



# Berkeley Zen Center



September–October 2023 Newsletter

## Aspects of Practice

All sangha members are warmly invited to join Aspects of Practice, our fall practice period, which will open with a one-day sesshin on Saturday, October 14 (led by Gerry Oliva), and end with a one-day sesshin on Saturday, November 11 (led by Carol Paul). The theme will be the Genjo Koan, which will be studied in four classes on Thursday evenings as well as in Saturday lectures and WSM talks.

Ten senior students will be leading Aspects of Practice. Please consider your schedule and responsibilities in order to determine your participation, and try to attend as much as you can along with zazen.

All events will be held in person as well as online.

Watch for information on the website and listserv about when and how to register (including separate registrations for sesshins and the class). Registrations will open after Labor Day.

Remember: In addition to the Practice Period sign-up, you will need to register separately for each sesshin and for the class.

We look forward to practicing with you during this special yearly time.



### 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

### September

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 9/2, 9:10am

#### **Zendo Holiday**

Monday, 9/4

#### **Founders' Ceremony**

Thursday, 9/7, 7:00am

#### **New Member Entering Ceremony**

Saturday, 9/9, 9:00am

#### **Board Meeting**

Sunday, 9/10, 9:00–11:00am

#### **All-Sangha Meeting & Board Nominations**

Sunday, 9/17, 7:00pm

### October

#### **Founders' Ceremony**

Saturday, 10/7, 9:10am

#### **Zendo Holiday**

Monday, 10/9

#### **One-Day Sesshin (Open Aspects of Practice)**

Saturday, 10/14

#### **Board Meeting**

Sunday, 10/15, 9:00–11:00am

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 10/21, 9:10am

#### **Sangha Work Day**

Sunday, 10/22, 8:00am–4:00pm

#### **Sejiki Ceremony**

Saturday, 10/28, 10:15am

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

## Fall Sesshins

This fall we will be offering several one-day sesshins:

**Saturday, September 23:** Study sesshin (7:50 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.). Led by Abbot Hozan, this sesshin will include two study segments on Dogen's *Tenzo Kyokun* (Instructions to the Cook).

**Sunday, October 1:** Beginners' Sesshin (see article below).

**Saturday, October 14:** Sesshin to open Aspects of Practice. Led by Gerry Oliva.

**Saturday, November 11:** Sesshin to close Aspects of Practice. Led by Carol Paul.

For each sesshin, a sign-up form will be posted on the website and on our email listserv during the month prior. You may participate either online or in person. In-person enrollment will be limited to 33 people.

All these sesshins (except the Beginners' one) will include oryoki lunch. The sesshins in October and November *may* also include oryoki breakfast, in which case the schedule will be adjusted to accommodate this change. Check the website for details.

For all in-person participants, Covid protocols will apply. We require that you be fully vaccinated and boosted, though indoor masking is now optional.

If you have any questions, please contact the sesshin director, Rob Lyons, at [dharmawork@yahoo.com](mailto:dharmawork@yahoo.com).

## Beginners' Sesshin

Please join us for a special sitting that comes around only twice a year. This is an opportunity for new and old practitioners alike to become intimate with beginner's mind. The sesshin will be led by Laurie Senauke and Susan Marvin. The focus will be on the basics of Suzuki Roshi's practice: zazen, kinhin, and

bowing. New students will receive clear explanations of our sometimes challenging forms, while more experienced students will have a chance to fine-tune their practice.

The sesshin will run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., on Sunday, October 1. It will be offered in-person only (no online participation). The rhythm of the day will be similar to our regular sesshins, with shorter periods of zazen and some on-the-spot instructions. Please bring your own bag lunch (or you can purchase a lunch nearby). For more information about signing up, etc., see the preceding article.

