



Berkeley Zen Center



March 2007 Newsletter



Alex Senauke bathes the baby Buddha during last years birthday celebration. Photo by Alan Senauke

All Invited to Celebrate Buddha's Birthday

This year our Buddha's birthday celebration will be on Saturday, April 7. Buddha's birthday is an important date on the Zen calendar, marking the birth of the Buddha and the fresh possibility of awakening in one's own life. The Saturday program will start at 9:30 am, but preparations will begin earlier in the morning. See the zendo bulletin board for the full schedule and to sign up to help prepare the temple grounds and clean up afterwards. Feel free to bring friends and families. Children, who embody our hope for enlightened peace and the planet's future, are especially encouraged to attend. An important

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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.

BZC Schedule March

Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 3-1, 6:20 pm

Friday, 3-2, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 3-3, 9:30 am

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 3-4

All Sangha Potluck

Tuesday, 3-6, 6:30 pm

Kidzendo

Saturday, 3-17

One-Day Sitting

Sunday, 3-18

April

Kanzeon Sitting

Sunday, 4-1

Founder's Ceremony

Tuesday, 4-3, 6:20 pm

Wednesday, 4-4, 6:40 pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 4-7, 9:30 am

Buddha's Birthday

Saturday, 4-7

One-Day Sitting

Sunday, 4-15

Kidzendo

Saturday, 4-21

Mountains and Rivers Sesshin

Friday-Sunday, 4-27 to 4-29

NOTE: The BZC Newsletter invites all sangha members to submit short articles, poems, or other items of interest. Send to: ehertzog@lmi.net. Deadline is the 20th of the month.

Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend; call or email Greg Denny, 595-8162, or greg@techsperience.org.



Childcare Schedule

March 3	Childcare
March 10	Childcare
March 17	Kidzendo
March 24	Childcare
March 31	Childcare * * *
April 7	Buddha's Birthday
April 14	Childcare
April 21	Kidzendo
April 28	Childcare * * *
May 5	Childcare
May 12	Sesshin – no program
May 19	Kidzendo
May 26	Childcare

Kidzendo

A talk in the zendo for young ones three and up is offered on the third Saturday of each month (or the fourth Saturday if a sesshin is scheduled on the third). We meet upstairs at the Senauke's household (1933 Russell) for a briefing on forms at about 9:45, then sojourn down to the zendo for the first 10 minutes of lecture starting at 10:10. Afterwards, children may join the regular Saturday childcare program if they wish.

One Continuous Mistake

Our 2007 member directories were recently mailed out, after which we discovered that the listing of ceremonies and events on the back at the bottom is wrong – it shows the 2006 dates (the sesshin dates are correct). Get your black sharpie and **CROSS IT OUT!** The correct calendar went out in the December newsletter. Watch for corrected version coming soon.

SAVE THE DATES

All Sangha Potluck and Budget Meeting

On Tuesday, March 6, at 6:30 pm, we will come together to hear a report from the treasurer and discuss and approve the BZC budget for 2007. Bring a dish to share (sign up on the bulletin board for food and clean up).

April Kanzeon Sitting

The next Kanzeon sitting will be on Sunday, April 1, 2007, 8:45 am to 4 pm. This sitting is especially designed for those who have some difficulty with the typical sesshin schedule, but it is open to anyone. The periods of zazen are shorter so it is also a good opportunity to experiment with a more challenging posture. Attend for all or part of the day. If you have particular concerns, needs, or ideas, or if this will be your first day-long sitting, please contact Greg Denny, greg@techsperience.org. Lunch will be bag lunch - bring you own, or purchase one from the Thai temple next door or the Berkeley Bowl. Cost for the day is \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members. Sign up on the bulletin board.

Shukke Tokudo

On Sunday afternoon, April 9, Sojun Roshi will ordain Alexandra Frappier - Seishi Ikusei (Clear Resolve, Nourishing Life) - as a priest at Berkeley Zen Center. The ceremony will take place in the zendo at 2 pm, with reception to follow. Community members are warmly invited to attend and help celebrate this joyous occasion.

Bhutan Trip Photos

On Saturday, April 21, at 1 pm in the community room, Sojun Roshi, Doug, and Max will present a slide show and talk about their September 2006 trip to India, Sikkim, and Bhutan. No need to sign up. The show will last about one hour.



