *sangaha vatthu*, variously translated as the four ways of showing favor, the foundations of social unity, or the bonds of fellowship, are found in the early Pali texts such as the *Sangaha Sutta* (*Anguttara Nikaya* — IV.32) and in the principal Mahayana sutras.

To embrace is to encircle. I put my arms around you; you put your arms around me. This is how we turn toward each other and show our love. To embrace is to unify, to make one of two. In an embrace, the limits of body, skin, feelings, thoughts momentarily merge. Seen from the outside, two beings are briefly one, dancers together on the vast stage of life.

Each Dharma is a practice, pointing toward compassion and embrace. Or more accurately, how we express the truth that we are not separate from each other. Because we are not separate from others, these four Dharmas move both Bodhisattvas and sentient beings toward freedom from the poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion. In the act of embrace there is no distinction between self and other, between a Bodhisattva and an ordinary being.

But to embrace is not simply merging, a mushy and meaningless oneness. When an embrace ends, when the dance is over, we return to our individuality. But something is changed. Consider the first embracing Dharma, giving. This is a Bodhisattva's essential practice, *dana paramita*. Giving one's attention, friendship, community, material aid, spiritual teachings, community, and fearlessness. And we offer our respect, our voices, incense, flowers, light, tea, and food. Our gifts circulate, without us holding on to them possessively.

Giving includes all the other Embracing Dharmas. Dogen begins "Shishobo" by explaining:

Giving or Offering means not being greedy. Not to be greedy means not to covet. Not to covet commonly means not to flatter. Even if we rule the four continents, in order to offer teachings of the true Way we must simply and unfailingly not be greedy. It is like offering treasures we are about to discard to those we do not know. We give flowers blooming on the distant mountains to the Tathagata, and offer treasures accumulated in past lives to living beings. Whether our gifts are Dharma or material objects, each gift is truly endowed with the virtue of Offering or *dana*.

Giving begins with the recognition that there is nothing but giving in the whole universe. The universe and all beings are continuously giving. This is our spiritual understanding. And yet each of us must still do our part and cultivate the practice of giving. I give myself to practice and practice offers itself to enlightenment and peace. But in this world peace often implies its shadow side, war. The taste of tears, corrosive doubt, and decay fall within the circle of my own body and mind. War is here, right where I get fooled by self-attachment and privilege. True giving means giving up one's small self. It means not hiding. It also means giving fearlessness by showing others that I am willing to face my own failure and despair as a natural part of being completely alive.

We offer gifts and guidance in many forms. At the heart of these teachings is the understanding that peace is connection. On a simple level, material goods are given. On a higher level, teaching is shared. And on the highest level there is just connection, the endless society of being, the vast assembly of Bodhisattvas. In Lewis Hyde's wonderful book *The Gift* he describes dinner in a restaurant in the south of France:

The patrons sit at a long communal table, and each finds before his plate a modest bottle of wine. Before the meal begins, a man will pour his wine not into his own glass but into his neighbor's. And his neighbor will return the gesture, filling the first man's empty glass. In an economic sense nothing has happened. No one has any more wine than he did to begin with. But society has appeared where there was none before.

The gift itself is only a gift so long as it remains in circulation. A monk or nun carries an empty bowl from house to house, or sits in the zendo with ori-yoki bowls laid out on the tan. The bowl is

emptiness, yet in this material world food is offered so that one may live. Emptiness and form embrace and dance. Having eaten, the monk transforms food into action and practice, which is offered again to nourish all beings.

Giving is not an abstract thing. It occurs in the world itself. Dogen writes:

To provide a boat or to build a bridge is offering as the practice of *dana-paramita*. When we carefully learn the meaning of giving, both receiving our body and giving up our body are offering. Earning our livelihood and managing our business are, from the outset, nothing other than giving. Entrusting flowers to the wind, and entrusting birds to the season may also be meritorious.

In all our worldly actions we should consider what others need and what we can give without nourishing our own self-centeredness. This is always a difficult practice. Dogen says bluntly, “The mind of a living being is difficult to change.” This is true for others . . . and for ourselves.

—Hozan Alan Senauke

*In the next BZC newsletter, I will write about the three remaining Embracing Dharmas: Kind Speech, Beneficial Action, and Cooperation.

**A long essay, “The Bodhisattva’s Embrace,” and a full translation of “Bodaisatta Shishobo” can be found in my book *The Bodhisattva’s Embrace: Dispatches from Engaged Buddhism’s Front Lines*. Also, Kaz Tanahashi’s translation of “Shishobo” as “The Bodhisattva’s Four Methods of Guidance” can be found in his Dogen collection *Moon in a Dewdrop*.

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE
for the January–February issue is
Friday, December 15.

Please submit items to
knabb@bopsecrets.org.

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