



Berkeley Zen Center



March-April 2016 Newsletter

One-day Sesshin

Saturday, March 19, 5am - 9pm

Sojun Mel Weitsman will lead a one-day sesshin on Saturday, March 19, 5am–9 pm. We encourage old and new sangha members to participate. Please sign up on the patio bulletin board by Wednesday morning, March 16 after zazen. If this is your first sesshin at BZC, we recommend that you first participate in a full Saturday program and also speak with the sesshin director, Gary Artim. The fee is \$35 per day and should be paid in advance (a discounted fee is possible for those in need; please speak to the director). Leave checks marked “March Sesshin” in the mail slot in the courtyard laundry room door or mail to the BZC Office Manager at 1931 Russell St., Berkeley 94703.

If you have any questions, contact the sesshin director, Gary Artim, gartim@gmail.com or 510-676-9756.



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

March

Founders' Ceremonies

Thursday, 3/3, 6:20pm

Friday, 3/4, 6:40am

Women's Sitting

Sunday, 3/6

One-day Sesshin

Saturday, 3/19

Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 3/20, 8:00am – noon

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 3/26, 9:40am

Work Day

Sunday, 3/27

April

Buddha's Birthday

Saturday, 4/2

Founders' Ceremonies

Monday, 4/4, 6:20pm

Tuesday, 4/5, 6:40am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 4/23, 9:40am

20s / 30s Hills & Streams

Friday 4/22 - Sunday, 4/24

One-day Sesshin/

Open Spring Practice Period

Saturday, 4/30

May

Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 5/15, 8:00am – noon

Some notes from Sojun about the 2016 Spring Practice Period

Dear Sangha,

It seems a little early to talk about the Spring Practice Period, but due to new bi-monthly newsletter schedule, the next issue will be too late. So here is some news about this year's practice period.

After seeking suggestions from the Senior Student group, there emerged a number of peers who would be qualified to be Shuso. Given that, I have asked long time practicing member Walter Kieser, Kosan Shinshi, (Tall Mountain, Deep Stillness) to take the position. This will be Walter's only opportunity, as he will be retiring to his newly developed homestead north of the Bay Area at the end of this year.

The practice period will begin with a one - day sitting on April 30th, and end with the five-day sesshin from June 8th to the 12th. As I mention above, Walter Kieser will be our Shuso, and he will make his best effort to set an example and encourage our practice.

As the fundamental ground for practice period, committing to a zazen schedule that harmonizes with our other activities and following it, is what makes the whole thing work. For our mature practitioners we understand it as refreshing our practice and pruning the unnecessary growth that has accumulated over the previous year. It is setting a tone of lightness, agility, pliancy, tranquility, workability, proficiency, and uprightness to carry us through the year.

The other morning, stepping out of the zendo, we were awed upon seeing the trees in the patio blooming all at once in a magnificent announcement of spring, bringing forth in us a deep appreciation for the nourishing rain refreshing our body and mind. Numberless



animate objects seemed to be proclaiming the Dharma, inviting us to awaken.

Our practice has three sides. The first side is turning away from the world and facing the infinite. The second is turning toward the world to face the numberless circumstances. And the third side is the matrix, the side that has no sides, but within which all sides are included.

I invite all of us to come together for this period of renewal and connection with each other, our surroundings, and the deep mystery of embracing and letting go. I have some ideas for our study, but am open to suggestions. If anyone does have suggestions, please contact me. Also if you are new or have questions feel free to contact me, or Vice-Abbot Hozan.

Finally, we will send out more details about the practice period sometime in April.

Sojun

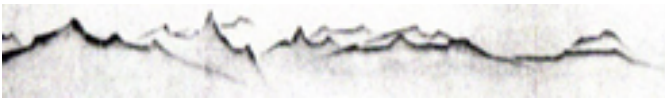


One-Day Sesshin
Opening of Spring Practice Period
Saturday, April 30, 5:00 am – 9:00 pm

Our annual spring practice period will begin with a one-day sesshin on Saturday, from April 30, 5:00 am until 9:00 pm. All are welcome to attend. If this is your first sesshin at BZC, it is strongly recommended that you first participate in a full Saturday program and that you speak with the sesshin director. The fee is \$35 and is due by April 27th. All details are on the sesshin sign-up sheet.

