



Berkeley Zen Center



September–October 2026 Newsletter

Meghan Collins (1926 – 2026)



Long time BZC member and practice leader Meghan Collins passed away on June 20, 2026, two weeks after her 100th birthday.

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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.

BZC SCHEDULE

September

Zendo Holiday
Monday, 9/7

Founders' Ceremony
Tuesday, 9/8, 7:00 a.m.

One Day Sitting/Open Aspects of Practice
Saturday, 9/19, 5:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Board Meeting
Sunday, 9/20, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 9/26, 9:30 a.m.

October

Half Day Sitting
Saturday, 10/4, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Founders' Ceremony
Wednesday, 10/7, 7:00 a.m.

Lay Ordination Ceremony
Saturday, 10/10, 3:00 p.m.

One Day Sitting/Close Aspects of Practice
Saturday, 10/17, 5:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Half Day BIPOC Sitting
Sunday, 10/18, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Board Meeting
Sunday, 10/18, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 10/24, 9:30 a.m.

Sejiki Ceremony and Celebration
Saturday, 10/31

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

Meghan began her practice at BZC in the 80s. Later she was Shuso and had Lay Entrustment with Mary Mocine at Clearwater Zendo. She ultimately returned to BZC to cook for oryoki breakfast, give talks, and lead a dharma group. She also wrote short stories and novels, played the harp and the Irish flute, studied Spanish, and was a wonderful storyteller. Here she is in her cowboy hat, likely reciting the Wallace McCrae poem "Reincarnation" at skit night (picture above).

Aspects of Practice

Aspects of Practice is a 4-week practice period run by BZC Practice Leaders from September 19 to October 17. For this year's Aspects, we will be teaching on "The Roots of Goodness", writings by Dogen Zenji and Uchiyama Roshi (<https://www.shambhala.com/the-roots-of-goodness.html>); all the talks and classes will be on this topic.

The practice period opens with a one-day sitting on 9/19. There will be a class offered over four Thursday nights: 9/24, 10/1, 10/8, 10/15. Every Monday our Way Seeking Mind talk will be informed by the subject. We'll close the Aspects with a one-day sitting on 10/17/2026. The practice period and Thursday class participation can be "all in" or what works best for you. Direct any questions you may have to Gary Artim, gartim@gmail.com. To sign up for the Practice period please visit: <https://forms.gle/dnJnkxqU6HjcCzuD9>

Remember to sign up separately for both One-Day Sittings. The class Links will be posted to the web and offered on the listserv. Suggested Donations: \$35 for the one-day-sitting, \$40 for Thursday class series. No one turned away for lack of funds!

Sesshins and Sittings

There will be a **one-day sitting at BZC on Saturday, September 19, from 5:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.** (opening Aspects of Practice). The dharma talk will be given by Gerry Oliva. For more information, email 1daysitting@berkeleyzencenter.org.

There will be a **half-day sitting at BZC's zendo on Sunday, October 4 from 8:00 a.m. to noon.** We will have five periods of sitting and three of kinhin, with a water break in the middle. This is a nice, quiet way to begin the day, and all are welcome. Suggested donation 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.

Aspects of Practice closes **Sunday, October 17 with a one-day sitting at BZC from 5:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.**

There will be a **half-day BIPOC sitting at BZC's zendo on Sunday, October 18 from 8:00 a.m. to noon** (see article below).

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

Lay Entrustment Ceremony

On the sunny afternoon of August 1, Sue Oehser (Ju En So Etsu/Round Pearl, Ancestral Joy) received Lay Entrustment from Ryushin Andrea Thach. The ceremony recognized this seasoned practitioner's commitment and deep understanding of the Dharma. Sue received a green rakusu, new lineage papers and a new dharma name. She gave a short talk and responded to formal questions.

Half-Day BIPOC Sitting

The BIPOC group at BZC will be hosting a half-day BIPOC sitting at BZC's zendo on Sunday, October 18 from 8:00 a.m. to noon. It will be hybrid and also available online. There is an in-person capacity of 30 people.

All folks who identify as people of color are welcome. Windows will be open, so dress warmly, according to the weather.

Our guest speaker, Rhonda V. Magee, is Professor of Law at the University of San Francisco. Professor Magee is an internationally recognized thought and practice leader on integrating Mindfulness into Higher Education, Law, and Social Justice and a Fellow of the Mind and Life Institute. She is the author of *The Inner Work of Racial Justice: Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities Through Mindfulness*.

Suggested donation is \$25 sliding scale. No one will be turned away for lack of funds. You can sign up here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1aGRk4EaED16SORtilwGCqNNeNwGaBwr00zTsNv8A_pk

If you have any questions, feel free to email Sandeep at slehil@gmail.com.