## Friday Afternoon Zen Talk

BZC welcomes the Soto Zen special teacher Rev. Kosai Ikeda on Friday afternoon, September 22, at 5:45 p.m., live in the zendo. Annually, our friends in the Soto Zen International office support a senior Zen teacher to visit centers and sanghas around the U.S. Rev. Ikeda, this year's presenter, is the abbot of Kenryu-ji temple in the Yamagata prefecture of Japan. After completing college in the U.S., he trained as a monk at Eihei-ji. For fifteen years he has served as a Buddhist chaplain at a local correctional facility, helping inmates with rehabilitation and reentry programs. He also teaches Kendo/Way of the sword to elementary and junior high school students.

## New Member Entering Ceremony

Our annual New Member Entering Ceremony will be in person in the zendo and online at 9:20 a.m. on Saturday, September 9. If you are a new BZC member you will be contacted. If you are a member who joined over a year ago, have never participated in this ceremony, and would now like to, please contact Hannah Meara ([hmeara@gmail.com](mailto:hmeara@gmail.com)).

## Dharma Transmissions

On Friday evening, July 28, we completed the joyous ceremonies of Dharma Transmission (*Shiho*) with Hannah Meara (Kijin Seisho — Resolute Love/Clear Illumination) and Carol Paul (Shiken Seigetsu — Clear Intention/Serene Moon). On the same occasion Zenshin Greg Fain completed these ceremonies with Curtis Fabens (Daishi Zenkai — Great Resolve/Complete Openness).

Transmission recognizes the maturity of their practice as Soto Zen priests, acknowledging their enlightened activity within the sangha. During a week of intensive work and ceremonies, we were supported and literally nourished by dharma sisters and brothers. Bows of gratitude to Shosan Victoria Austin, Nyokai Laurie Senauke, Jean Selkirk, Judith Putnam, John Busch, Susan Marvin, Penelope Luminous Heart Thompson, Liz Horowitz, Preston Evers, Ross Blum, Helen Cheng, Sue Dunlap, and more. Thank you all.

(For more details about these ceremonies, and about the meaning of Dharma Transmission, please see Abbot Hozan's longer article at the end of this newsletter.)



*Greg and Curtis*

## Sangha Work Day

On Sunday, October 22, we will be having a Sangha Work Day. The day will open with coffee and pastries at 8:00 a.m., then zazen from 8:15 to 8:40 and 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 3:45–4:00.

If you would like to join us (or if you have any questions), please contact Greg Denny ([greg@techsperience.org](mailto:greg@techsperience.org) or 510- 402-8282). Please also let him know which of the following categories of work you are able to participate in: cleaning; gardening; painting; and simple carpentry or building-related tasks (possibly using tools like drills or saws). Some work may get you dirty. Dress appropriately.



*Carol, Hozan, Hannah*

## Sejiki—Feeding the Hungry Ghosts

On Saturday, October 28, BZC will again celebrate Sejiki, a traditional Soto Zen ceremony, calling forth and feeding hungry ghosts, spirits of the departed, and hungry ghosts within each of us. Weather permitting, the ceremony will take place outside in the courtyard with an altar filled with fruit, cakes, and other food offerings for the ghosts. Children are welcome and participate with adults in making loud clashing sounds with noise-makers (some are provided, and you can also bring your own) so that hungry ghosts know they are *very* welcome. Children and adults are welcome to wear Halloween costumes (or not). Abbot Hozan will lead the ceremony with welcoming music and words.

At this ceremony we will also read the names of all those who have died since last year's ceremony. Please send names you wish to be included to Hannah Meara at [hmeara@gmail.com](mailto:hmeara@gmail.com).

The talk and ceremony will start in the zendo at 10:15 a.m. All are welcome to join the work circle at 7:45 to help set up the altar.

## New BZC Resident

BZC welcomes our newest resident, Cecelia Fitzgerald, to 1933½ Russell (above the Abbot's office), sharing that space with Joe Buckner. Cecelia was visiting last fall from New Zealand and she liked Berkeley and BZC so much she decided to return! The other current residents are Ross Blum—adjacent to the Abbot's office; Helen Cheng and Preston Evers in 1929 Russell; Yoni Ackerman and Brianna McGuire in 1933A Russell, and the Senaukes in 1933 Russell.

