



Berkeley Zen Center



December 2003 Newsletter

Dear Sangha,

As we approach the new year, I am moved to express my deep respect, appreciation, and gratitude for your continuous and sincere practice. Sometimes when I am sitting in the zendo I wonder at the mysterious attraction this practice has for each one of us: so simple, and yet it requires so much dedication. I am moved by that degree of dedication, especially given all the other responsibilities that we have.

In the past, there have been times when the core group was very small. Now we have a sizeable group of steady practitioners.

My wish is that we continue to support one another, rising above petty differences and judgmental attitudes. Although it is inevitable that there will be personality differences and clashes, we can make an effort to understand each other and act out of compassion and not get caught in a reactive mode. Dogen Zenji asked his students to blend together like milk and water. At the same time we rub (and knock) up against each other, and little by little (or suddenly) our sharp corners get rounded off. This is the advantage of sangha practice. We may wish that everyone would be just the way I want them to be. But it's also possible to wish for them to be just the way they are. If we address each one as Buddha, who knows? They might just turn out to be. We each have a wonderful and endless opportunity to work toward our maturity as a human being. I look forward to doing this with you in 2004.

Happy Holidays,
Sojun

December & January Schedule

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

New Year's Day — *Zendo Closed*
Thursday, 1-1

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

Founders' Ceremony
Monday, 1-5, 6:20 pm
Tuesday, 1-6, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 1-10, 9:20 am

One-Day Sitting
Saturday, 1-10, 5 am to 9:30 pm

Memorial for Eika Jakuko Butch

Baluyut... will be held at the San Francisco Zen Center, 300 Page Street, on **Friday, 19 December**. Dinner will be at 6:30 pm, a formal ceremony at 7:30 pm, and reception to follow. *RSVP to Mary Mocine for dinner.*



20s and 30s Dharma...

Starting in January, BZC will offer a dharma group for members in their 20s and 30s. Dharma groups serve to support the spirit of *kalyana mita* – spiritual friendship, emphasizing the “horizontal” aspect of our sangha; a senior BZC member acts as a facilitator. The time for the initial meeting will be announced in the January newsletter. For more information in the meantime, contact Blake, 653-1217 or Laurie, 845-2215, lauries@kushiki.org.



Bay Area Family Sangha Day

BZC families are warmly invited to join families from other Bay Area sanghas for an exciting new event sponsored by the Spirit Rock Family Program. This is an opportunity to gather in wider community to share dialog, teachings, and experiences from senior teachers in three traditions (Zen, Vajrayana, Thervada/Vipassana). Families and extended families of all backgrounds and traditions, and children and teens of all ages, are welcome.

Sunday, 25 January from 10:30 AM to 4:00 PM at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. See the flyer on the BZC bulletin board, or visit the website at www.spiritrock.org.



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. Current *chidens* will be happy to train anyone interested. This is a quiet, lovely way to support our zendo practice.



Innumerable Gasshos...

to BZC Work Leader Baika for coordinating, with her usual creativity and attention to detail, the much needed repair and maintenance work in BZC residence 1933A. The work combined the efforts of both outside contractors and many generous BZC members, who deserve our gratitude as well. Gasshos to everyone involved.

Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered on Saturdays from 9:15 am to 11:15 am. The cost is \$5 per family. Note that the childcare schedule is tentative.

Childcare is not offered if no one is 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.

December 6	No program
December 13	Childcare
December 20	No program
December 27	No program
January 3	Childcare
January 10	No program
January 17	Childcare
January 24	Childcare
January 31	Childcare

Lecture by Sojun Roshi

One More Thought on *Metta*

The *Metta Sutra* opens with a teaching: "This is what should be accomplished by the one who is wise..." Then it introduces a prayer: "May all beings be happy..." Then it offers guidance on how to do this: "Even as a parent at the risk of one's life, one watches over and protects one's only child..."

Many people feel that zazen assumes the role that prayer takes in other religions. Prayer takes many forms, among which are supplication to a deity, and asking for favors of one kind or another. The highest form of prayer is simply recognized as communion with no other motive.