Priest Ordinations

In recent months BZC has held two priest ordinations (shukke tokudo). On April 25 Abbot Linda ordained Michael Donnoe (Jikai Kosei/Compassion Ocean, Eternal Vow). On August 15 Greg Fain ordained Steph Revering (Seifu Tokushin/Sacred Wind, Body of Virtue). Michael is the current BZC Board Secretary, and Steph will be the only Soto Zen priest leading a Zen group in Flagstaff, AZ. We welcome these two new baby priests as they learn to navigate "these troublesome robes."

Upcoming Lay Ordination

Please join our sangha members who will be receiving precepts at the annual Lay Ordination ceremony on Saturday, October 10, at 3:00 p.m. On this joyous occasion, after many months of sewing and study, the ordinees will receive their inscribed rakusus, dharma name, and lineage papers from their preceptors. In our attendance we, too, renew our vows as we support our sangha friends.

The ordinees this year are: Debbie Becker, Nathaniel Page, Elan Loeb, Rob Burns and Sage Luna. The ceremony will be in person and streamed in the Online Zendo.



Sejiki Ceremony (Feeding the Hungry Ghosts)

On Saturday, October 31, BZC will celebrate Sejiki, a traditional Soto Zen ceremony where we invite hungry ghosts and spirits from all realms to come and receive our respectful offerings of flowers, food and Dharma.

The day begins with a work circle at 8:00 a.m. All are welcome to come and help set up the altar. At 10:15 a.m., we will have a short dharma talk followed by the outdoor ceremony, during which we will make a variety of raucous, joyful sounds to call forth the spirits. Noisemakers will be provided, but you're also welcome to bring your own!

Since Sejiki harmonizes in some beautiful way with our American holiday of Halloween, we also invite everyone – adults and children – to come in costumes if you'd like.

As part of the ceremony we will read the names of those who have died since Sejiki last year. To send names you wish to be included, please contact Dave Rutschman (hondodave@gmail.com).

Sangha Work Practice Day

Come join your sangha siblings to care for the temple and grounds on November 1. The day will begin with coffee and tea followed by zazen and work circle.

Please come at 8:00 for the morning and lunch, or come at noon for lunch and the afternoon work. Some work may get you dirty. Dress appropriately. Both light work and physical work are needed. You can indicate your skills and work preferences when you sign up. A sign-up link will be posted on the website soon.

For questions, email jameserb@gmail.com.

Upcoming Board Elections

At the All-Sangha Meeting on Sunday, September 20 at 7:15pm, the BZC Board will announce three candidates for Member-at-large positions: Blake Tolbert, Mary Duryee, and Kosei Michael Donnoe. If elected, each candidate will serve a two-year term on the Board beginning in January 2027.

Sangha members will be asked to vote on this slate by electronic ballot between October 1 – 31. Sangha members may also nominate alternative at-large candidates at the All-Sangha Meeting. If you plan on nominating someone, please speak with them ahead of time about their willingness and ability to serve on the Board.

Please contact Rob Walker (Chair, Elections and Nominations Committee) with any questions about the election.

Cooking for the Sangha

Cooking for BZC is a rich and rewarding practice. Come learn about being a Tenzo! In this two-session class we will review breakfast and Sesshin cooking. We will look at traditional menus, discuss ingredients, quantities of food, and the essentials of managing a professional kitchen. The class will be taught by current BZC Co-Tenzo, Marie Hopper, and will be hybrid.

The two classes will be on Thursday evenings, October 22nd and 29th from 7:15-8:30p.m. To register, visit: <https://forms.gle/jSmJEPctMidvCTAu7>

Questions can be directed to Marie Hopper at marie_hopper@sbcglobal.net.

Saturday Speakers, 10:15 a.m.

September 5:	Peter Overton
September 12:	Kristin Diggs
September 19:	Gerry Oliva
September 26:	Gary Artim
October 3:	Mary Duryee
October 10:	Mark Copithorne
October 17:	Ryushin Andrea Thach
October 24:	Rhonda Magee
October 31:	Linda Roshi

Monday Morning Talks, 8:00 a.m.

September 7:	Zendo Holiday
September 14:	Luminous Heart
September 21:	Peter Overton
September 28:	Jeff Kastenbaum
October 5:	Open Discussion
October 12:	Colleen Busch
October 19:	Carol Paul
October 26:	Jeremiah Holland

Friday Afternoon Talks, 5:45 p.m.

September 4:	Doshin Shreya Simhadri
October 2:	Ryushin Andrea Thach

Current Weekly Schedule

Our programs vary between in-person-only, online-only, and hybrid (both at once). See the BZC listserv announcements or the BZC website (berkeleyzencenter.org) for details.

Note: We are no longer checking vax or booster information; but we do encourage everyone to keep their vaxes up to date and recommend masking when indoors to minimize risk to yourself and others.