From time to time vacancies in the residency appear. If you would like to be put on a list of folks who would be interested in residency at some future time, please contact the Head Resident, Laurie Senauke, at [lauriesenauke@gmail.com](mailto:lauriesenauke@gmail.com)

## Interview with Paul Discoe

In a short Zoom chat on August 15, I asked Zengyu Paul Discoe if he had further comments to make after his BZC lecture ten days earlier. During that lecture Paul talked about his work as a temple and gate builder and his work in Japanese carpentry, as well as how he came to BZC and how he is doing in his retirement. His book *Zen Architecture: The Building Process as Practice* is available at our book table on Saturdays.

In our chat Paul reviewed some of his life and work. When BZC started out on Dwight Way, Paul ran the center during Sojun's time as shuso at Tassajara. His family had three industrial acres in Oakland. Paul housed a sangha of his own on that land, but eventually had to sell the acreage due to lack of money and energy.

He lives with his wife Brenda in Oakland near Mills College, where they have a large vegetable garden. He also teaches via Zoom at Taigen Leighton's Ancient Dragon Zen Gate center in Chicago.

Paul's teacher is Tenshin Reb Anderson at Green Gulch Farm. He is invigorated by his attendance in an ongoing class on *The Flower Ornament Sutra*. Paul has fatigue and mobility problems and asked Tenshin what he should do in retirement. Tenshin told him to sit by the road and talk to people. Not so many people

walk by his garden in Oakland, and BZC looks like a good place to sit and practice. We are delighted to have him with us.

I asked Paul what he thought would be important to carry Buddhism forward. He has studied the precepts most intently the last few years and thinks they are the main thing Buddhism has to contribute to society. Precepts shape society and are an asset to society—the Eightfold Path, including right livelihood, addresses racial discrimination as well as social and economic injustice. He believes that Buddhist precepts offer a new paradigm beyond socialism and capitalism. They allow us to be one with our neighbors, and are more relevant than the focus on being as safe as possible or making the most money. Paul pondered the question of enforcing the precepts in society. If precepts or laws are broken in our society, someone might lose money. In Russia, someone might be shot. What enforces precepts in a Buddha Land?

Paul mentioned Case 86 in the Blue Cliff Record: “The Temple Gate, the Kitchen, and Light,” which he says is most beautiful to him. The Gate is our entry to practice. The Gate focuses our attention and helps us carry out our vow to practice. If we stay for a while we have to eat as well as breathe. So the Kitchen is the power house. The Tenzo’s role is most basic. To breathe, to sit, to practice, it is necessary to eat.

And that reminded him that it was time to cook dinner, so we stopped the discussion there.

—Sue Oehser

## 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 ([bzcofficeamanager@gmail.com](mailto:bzcofficeamanager@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](http://berkeleyzencenter.org)) for details.

## Saturday Speakers, 10:15 a.m.

September 2:	Raul Moncayo
September 9:	Abbot Hozan
September 16:	Laurie Senauke
September 23:	Abbot Hozan
September 30:	Ellen Webb

October 7:	Abbot Hozan
October 14:	Gerry Oliva
October 21:	Hannah Meara
October 28:	Abbot Hozan

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

September 4:	Open Discussion
September 11:	New Member Entering Ceremony
September 18:	Charley Ware
September 25:	Zachary Sherman

October 2:	Open Discussion
October 9:	Zendo Holiday
October 16:	Aspects WSM talk
October 23:	Aspects WSM talk
October 30:	Aspects WSM talk

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

September 1:	Sherwin Yu
October 6:	Sonia Tamez

## There's Joy and Sorrow in the Family Way

In late July, after two years of studying and sewing, Hannah Meara (Kijin Seisho—Resolute Love/Clear Illumination) and Carol Paul (Shiken Seigetsu—Clear Intention/Serene Moon) completed dharma transmission/shiho, marking the maturity of their practice and their position as fully ordained Soto priests. Transmission also acknowledges their years of service to the BZC sangha, and the hope that we will benefit from more years of their practice. I was honored to officiate in these ceremonies with two women I admire. It was a moment of great joy for me, for the sangha, and for Hannah and Carol. I imagine they are still coming down from it all, and it will take some time to understand and absorb what took place.

