



# Berkeley Zen Center



September–October 2021 Newsletter

## Aspects of Practice

This year's Aspects of Practice period will take place from October 3 through November 13. We will be studying Dogen Zenji's *Gakudo Yojinshu* (Guidelines for Studying the Way) in a series of Thursday evening classes. In these classes, as well as in our talks, lectures, sesshins, and other activities, we will bring Dogen's teaching alive with our experience and our questions about practice inside and outside the gate.

As of this writing, all events will be virtual. Any updates will be posted.

Please plan on committing to coming to as many of the activities as you can—warming up your commitment to practice and supporting each other. Several BZC senior students will be teaching during this time, and we encourage you to meet with one or more of them at least twice to discuss your practice.

Please sign up at this link by September 27: <https://forms.gle/NiyPJXB1EHM92Z8X7>.

Ross Blum, Gerry Oliva, and Ryushin Andrea Thach have been invited to organize this practice period. Please direct any questions to one of them.

We hope you will join us.



### Affirmation of Welcome

Walking the path of liberation, we express our intimate connection with all beings. Welcoming diversity, here at Berkeley Zen Center the practice of zazen is available to people of every race, nationality, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and physical ability. May all beings realize their true nature.

## B Z C S C H E D U L E

### September

**One-Day Sesshin**  
Saturday, 9/4

**Zendo Holiday**  
Monday, 9/6

**Board Meeting**  
Sunday, 9/12

**New Member Entering Ceremony**  
Monday, 9/13, 7:30am

**All-Sangha Meeting (Board Nominations)**  
Sunday, 9/19, 7:00pm

### October

**One-Day Sesshin**  
(opening Aspects of Practice)  
Sunday, 10/3

**Women's Sesshin**  
Sunday, 10/10

**Jizo Ceremony**  
Saturday, 10/16

**Board Meeting**  
Sunday, 10/17

**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 email list.**

## **One-Day Sesshins**

Hozan Sensei will lead a one-day online sesshin on Saturday, September 4, 7:50 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Please sign up by September 1 (the Wednesday before the sesshin).

The Aspects of Practice period will begin with another one-day sesshin on Sunday, October 3, 7:50 a.m.–5:00 p.m., and will be led by a member of the Aspects of Practice team. Please sign up by Wednesday, September 29. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the sesshin director, Mary Beth Lamb, at [sesshin@berkeleyzencenter.org](mailto:sesshin@berkeleyzencenter.org).

You may sign up on the Calendar page on the BZC website. When paying for sesshin, please indicate on your check or in the PayPal note field that your donation is for the September or October Sesshin. The suggested donation is \$15, or whatever you can afford. Mail a check to BZC Office Manager, 1931 Russell St., Berkeley, CA 94703, or pay through the website using the “Sits/Classes” tab on the Donate page. Please consider a donation to Berkeley Zen Center above the suggested fee to help us maintain our practice.

## **Women’s Sesshin**

There will be a women’s sesshin on Sunday, October 10, 8:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m. This will be a study sesshin, co-led by several BZC senior students, based on Dogen’s Guidelines for Practice as viewed through the lens of women’s experiences. (The Guidelines for Practice are the focus of this year’s Aspects of Practice, during which the women’s sesshin falls.) It will follow the usual format for women’s sesshins, including meditation periods, discussion of Dharma, and service. It will be on Zoom rather than in person.

For further information, please contact Karen Sundheim ([ksundheim@gmail.com](mailto:ksundheim@gmail.com)).

## **All-Sangha Meeting: Nominations for the BZC Board**

An all-sangha meeting will be held Sunday, September 19, at 7:00 p.m., which will include nominations for the BZC Board. Each year the sangha affirms three of its six members-at-large for two-year terms to the BZC Board. Board members may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. Elections take place in October and the new term starts in January 2021.

This year three of the at-large Board members will finish their second terms at the end of 2021 (Tom Painter, Gary Artim, and Rondi Saslow), so we will be filling all three spots with new Board members. BZC members will have the opportunity to affirm them in an online ballot process in October. (The at-large members who are in the middle of their terms are Linda Hess, Sue Oehser, and Dean Bradley.)

On that ballot, the members will also have the opportunity to affirm the three salaried positions at BZC: Abbot, Office Manager, and Archive and Media Assistant.

If you would like to nominate someone to serve on the Board, please pass their name on to Ed Herzog, Rondi Saslow, or Carol Paul (BZC Nominations and Elections Committee members). We are always interested in potential Board members!

A great deal of care, time, and commitment has been put into the nominating process to make it as fair and unbiased as possible.

All BZC members and friends are invited to attend the sangha meeting. Please join us for this important conversation.

## Reflections on Board Service

I was initially invited to finish up Katy Guimond's term on the Board, and then I continued with a two-year term in 2020–2021.

There have been many practice opportunities during the challenges of the pandemic. I have listened, practiced patience, and supported various sangha members in their creative and mundane endeavors. I have grieved over losses and appreciated victories and necessary work-arounds.