Many people think that Buddhism is not a religion because it doesn't point to a deity. It is widely thought that Buddhism is atheistic. But a-theistic is just the other side of theistic. I think of Buddhism as non-theistic. There have been throughout the history of Buddhism, theistic tendencies in both the early and later schools. In India the Pudgalavadins posited the existence of an immortal soul, which was denied by all the other schools. Then the Mahayana came up with Vairocana, the Dharmakaya Buddha as personifying the primal source, along with the understanding of the Buddha Nature as the all-pervasive primal reality common to all beings. The Pure Land school chants the name of Amida Buddha and offers prayers for salvation, as do other schools. But for Buddhists, none of this adds up to either a deity or a first cause.

A deity provides a focal point. It is the ultimate parent. But, even though there is no recognized deity in Buddhism, it often seems like there is. We like to say that the true human body is the whole universe: one whole being with infinite phenomenal expressions, and we stress the interconnectedness of all beings. So we direct our effort toward harmonization and right conduct because each one of us creates a positive or negative influence on our immediate surroundings and through the power of influence, on the world at large. Many Buddhists believe that there is just one soul: the vast being we call Buddha. And each one of us is a unique expression of that one soul. Our individuality is temporal, but our life of unity is universal. Therefore, when we hurt each other, we hurt ourselves, and when we help each other, we help ourselves.

In this *Metta Sutra*, or, Meditation on Metta, as it is now being called, we offer this prayer: "May all beings be happy, may they be joyous and live in safety, all living beings whether weak or strong, in high or middle or low realms of existence, small or great, visible or invisible, near or far, born or to be born, may all beings be happy." This prayer for the happiness and well being of all is a truly religious expression. It includes all beings unconditionally. It is on the level. It is an expression of pure faith. There is a Buddhist term, *adhithana*, which means something like, the sustaining power of grace,

or the assistance of the buddhas and bodhisattvas who meet us face to face through our selfless effort. Dogen uses the phrase, "Imperceptible mutual assistance." In other words, the universe meets us and responds to our effort.

When my son was a little boy, I would read him stories about the ancient world. One was a story about the Vikings and another was about Rome. The Vikings were bloodthirsty. They would take their ships all over their world, pillaging unmercifully. The Romans were somewhat the same. They loved the Coliseum, which was an arena for all the viciousness of human nature. Then the Christians came along and changed the ancient Western world. I think it was a kind of miracle. In that way Buddhism is not different from true Christianity and other religions when they practice indiscriminate loving-kindness.

Even though Dogen Zenji says "Only zazen," without this effort it's not complete practice. "Only zazen" includes all beings. Whether sitting cross-legged on the cushion or at work in the world, if we are always abiding in Big Mind with all beings, that is "Only zazen." When we include each being as a part of our big self, even though all beings seem to exist independently, the prayer for the welfare of all beings permeates our practice as a way of life.



Member Directory Changes...

If you have changes to your contact information (name, address, phone, email), please let the Office Manager, Laurie Senauke know, by note or email - lauries@kushiki.org - by **13 December**.



Elderly Parents?

Many of us at BZC are taking care of (or worrying about) elderly or infirm parents, either nearby or at a distance. We will have a potluck and informal gathering of those concerned with this topic - to connect, commune and conspire, on **Tuesday, 6 January**. For more information call or email Laurie, 845-2215, lauries@kushiki.org.



Thank You, Richard...

BZC received a donation of beautiful bud vases made by member Richard Urban. Please use and enjoy!



Welcome to New Friend

Leavenworth Jackson.



Practice Committe Asks..

Each of us to remember to remove our hats in the zendo.

Accepting New Students...

Mary Mocine welcomes new students into her monthly seminar on *Transformation at the Edge: Fifty Verses on the Nature of Consciousness*, Tich Nhat Hanh's commentary on Vasubandu's Thirty Verses. Look for a notice on the bulletin board in January.



Automated External Defibrillator...

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

We currently have \$400 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.



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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