Our practice period entering ceremony will take place that day at 4:00 pm. All practice period participants should make it a priority to attend the entering ceremony and support the Shuso.

After you've signed up for the sesshin, please complete a sesshin information form and place it in the sesshin director's box. (If you completed one for a prior sesshin, there is no need for another one unless information has changed.) If you have any questions, contact the sesshin director, Ken Powelson, sesshindirectorbzc@gmail.com.



Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, March 20, 8:00 am - noon

Half-day sittings include five periods of zazen, kinhin (walking meditation) and an informal tea. Sojun Roshi asks participants to commit to the entire four-hour schedule. A \$10 donation is requested. If you have questions or if you cannot sign up on the bulletin board, contact the director Peter Overton at peterovrtn@gmail.com or 510.848.5239.

Annual Women's Sitting
Sunday, March 6, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm

How do we as women find and express our true selves, standing tall and solid within a tradition that has been male dominant, while at the same time appreciate the gifts of the tradition? How do gender dynamics impact our relationships with our teachers? This is a day devoted to exploring women's experiences and understanding of the Dharma in the context of the increasing inclusion and impact of women, both lay and ordained, on the practice of Buddhism in American society. The day will include a lecture and discussion period led by BZC priest Gerry Oliva.

The sitting will be held Sunday, March 6, beginning at 8:30 and ending at 5:00 pm. We will go at a relaxing pace with a mixture of 30- and 40-minute sitting periods, short AM and PM breaks, a silent bag lunch, and an afternoon tea break. Women of all levels of practice are encouraged to attend. Cost for the day is \$25. (If you are unable to pay the full amount, contact the sesshin director to arrange a reduced fee.) The sign-up sheet will be posted on the courtyard bulletin board in early March. For more information, please contact sesshin director, Mary Duryee at maryduryee@gmail.com or 510-872-0507.





Work Day **Sunday, March 27. 8:30 am – 4:30 pm**

Come and enjoy the pleasure and camaraderie of working together to maintain and beautify our temple and gardens during Work Day on Sunday, March 27th. The day will begin with a half hour of zazen at 8:30am, include a delicious lunch made by head tenzo Kika and friends (menu to include: vegetarian and vegan mexican tamales, homemade guacamole, and flan of one kind or another), and end with 20 minute zazen at 4:10-4:30pm. The exact work we will do is still TBD, but we typically have a diverse set of indoor and outdoor tasks, including gardening, sanding, painting, cleaning, and lunch prep. You can come for the whole day, or just the morning or afternoon, and still have lunch. If you come before 8:30, you will be greeted by Kika with coffee, pastry and even hard boiled eggs!

This will be one of only two days a year we can spend the day working together rather than just 1 1/2 hrs during sesshin work periods.

To plan the work for the day, we need to know you are coming, so please sign up on the courtyard bulletin board when the sign-up list is posted, approximately March 12th. Questions? Contact Paul Ridgway.

Buddha's Birthday **Saturday, April 2**

Please bring family and friends! Children are especially encouraged to attend. The celebration will include a song by the children and birthday cake. A wonderful part of the day is bathing the baby Buddha.

We will not have our usual early program. Decorating the bower with flowers will begin at 7:30. Work period to prepare the grounds begins at 8:30. The first period of zazen will be at 9:30 followed by a short lecture and the ceremony.

On Friday, the day before the celebration, donations of flowers from your garden such as iris, daisy, ranunculus, sweet william and camellia are appreciated. There will be a sign-up on the bulletin board if you can help trim flowers on Friday afternoon.

If you can help with set up and clean up, please sign up on the bulletin board and arrive by 8:30am. And please sign up if you will help trim flowers on Friday afternoon so they will be ready for bower decorators on Saturday.