PEOPLE

Monk Looking For a Home

Since January, BZC has been home to Bhante Suhita Dharma. Bhante has been a monk for 40 years, primarily in the Vietnamese Zen tradition, and with practice and ordinations as a Trappist, Theravada, and Vajrayana monk as well. Bhante has moved from L.A. to the Bay Area to work as coordinator of Buddhist Peace Fellowship's Transformational Justice Program. His special mandate is to help get a prison post-release project, Coming Home, up and running. He has been working at BPF since October, and is a valued member of the staff there.

Bhante is looking for a longer-term residence than we have been able to provide at BZC. Most likely for a year's time. If BZC sangha members have or know of a reasonably priced room or living space, please contact Bhante at 626-202-2369 (cell), bante@bpf.org, or call, email, or talk with Alan Senauke. This is a wonderful opportunity to help a Buddhist monk in the world who really walks his talk.

* * *

Gasshos to **Anne Larsen** for managing the auxiliary bulletin boards for several years. Taking over for her is new resident **Everett Wilson**. New residents **Everett** and **Anke's** phone number is 510 666-8890.

Buddha's Birthday

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part of the ceremony is bathing the baby Buddha in his bower, which the sangha decorates every year. Decorating the flower bower is a fun group event, which will happen Saturday morning from 7:30-8:30 am. Everyone is invited.

Please bring flowers on Friday, April 6: carnations, iris, daisies, ranunculus, sweet william, camelias, and lilies are especially good. Leave them on the community room porch before evening zazen, or bring treasures from your garden. For more information, contact BZC Head Chiden, Carol Paul, (510) 596-9048.

"Trust in Mind" Class Offered

Karen Sundheim and Andrea Thach will co-teach a class on the poem, "Trust In Mind" (Hsin Hsin Ming) on four consecutive Thursday evenings beginning April 5. Composed in the sixth century by our third Zen ancestor, Seng-T'san, this work goes to the heart of how our clinging to gaining, attraction, and aversion leads us astray. Fortunately he has subtle and good advice for us. Though Karen and Andrea will present context and background, the emphasis will be on making it personal through discussion and investigation. Cost for the series is \$20.00. Classes run from 7:15-8:45 pm. Bulletin board sign up begins mid-March.

Interview with Co-Teachers

Karen Sundheim and Andrea Thach

Q. *In the Hsin Hsin Ming (Trust In Mind) what stands out as being relevant to your practice?*

Karen Sundheim: One thing I've always been curious about is what faith really means. In master Sheng Yen's commentary he points out that faith has two aspects; one is "belief in" which is believing in true mind, that there is an unmoving mind. The other is that faith means realizing mind. So there's belief in and realization.

There's a tendency for us to think there is a state called enlightenment and to strive for that. What the Hsin Hsin Ming emphasizes is that there is nothing to grasp at and nothing to get rid of. I personally love the line that says, "let go of ridding yourself of your vexations". I've always thought that if I wasn't worried or upset about something-if all that was removed-enlightenment would be there. So it's something which is under the surface of all this clutter. But what Seng-T'san, the author, points out is that we don't need to get rid of anything, that all these things are part of the same mind, and it's understanding the mind, realizing the mind, that's our ongoing practice: not getting rid of, not creating, and not finding. Often we feel we're going out to find it but it's actually no different from this.

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Sojun Roshi: Why and How? From a talk on 12/6/97

In this sesshin we have been sitting continuously, eating, cooking, kinhin, serving each other, working and little else. We have been sitting with our silent dramas, our joys, our pains, our confidence, our complaints and our doubts. And during this time of concentrated



continuous practice, two questions often come up. One is *why?* And the other is *how?*

Even for older practitioners it can be difficult to stay in our seat, dealing with painful legs, painful mind, and the continuous loop of our emotions and thoughts or attachment to habitual states of mind.

It's hard to let go of the desire for some ideal state, or a great transformative experience. What can we bring home to justify this commitment of time and effort? It may feel that all we got was painful legs and a screwy, boring movie. Students sometimes ask me how to prepare for sesshin. I always say to not think about it at all. When the time arrives just go and sit down. It's seven days of letting go, of dropping, not clinging, not discriminating, not chasing away evil thoughts, not coveting good thoughts, not holding onto wonderful states of mind, not rejecting painful states of mind. Just being fully present. That's all. Maybe the most difficult thing we can do.

In the beginning we may feel that we know why we do this. It is actually beyond our reasoning, but somehow we know. Knowing knows. But when we start to reason about it, we don't know. And when we try to match our reasoning with our knowing, it brings up this question of *why?* But in the midst of sesshin, the question *why?* becomes meaningless.