Late last year Zenshin Greg Fain asked if he might transmit one of his students at BZC—Curtis Fabens (Daishi Zenkai—Great Resolve/Complete Openness). Because I feel that this zendo and community is available to all of Sojun Roshi's students, I invited Greg to join this transmission group here at his home temple, which he did. Curtis arrived for opening ceremonies on Sunday, July 23. This was our first meeting, but there was an immediate connection for all of us involved in the week of ceremonies. Limited by chronic illness, Curtis got wonderful help from BZC sangha members doing the transmission document calligraphy—copying the ancestor's names with brush and ink on six-foot pieces of silk. There was joy for all of us—Curtis, Hannah, Carol, Greg, and all the many hands assisting with the successful completion of all three transmissions on Saturday the 29th.

Less than two weeks later we were shaken to learn that Curtis died unexpectedly on Thursday, August 10. We have since learned that he died in his sleep of complications from his serious chronic health issues. The sorrow and loss experienced by his wife Caitlin and young daughter Layla is unimaginable. Our sangha is likewise sorrowed to lose a friend we had just come to know in our close time together.

In an article on dharma transmission, scholar William Bodiford points out the ancestral and family structure of our Zen tradition, expressing the Confucian roots of Zen carried from China to Japan, and now to us in the West. Bodiford's essay cites the work of another scholar, John Jorgenson, and reflects further:

[Zen] is Confucian because it conforms to traditional Chinese family values. Like any good Confucian family, it has ancestors whom it honors. It honors those ancestors by transmitting their legacy to proper descendants, from generation to generation, who will maintain and carry on their family traditions. We can complete Jorgenson's explanation by saying that in Zen this process of transmitting a family legacy is given structural form through the ritual of dharma transmission. If we consider Zen dharma transmission as an expression of Chinese social norms for family structure and for the proper behavior of familial heirs, then several key features seem to apply equally to family relationships within secular society and within dharma lineages. (<https://terebeess.hu/zen/mesterek/Bodiford-transmission-ZenRitual.pdf>)

We see this in the ceremonies of dharma transmission, in our lay and priest ordinations, and in the regular chanting of our Soto lineage and women ancestors. And, of course, we feel this in the quality of sangha and the “family way” of our practice, carefully preserved and passed on when new people come to practice with us. Countless times Sojun Roshi shared the family stories of his experience with Suzuki Roshi, his other Japanese teachers, and his dharma sisters and brothers from early days. This was the family legacy he gave us.

Reflecting on the joyous completion of these transmissions and on the piercing loss of our new friend and brother, I realize that just like our life in full, the intimate bonds of spiritual family are marked by joy and sorrow, by gain and loss. This is the nature of things “as it is.” For quite a few of us at BZC, Zen practice continues to unfold over decades. The price of our intimate practice is to bear all that comes our way. We celebrate the arrival of young practitioners who bring energy to the community. We celebrate the milestones of each other’s lives. We do all that we can to help each other through the trials of aging, sickness, and death—the whole catastrophe. We are grateful to have this family way to meet life day by day, moment by moment.

—Hozan Alan Senauke

**Note:** If you wish to know more about the dharma transmission ceremony and its meaning in our practice tradition, you can listen to my BZC lecture from July 22, where I go into greater detail:

<https://berkelezyzencenter.org/dharma-talk/on-dharma-transmission>. Also, Hannah, Carol, and Curtis together gave a lovely talk about their transmission experience the following week:

<https://berkelezyzencenter.org/dharma-talk/hannah-meara-carol-paul-curtis-fabens-what-is-dharma-transmission>.

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE**  
for the November–December issue is  
*Friday, October 20.*

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

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