



Berkeley Zen Center



November 2003 Newsletter

Editor's note: this letter appeared in the December 2001 newsletter. It is timely to consider these words again...

To the Sangha...

Soon we will enter the new year. And as Dogen Zenji says, "Summer does not turn into Fall, nor does Fall turn into Winter." These are not his exact words, but the meaning is the same. Fall is a period of Fall and Winter is a period of Winter. Master [Mumon] said, "Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter. If useless things don't clutter your mind, you have the best days of your life." The common feeling is that since September 11th everything has changed. But it is also true that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Those of us who have followed the history of the past fifty or so years can see progressive steps leading up to the present conflicts and we know that the momentum is not easy to turn around. No one knows what tomorrow may bring. The question facing each of us is, "What can we do to work toward finding non-violent solutions to these enormous problems?"

What we do today will determine what we do tomorrow. Today is a stepping stone to tomorrow. But today is just today and tomorrow is just tomorrow. If we live thoroughly today, there is no other day for us. In times like this we are challenged to find the deepest meaning of our Buddhist practice. Through our sincere effort and without trying to do something special, we can light up our small corner of the world.
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November & December Schedule

Aspects of Practice
continues to 11-22

Founders' Ceremony
Thursday 11-3, 6:20 pm
Friday, 11-4, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 11-8, 9:30 am

Kanzeon Sitting
Sunday, 11-9, 8 am to 5:30 pm

Part-Day Sitting and
End of Practice Period
Saturday, 11-22

Thanksgiving — *Zendo Closed*
Thursday, 11-28

Rohatsu Sesshin
Monday, 12-1 to Sunday, 12-7

Suzuki Roshi Annual
Memorial Ceremony
Thursday, 12-4

Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony
Saturday, 12-6

Winter Break — *Zendo Closed*
Sunday, 12-14 to Wednesday, 12-31

New Year's Eve Sitting and Party
Wednesday, 12-31, 8 pm to 12:15 am

Regular Zendo Schedule Resumes
Friday, 1-2, 5:40 am

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The merit of practice has a far-reaching effect beyond what we can see. Going into the new year, let us renew our intention to live each day with our Bodhisattva Vows, with gratitude for our fortunate circumstances, with a compassionate attitude toward all beings. And let us do whatever we can to bring the human world together in harmonious union.

Sojun



Automated External Defibrillator...

The BZC Board is considering the purchase of an AED or, Automated External Defibrillator.

An Automated External Defibrillator is a device used to deliver an electric shock to an individual in cardiac arrest. Access to AEDs in public places is becoming increasingly prevalent.

The average cost of an AED is \$2,000. Having one at our Zen Center is a worthy investment. Toward that end the Board invites interested sangha members to contribute to a specific fund for the purchase of an AED.

We currently have \$350 in the fund. If you are interested, put a check in the community room mail slot and mark in the memo section that the contribution is for an AED.

If you have questions, please speak with board member Greg Denny or board secretary Andrea Thach.



Mid-week Sesshin ...

The practice committee is considering a mid-week sesshin on a Tuesday or Wednesday. The sesshin would begin with

the morning zazen period at 5:40 am and conclude with the evening service at 6:30 pm. Please contact Clay Taylor at 510.845.1991.



Calling All Chidens ...

If you would like to help care for our beautiful altars, contact Ann Kennedy (649-9432; kaimon@earthlink.net) to be trained for open positions on our 2004 chiden schedule. This is a quiet, lovely way to support our zendo practice.



Sewing class...

If you are interested in preparing for Jukai next year, sewing classes start in the second half of January. Classes are open to those who have asked their teacher if they may participate. Before the winter break (mid-December), please speak with Sojun Mel Weitsman and then also contact sewing teacher Jean Selkirk. Check the bulletin board for further announcements.

Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. The cost is \$5 per family. Note that the childcare schedule is tentative. Childcare is not offered if no one's planning to come, so please call Laurie the Thursday before to let us know if you're hoping to attend. For more information, call Laurie Senauke, 845-2215.

November 1	Childcare
November 8	Childcare
November 15	Childcare
November 22	No program
November 29	Childcare
December 6	No program
December 13	Childcare
December 20	No program
December 27	No program

Lecture by Sojun Roshi

Honoring Peace

Today we face a crisis of monumental significance which involves the entire world and causes each nation and each individual to look deeply within their own conscience and decide whether or not war is a just or viable way to settle conflicts or whether any one nation has the right to dominate other nations or peoples. Buddha is believed to have said that the law of the fishes is that the big fish eat the smaller fish, which eat the smaller fish, which eat the smaller fish and so forth. This is the way of "the world," but it is not the way of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Katigiri Roshi told this story about the difference between heaven and hell: In hell there is a long table and all the guests are sitting around it. On the table is a sumptuous feast, and the guests are issued a pair of long chopsticks. In fact, the chopsticks are so long that although the guests can reach the food to pick it up, they can't get it into their own mouths. That is hell. Heaven looks exactly the same; same table, same chopsticks, same arrangement. But when each person on either side of the table picks up a morsel with the long chopsticks, they put that into the mouth of the person on the other side of the table. Heaven and hell are realms of our own making.