Questions? Please contact head chidens Stephanie Seaborg at slseaborg@gmail.com and Jeanne Courtney jmatilda@icloud.com. Let zendo co-manager Sue Oehser at soehser@earthlink.net 510 339-0243 know if you'd like more information and can help.



Priest Ordination **Saturday, April 9**

There will be a Priest Ordination at BZC for long time practitioner Karen DeCotis on April 9th. Karen was the first person to receive Lay Entrustment at BZC. She is a former resident, and also practiced at Green Gulch and other

SFZC centers. At present she is the leader of the Bozeman Zen Group in Bozeman, Montana. She is well known by those who have been around for a while. She will return to Bozeman after the Ceremony. More information will be forthcoming.



Sangha Potluck & Budget Meeting **Tuesday, March 8, 6:30 pm**

All members and friends are warmly invited to share potluck offerings of great food, as well as discussion of the board recommended 2016 BZC budget. The budget is the treasurer's best effort to project the financial goals and realities for BZC in this new year. After discussion the budget will be submitted for approval by those in attendance. Your presence at this meeting makes a difference. A sign-up sheet for the potluck is posted on the patio bulletin board.



Summary Report on Board Retreat

The BZC Board of Directors met for its annual all-day retreat on February 7, 2016. The retreat involves "off the record" discussion (no minutes are taken) to allow a free flow of perspectives and ideas that may or may not be later implemented as BZC policy.

Determining that the financial well-being of BZC is relatively good, the Board first took up the topic of "Money, Giving and our Zen Practice." We addressed such questions as our

general overall feelings about money and whether Zen students should even care about money. We asked what should be our relationship to money and non-money donations to sustain our practice. How do we – and how should we – thank financial donors and people who make non-monetary donations?

Then we turned to the general subject of "Sustaining Our Practice Place and Teachers." How heavily should we rely on fundraising versus other sources of income, such as dues, sesshin fees, and class fees? Should we actively request that members and friends leave a gift for BZC in their wills and trusts? And what about dana: is there a place for it at BZC, such as reminding sesshin participants that they can make dana contributions over and above their basic sesshin fee (which, we believe, are the lowest anywhere)?

Turning to the issues of the residence program at BZC and rents paid by the residents, we discussed what the Board's responsibility is regarding residency practice and how the Board should exercise its responsibility in setting the rents for the residents. In general, it was thought that the Abbot and Vice-Abbot should work with residents to tweak and clarify the residency guidelines and seek to shed light on the residents' on-going intentions and long-term plans about their practice in relation to the guidelines. After a general discussion about rental policy options (taking into account the Berkeley Rent Stabilization laws), the Board asked its Finance Committee to develop specific alternate proposals for calculating rents, to be presented to the Board in the next several months. The Board intends to involve the residents and the general sangha in further discussions about the residency program and rents.

The Board spent some time brainstorming new ideas for the future, such as: forming a welcoming committee to greet new people on Saturdays; incorporating topics of race relations in lectures and recruiting people of color to speak at BZC; and, sponsoring a block party.



Sounding Board for September 2015

Solar Power Comes to Berkeley Zen Center Mark Copithorne

Last summer, when Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* was disseminated, I saw that the Pope called on other religions to join the Catholic Church in swift, urgent action to address climate change. Reading that, I had a reaction that it was good and appropriate to respond to the Pope's leadership. I felt that my role as a Berkeley Zen Center Board member gave me some small piece of ground to stand on to make a response.

Bringing solar power to BZC was an item that appeared on the Board agenda but was consistently deferred in favor of more urgent projects. I wrote an email to the Board asking if we could move forward with exploring solar power. I offered to produce the project of analyzing options and making a proposal to the Board. The Board quickly agreed that such help would be welcome and they were fine with me doing this independently.

I contacted several solar companies and discussed options. When I started, I believed I would find that it made sense to purchase and install panels as an investment owned by Berkeley Zen Center. But when I looked more closely, I saw that a lot of the finances of solar power make sense with the 30% Federal

income tax credit. It would be difficult for BZC as a religious non-profit to claim that credit. That distinction made leasing panels a more appropriate option for BZC.