I have rested in sangha and witnessed the Stepping Down and Mountain Seat ceremonies. I have sat with Sojun Roshi and our new Abbot. In the last two years, I believe our accomplishments have been multiple: accepting new residents, refurbishing their apartments, mastering Zoom tech and equipment, exploring safety requirements for the future, being invited to build an Archive at Stanford, maintaining Work Days in the garden, and supporting an active Buildings and Grounds Committee. On Zoom, we have connected with sangha members and interested others across the country and a number of continents. I am grateful that my family situation has remained stable, allowing me to complete my term. I appreciate that, during this time, we have been able to hold sesshins, classes, a Practice Period, teas, and councils.

The Election Committee is in the process of inviting sangha members to fill three open Board positions, and in doing so we have been mindful of current and future Board and sangha needs. High on our list are those with Board and/or tech experience and those younger, with diverse backgrounds and interpersonal skills, as well as grounding in BZC practice. I've found Board service to be a meaningful way to contribute to the sangha.

—Rondi Saslow

## Tea with Abbot Hozan

During our last Practice Period and continuing through this summer, Abbot Hozan Alan Senauke has been offering small Tea gatherings online via Zoom. Almost seventy people have participated, several more than once. The gatherings have offered welcome opportunities for BZC participants to have intimate conversations with Abbot Hozan and each other about the dharma and other matters of common concern.

Participants appreciate the relaxed, informal nature of the online Teas, the small group intimacy making it possible for everyone to speak. This kind of setting is different from Q&A following lecture or dokusan. One student noted that the Teas dissolve to a degree the usual formality of interaction between teacher and students. Abbot Hozan brings up interesting dharma issues, which can lead to intense discussions. Or as a launching pad for related topics of mutual interest.

The online Teas have also provided the opportunity for informal interactions between longtime BZC Members and newcomers. With newcomers who have "arrived" since we have gone online, these may be their first such interactions.

Abbot Hozan will continue to offer online Tea gatherings the second Sunday evening of the month through September, and then resume following Aspects of Practice, beginning in December. You can sign up by emailing Hannah Meara ([hmeara@gmail.com](mailto:hmeara@gmail.com)).

## **New Member Entering Ceremony**

Our annual New Member Entering Ceremony will be on Monday, September 13, 7:30 a.m. If you are a new BZC member, or if you are a member who has never participated in this ceremony and would now like to, please contact Carol Paul ([carolipaul@yahoo.com](mailto:carolipaul@yahoo.com) or 510-206-5051).

Although during this time the sangha cannot meet new members with an in-person bow, BZC most heartedly welcomes and looks forward to greeting them in our virtual online zendo at the ceremony.

## **Interested in Becoming a BZC Member?**

Membership is a significant step in our practice at Berkeley Zen Center. It acknowledges our commitment to be actively engaged in a regular zazen schedule with our teachers and sangha. During this time of Covid, we have developed ways to keep our practice alive and thriving using Zoom. If you have been sitting with BZC regularly for a few months or longer and wish to contribute to support the practice, we encourage you to become a BZC member.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please email Sue Oehser at [membership@berkeleyzencenter.org](mailto:membership@berkeleyzencenter.org).

## **Deeps Bows to Sangha Generosity**

You probably received a letter in early July with our annual summer fundraising appeal. Our goal was to raise \$30,000, and at the time of this newsletter's publication, we have just reached that goal! We are carefully moving

forward researching several projects that will support in-person reopening, and we will keep you posted. The Board and leadership of BZC bow in gratitude.

There's still time to get in on the fun— simply mail a check to BZC or use the "Generosity" tab on the website; donations through September will be considered part of this appeal.

## **Caregiving Resources**

From concerns about a distant loved one, to preserving the dignity of a spouse, to helping a friend stay in their home, caregiving takes many forms. In addition to recommending public and non-profit resources, Sangha Support offers a quarterly meeting where you can discuss how your caregiving relates to your Zen practice.

For more information, please call Debbie Schley at 503-505-4282.

## **Buddhist Action to Feed the Hungry**

On Saturday, October 2, at 1:00 p.m., BZC will join with other Bay Area sanghas to support Buddhist Global Relief's "Buddhist Action to Feed the Hungry." For more information, see [www.buddhistglobalrelief.org](http://www.buddhistglobalrelief.org).

Taking precautions against the Covid virus, this year's event will again be online. This is our third year as a local sponsor of BGR's event, raising funds to provide food aid and education to thousands of the poorest people around the world, and also to those in need here in the Bay Area.

## Sheltering-in-Place Schedule

BZC is continuing to offer all programs on the Zoom platform. To take part in any of these public programs, go to the BZC website—[www.berkeleyzencenter.org](http://www.berkeleyzencenter.org)—and then click the “Enter the Zendo Now” link.

### Zazen Monday–Friday:

- 6:00–6:40 a.m. (*Note time change.*)
- 7:30–8:10 a.m.