It's like our body/mind which has many co-operating streams: the bloodstream, the water stream, the heat, the breath, the limbs, the brain, the organs, all working together harmoniously. When they don't, the body gets sick. Our body/mind is a microcosm of the world. A city or country is like our body. When goods and services and money don't flow, the body or the country gets sick and the world as well. The result is pain, trauma, and imbalance. We say, "the whole world is our true human body." We have to think about how we take care of the world as one whole body. Compassion and identification with others are qualities that sustain the world.

It is said that to be a bodhisattva is to be a mature human being. As a bodhisattva in the midst of fighting demons we can offer the precepts of thought and conduct. In the midst of so-called animal behavior we can offer the teaching of *Prajna Paramita*. For hungry ghosts we can teach generosity, and as humans we can transform desire into Way-seeking Mind. We can also teach patience in the midst of hellish conditions. Wisdom, generosity, goodwill, and practice/enlightenment are the basis of a harmonious sangha, and a harmonious sangha is the basis of a harmonious world. Traditionally a monastic community is supported by people who see it as an example of pure living, free from greed, ill will, and delusion.

In Dogen's time, and throughout history, most countries have been monarchies of one kind or another. There has not always been access for the populace to effect changes in society except through revolution. In this country we have the vote, and less than half of

us use it. We have the privilege of being able to influence what happens here. This is a valuable tool, a gift which it is incumbent upon us to use. Otherwise change will not happen. This is the option that Buddhists in the past did not have. Therefore Dogen could tell the monks not to be concerned with worldly affairs. The rights and privileges we have here must not be taken for granted and are constantly being challenged. If they are not protected they will be lost before we know it.

I gave a talk at Green Gulch two weeks after 9/11. Someone asked, "What can we as a monastic community do to help people in this time of crisis?" I said that through *zazen* and monastic practice we are showing people that there is a way. By being an example of frugality, honesty, wisdom, compassion and peaceful harmony, we are making a vital contribution to the world. A guest at the talk said, "I can't tell you how much I appreciate this community being here and, for what it offers. When I come here from the world outside, its like a place of sanity and refuge. I feel that I can take a deep breath and let go."

This practice is our offering to the sanity and stability of the world. There is no way to measure the far-reaching effect of the radiant light of *zazen* throughout the ten directions.

This lecture previously appeared in *Wind Bell* spring/summer 2003



Field Notes from Montana...

Karen DeCotis
10/28/03

Today it's the wind. Blowing everywhere and although it seems there is no need to fan, I am practicing by sitting in a small, broken down shed, an electric heater at my feet, sending this email to the newsletter editor. We don't indulge in internet services on the ashram where I live. Same with coffee, alcohol, tv & radio, newspapers and hopefully idle talk, attachment to self and the like. I am working in the position of ashram manager; it's kind of like being a classroom teacher for several families and single adults. I organize cars, meals, jobs; oversee finances, have a small (3 children) school twice a week, pinch hit for errands in town, help manage the (too many) businesses we're trying to run to meet the expenses of being a spiritual community out on the windy plains.

On the Zen front, the Bozeman Zen Group is flourishing. Check out the website: bozemanzengroup.org. We now have a steady 10 people coming every week, we've plunged into Dogen and even have sutra books. We've begun doing a more full service, with bowing and incense offering. Last night had a business meeting



to develop our calendar, explore becoming a church legally and, of course, to look at the money. For me, it is a sanctuary to drive into town every week just to face the wall, drink some tea and help promote the buddhadharma. Every Monday night, I am driving home, beaming, noticing the desire for more of this good medicine. Taking up my fan and celebrating these furious winds.

Part of my responsibility is to spend about 10 hours a week pursuing adoption. I have the support of the residents of the ashram, and I must practice very hard not to let circumstances or what seems so needed in the moment derail me from my intention. Although the last two weeks have been less than successful, Paul and I did travel to New York to meet our adoption agency which kicked the whole process more into the realm of the real. Perhaps by next summer we will be traveling to one of the zen homelands, China, to meet our new child.

My heart is always here in the Berkeley zendo and I bow daily to maintain my connection to you. When I look at my calendar and my checkbook, how to get to Berkeley again is my concern. Thank you all for your strong practice as it feeds me on the stillest of days.



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.

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