Sue Oehser Lay Entrustment [*article on page 2*]

Practicing Equanimity

Lately, I've been reflecting on equanimity as a practice that helps regulate one's mind, body and life. Equanimity (Skt. *Upeksha*) refers to a balanced, stable mind that remains peaceful and non-reactive through life's changes. Equanimity is a deep wisdom quality, seen as the culmination or fruit of several of the Buddha's lists, e.g., the Seven Factors of Awakening and the Ten Perfections.

It is also the fourth *Brahmavihara* (Divine Abode), along with lovingkindness, compassion and sympathetic joy. Equanimity balances the other three—it centers non-attachment and even-mindedness in awareness. It creates a space in which we can see the happiness or suffering of both ourselves and others as being in accord with the karmic causes and conditions that are arising.

One form of equanimity practice from the *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification) repeats the phrase, "Happiness and suffering depend on one's actions and not on my wishes or desires." It is based on the Buddha's teaching that "Our acts [of body, speech and mind] are our only true possessions," and emphasizes the role that intention and agency plays in our lives and in practice.

Modern phrases for cultivating equanimity include, "Whether I understand it or not, things are unfolding according to a lawful nature [i.e., the laws of karma and dependent co-arising]," and "Everything is constantly changing. May I learn to see the arising and passing of all things with equanimity and balance." This intention can remind us of the broad net within which we are held.

Such clear seeing reflects the cooling wisdom aspect of equanimity, and the importance of balancing the warm-hearted qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy. The Buddha repeatedly taught: "Clearly observe: how things arise, come into being, how they are sustained, and how they pass away." This is how we can practice with impermanence in our day by day, moment to moment experience.

When we see how states of mind and body come into being, what supports their continuation, and how they pass away, we develop two things. First, is familiarity—and with greater familiarity there can be greater ease. Because we know that this has happened before, and will likely happen again, and we are less shocked or thrown off-balance. Second, this increased familiarity allows us to increase our skillfulness in terms of how to overcome states of stress/suffering (*dukkha*), avoid falling into such states in the first place, and to cultivate and maintain wholesome/beneficial states of mind.

Note that the near-enemy of equanimity is indifference—not the cooling of the passions with the wisdom of clear seeing, but the frozen states of distance, avoidance, or absence of connection and care, all of which are aspects of wrong view (denial of no-self/emptiness and impermanence).

Equanimity manifests as a spaciousness of mind and heart that can see and accept that things are just as they are, simply that “yes, this is happening.” It is the opposite of reactivity, of getting caught in our reactions to our experience. Our reactions are information, responses to the unsettling experience of being profoundly vulnerable human beings. The balance of equanimity and compassion creates a space in which it is possible to care deeply, without becoming caught or overwhelmed by suffering.

Zen tends to take a more active, everyday, body-based approach to practicing equanimity. Dogen writes in *Tenzo Kyokun* (Instructions for the Cook): “The ancients said, “The mind of the Way is actualized by rolling up the sleeves” (i.e., rolling up their long robe sleeves in order to do manual work). He means this quite literally:

When washing the rice, remove any sand you find. In doing so, do not lose even one grain of rice. When you look at the rice, see the sand at the same time; when you look at the sand, see also the rice. Examine both carefully. Then a meal containing the six flavors and the three qualities will come together naturally.

Dogen is using the mundane action of separating rice and sand to point to how we practice, how we perceive things. He is telling us not to fall into thinking that “rice is good and sand is bad,” or “this is right and that is wrong.” As Suzuki Roshi says, “Not always so!” Dogen tells an old story:

When Xuefeng resided at Dongshan’s monastery, he served as cook. One day when he was sifting rice Dongshan asked him, “Are you sifting the sand and removing the rice, or sifting the rice and removing the sand?” Xuefeng said, “Sand and rice are simultaneously removed.”

Our practice is to see beyond the ordinary, relative way we judge and value things. The way to actualize this practice is to be completely present with what we are doing, moment by moment, whether it’s sitting zazen, cooking rice for the sangha, or whatever seemingly mundane, utterly un-Zen thing we happen to be doing right at this moment. Dogen tells us:

Handle even a single leaf of a green in such a way that it manifests the body of the Buddha.

In closing, I would like to let you know that I will be on a 28-day Insight retreat with Gil Fronsdal (one of Sojun's transmitted priests, so my elder dharma brother) from Aug. 30 to Sept. 26. In one sense, this is quite un-Zen, and in a larger sense, it is utterly Zen, but it is, without doubt, an extended period of both inquiry and settling into profound equanimity. I look forward to sharing the fruits of this period of intensive practice when I return.

Until then, with love and bows,
Abbot Linda

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE

for the November–December issue is
Friday, October 23.

Please submit items to
newsletter@berkeleyzencenter.org

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