I had a proposal prepared at the next Board meeting based on a plan from Solar City. The Board readily agreed that installing solar panels was worthwhile. President Jake Van Akkeren laid out a process for the proposal to be reviewed by the respective committees and reimbursement rates negotiated with participating residents. It took more than seven months for this process to unfold in conjunction with Solar City. That was about as swift and urgent as we could make it. Even now it is not fully nailed down. But the Board has approved the project and Solar panels should be installed by the end of March.

The project has been scaled down for architectural reasons and solar panels will only be installed on the roof of 1929 Russell. Those panels will supply most of the electrical power for the community room, kitchen and 1933 1/2 Russell -- the house in back.

We'll save a little money. We'll save tons of carbon emissions. The best opportunity is if we can share the inspiration. Solar City makes the decision to put up solar panels very easy. They will also pay Berkeley Zen Center \$250 for any customer who cites us as a referral. Please contact me if you are interested in exploring this option.

I look forward to sharing more details when the panels are installed.

Come and Sit with Us

Monday through Friday

5:40am - 7:00am || zazen, service, soji

5:40pm - 6:30pm || zazen, service

Wednesdays

12:00pm - 12:30pm || informal zazen

Changing Hands

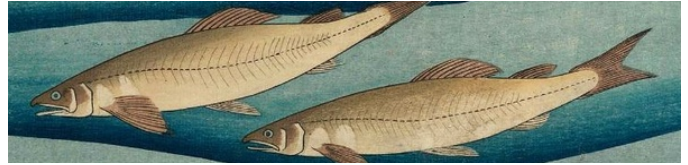
In 2015, Alexandra Frappier served as our oryoki instructor. We are very grateful to her for teaching this form which is so integral to our practice. We welcome Tamar Enoch who began in January as our new instructor.

Ellen Webb has served for three years as our librarian, overseeing the library, ordering new books, and keeping the library files up to date. We thank her for her dedication to our library and attention to the myriad details that support it. Peter Wolak is our new librarian and we welcome him into this position.

Mary Beth Lamb has taken care of our memorial garden altars for more than a year now. We appreciate and thank her for her devoted practice and welcome Amaselu Meyer to this position.

We thank Cole Bartholemew for being our community room caretaker these last few months, keeping this room clean and tidy. We welcome Matt Haug as our new community room caretaker.

An update on the Saturday Director position -- as mentioned in the previous newsletter, Mary Beth Lamb is now serving as Saturday Director. However, Ed Herzog will be continuing as Saturday Work Leader during 2016. We are grateful to both of them for serving in these key roles.



20s / 30s Hills and Streams Backpacking Sesshin Friday, April 22 – Sunday, April 24

The Berkeley Zen Center 20s and 30s Dharma Group is happy to announce it will be hosting its second annual "Hills and Streams" backpacking sesshin, from Friday, April 22nd through Sunday, April 24th. There is also a mandatory meeting on Thursday, April 21st. The retreat will be held in the steep oak woodlands of Sunol Regional Wilderness, east of Fremont (<http://www.ebparks.org/parks/sunol>). Sign-up and cancellation deadline is Monday, April 11th. While readings for this sesshin will be announced at the April 19th meeting, last year we studied the Xin Xin Ming and contemplated some verses of Thich Nhat Hanh's on walking meditation while we were hiking.

This is an intensive meditation retreat which will involve significant hiking and will maintain (to the extent possible) a sesshin atmosphere and practice. This includes long periods of silence, sitting zazen, and shared responsibilities (cooking, cleaning, etc.). If you are new to backpacking or sesshin, please speak with the director, Kelsey.

This sesshin is a wonderful way to connect with other young sangha members and experience practice in wilderness. If you or someone you know is interested in attending, please fill out an application at the following link: <http://bit.ly/1PBorgw> or email Kelsey at kelseybrynn@gmail.com. We hope to see many old and new faces there!