(*See Calendar for special Monday morning schedule.*)

- 5:40–6:20 p.m.

### 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.

September 4: Hozan Sensei  
September 11: Ron Nestor  
September 18: Hozan Sensei  
September 25: TBA

October 2: Laurie Senauke  
October 9: TBA  
October 16: TBA  
October 23: TBA  
October 30: TBA

### Monday Morning Talks, 8:00 a.m.

September 6: Zendo closed  
September 13: New Members Ceremony  
September 20: Andrea Thach  
September 27: Daniel O’Hara

October 4: Open Discussion  
October 11: TBA  
October 18: TBA  
October 25: TBA

### Friday Afternoon Talks, 5:45 p.m.

September 3: Genpo Alex Senauke  
October 1: Andrea Henderson

**Note:** An “Aspects of Practice” period will take place from October 3 to November 13. During that time, Saturday lectures and Monday morning talks will continue as usual, along with Thursday evening classes and other activities. More up-to-date information will be posted on the BZC website and via the BZC email listserv.



## What Now?

When I think about the pandemic lately, Michael Corleone's words in *Godfather III* come to mind: "Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in."

By late June, the whole country seemed to breathe a sigh of relief. Between effective vaccination and approaching herd immunity, many of us thought that Covid 19 was playing itself out. Mask requirements were relaxed, restaurants and public venues were reopening. You could feel energy and joy in the streets again. At BZC we were strategizing a "soft opening" of the zendo—requiring verified vaccination and social-distanced sitting.

Simultaneously, in the spring, a Delta variant of Covid carried a second wave of infection across India. By July it had spread to 124 countries and was found to be much more infectious than earlier variants. Even vaccinated people were shown to be at risk of "breakthrough" infections, capable of transmitting the virus without being themselves symptomatic.

In the U.S. and in the Bay Area, businesses and institutions, including BZC, were rethinking their opening plans, and continue to do so. Meanwhile, other virus variants have taken root around the world, and first cases are beginning to show up in the U.S.

What now? What precautions should we be taking at BZC? Will there ever again be a time of relative safety here and in the wider society? If some version of Covid 19 or another pandemic is the new reality, what does this mean for the warm hand to warm hand Zen practice we love?

I don't know.

Dizang's "Not knowing" (Case 20 in the *Book of Serenity*) can be our guide. Actually, it has always been our guide. Here is the koan:

*Dizang asked Fayan, "Where are you going?"*

*Fayan said, "Around on pilgrimage."*

*Dizang said, "What is the purpose of pilgrimage?"*

*Fayan said, "I don't know."*

*Dizang said, "Not knowing is most intimate."*

Not Knowing echoes though all the teachings. It is Bodhidharma's response to Emperor Wu—No Knowing, Suzuki Roshi's *Beginner's Mind*, Bernie Glassman's *First Tenet*, Master Seung Sahn's *Only Don't Know*.

In the face of a continuing pandemic, what now? I don't know. Another translation of this case has Dizang saying: "Not knowing is nearest." This question is very near to me and probably near to many of you. Fair to say, each of us may have a different response. One can see this from exchanges on the BZC listserv and conversations among sangha members. I feel grief for the loss of friends, family, teachers, and all those unknown to me. I feel anxiety about how we will sustain Zen traditions that have sustained us for so long. And, of course, I am stunned by natural disasters, wars, and

oppression loosed upon the world.

I am keeping my mind open to multiple perspectives. Are we being overly cautious, not cautious enough, or just right? Are we allowing for personal responsibility, or do our protocols undermine such responsibility? How is it for people who live alone; or who live with others in small apartments; or who have to work and care for small children? Should BZC make significant investments in ventilation for the zendo and community room? And on and on.

But the abbot's responsibility includes guarding the well-being of Dharma and Sangha. As an individual I may choose to take personal risks. As steward of our practice, the bar is set higher. So far, our collective caution has served us well, despite the fact that some members have had their fill of life on Zoom. As far as I know, there has been no spread of Covid-19 at BZC, and no members have died of the virus.

Going forward, let's continue to practice Great Patience, the perfection of *ksanti*. Such patience is the motor of zazen. Practice means sitting with every arising thought and circumstance, even when we might want to jump out of our skin. It means creating new rituals in our homes and online. After all these months, patience is wearing thin for many of us. I'd like to join Fayan on pilgrimage, wandering aimlessly. These days, even driving to Marin County to run an errand feels like a great adventure.

Please be patient and compassionate to yourself and others. Let your mind travel freely on pilgrimage and honor others who follow their own paths and have their own views. Zazen will sustain us. Buddhas and ancestors will support us, even when the world is on fire.

—Hozan Alan Senauke

21 August 2021

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE**  
for the November–December 2021 issue is  
*Friday, October 22.*

Please submit items to  
[knabb@bopsecrets.org](mailto:knabb@bopsecrets.org).

Berkeley Zen Center  
1931 Russell Street  
Berkeley, CA 94703