Saturday Speakers, 10:15 am

March 5	Laurie Senauke
March 12	Sojun Mel Weitsman
March 26	Ross Blum
April 2	Hozan Alan Senauke
April 9	Sojun Mel Weitsman
April 16	Mary Mocine
April 23	tba
April 30	Sojun Mel Weitsman

Friday and Monday Talk Schedule

March 4	Fri 5:40pm	zazen referresher with Sojun Roshi
March 7	Mon 6:25am	open discussion
March 14	Mon 6:25am	Ko Blix
March 21	Mon 6:25am	Ellen Webb
March 28	Mon 6:25am	Alexander Coward
April 1	Fri 5:40pm	Walter Kieser
April 4	Mon 6:25am	open discussion
April 11	Mon 6:25am	Jed Appelman
April 18	Mon 6:25am	Rhea Loudon
April 25	Mon 6:25am	tba

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Third Friday of the month before each
issue. Submit items to
bzcnewsletter@gmail.com.

May-June deadline:
Friday, April 22, 8:00 pm

Family Practice at BZC

BZC Family Practice on Saturdays

BZC Family Practice is offered on almost all Saturdays (still check the calendar for details, and always RSVP so we can share late-breaking news), at the usual time, from 9:30 to 11:15. BZC member and Music Together teacher Ryk Groetchen will be taking the lead. See details on our section of the website: berkeleyzencenter.org/family-practice.

New Sign-up Form

Check out our handy new sign up form on the website (berkeleyzencenter.org/family-practice) - you may use this form, or send an email to ryk@groetchen.org.

Saturday Morning Supervised Play

Due to the expanded KidZendo program, we will not be offering supervised play. We want to serve the needs of parents keeping the flame of practice alive, so don't hesitate to contact us with your questions, concerns, and wish list. Direct inquiries to Laurie Senauke (lauries@kushiki.org).

Family Practice E-mail Group

Our Yahoo group makes it easier to communicate about family practice. We only send, at most, one e-mail a week. To join, e-mail Marie (marie_hopper@sbcglobal.net) or Laurie (lauries@kushiki.org).

Family Practice Schedule

March 5:	No program - teacher training
March 12:	Family Practice
March 19:	No program - sesshin
March 26:	Family Practice
April 2:	Buddha's Birthday!
April 9:	Family Practice
April 16:	Family Practice
April 23:	Family Practice
April 30:	No program - sesshin

Please RSVP for ALL family activities. Thank you.

Tensions and Tenseness

Freeing our self from our self



When I give zazen instruction I encourage people to release or let go of the tenseness in various parts of their body. Easier said than done. There is tension that holds the structure of the body/mind together allowing for a free flow of unhindered energy. And then there is tenseness that causes knots that hinder that flow. The tenseness is extra. An important aspect of our practice both on and off the cushion is to be aware of how we hold our well-balanced unconditioned posture, as well as waking up to the corners and crannies of our body where we hold our unresolved anger, resentments, fears, frustrations, anxieties, loss and gain, and much, much more that determines our conditioned postures.

In a world where there is so much to be angry, resentful, fearful, frustrated, jealous, and self-critical about, it's a wonder that we have any freedom from ourselves at all. It is well known that our back from top to bottom is a storage compartment for anger and resentment. After all, if we can't resolve it, it has to go somewhere. The other parts of our body also hold this mental and emotional baggage. When I adjust posture in the zendo, it becomes clear that we bring our conditioned postures to the cushion.

Zazen is to resume our original unconditioned posture that harbors nothing while embracing whatever appears without attachment. Although angry, not harboring anger, although resentful, not harboring resentment, although self-critical not harboring criticism. Meeting the trials and tribulations as well as savoring the sweetness and love of our everyday activity we follow the natural order of Mind in this way. Suzuki Roshi once said that everything is falling out of balance and finding its balance moment by moment. This takes continuous awareness. Responding allows us the opportunity to stay centered, while reaction usually pulls us off center. Staying centered and balanced and in touch with the profound stillness at the center of our activity is our practice.



Sojun

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