Supposing we take a ride on a boat. What a pleasure. But suddenly a storm comes up. Pretty soon the boat is leaning over, the storm gets worse, the sails are starting to rip, and the waves are swamping the boat. The question arises, "Why did we do this?" But it doesn't help. The next question is, "How can I deal with this? How do I keep my composure and make it to shore?" *Why?* may have validity, but the zen

students question is always *how?* "How can I do this? Why was I born?" It doesn't matter. Here we are. How do we deal with this situation, this life right now.? When we hold the question, *how?* it's continuous practice. When we hold the question, *why?* we haven't entered yet.

Within the question is the quest, as Suzuki Roshi would say, "We are following our inmost request." One day one of his students asked him how he could be a good zen student. Suzuki Roshi answered, "Just keep asking that question."



FORMS

Soji

If you come to Saturday morning zazen, and stay for breakfast, you should plan on staying for Soji, the short work period after. Eating and cleaning go together as two sides of one practice.

And a related Soji request, from Sojun Roshi, on behalf of the weekly jikidos: They request that 2-3 people stay in the zendo during Soji after morning zazen during the week to brush off all the zabutons and fluff all the zafus. This will make the job a bit easier for those who come during the week to clean.

Sense & No Scents

We have been making a strong effort to create an environmentally welcoming and inclusive zendo. This includes no longer using incense on a regular basis, working with unscented cleaning products, and running a powerful air purifier during quiet hours. You can help this effort by refraining to wear personal scents when coming to BZC. This applies to colognes, aftershave, scented deodorants, powders, and other products. Your attention to this is deeply appreciated.



Interview with Andrea Thach and Karen Sundheim

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Q. But you do find out things right?

Sundheim: You discover them.

Q. But you don't have a pre-set idea?

Sundheim: Whatever you discover is already there

VOICES

Troubled and confused is life in the three worlds

It's not just the way things are today
Things have always been like this
Because you fail to realize the truth
You spend a lifetime chasing about.
Reading the Buddhist scriptures, you
become caught up in names and forms and
never return

Practicing Zen, you become attached to
nirvana and end by being mired there.
It reminds me of Master Tung-shan's apt
words, "The moment you set foot outside
the gate, grasses are sprouting everywhere."

--Ryokan

For one human being to love another human
being: that is perhaps the most difficult task
that has been entrusted to us, the ultimate
task, the final test and proof, the work for
which all other work is merely preparation.

--Rainer Maria Rilke

Borahu

dear one

Shekina

holy name

When I call out the light

Of my soul

I come home.

--Hebrew prayer



Q. We asked you to do this particular class because you were already studying the Hsin Hsin Ming. Of the many zen texts you could have been working with why did you pick this one?

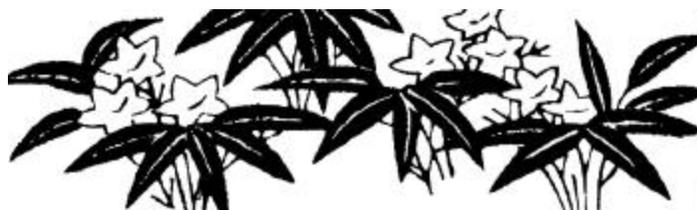
Andrea Thach: I was at the Russian River Zendo with Darlene Cohen and Tony Pachell and it's a poem they're particularly fond of. When I was up there they took it out and read through it. The line early in the poem that says, "if you want to know the truth don't be for or against anything," really grabbed me because since I was very little I've wanted to know what the truth is and since I've been very little I've also had strong opinions for and against everything (laughs). So it seems like a great koan for me.

Q. According to the story in Keizan's Record Of Transmitting The Light, the author, Seng-T'san, was a leper.

Thach. That's the story that's been passed to us.

Q. He had a poor self image because he blamed his leprosy on his own wrongdoing. When he asked the second ancestor to cleanse him of his wrongdoing the second ancestor asked him to bring his wrong doing to be cleansed. He couldn't find it and so the teacher pronounced him cleansed. This story is interesting to me in light of the fact that you're a doctor.

Thach: In memorizing and working with the poem I've realized what potent medicine this particular writing is for me and it's potent for the same reason I was drawn to it. My mind, #1 in the enneagram system, is very much about evaluation and comparing and so it's the antidote to that. How do these qualities arise? How are they skillful or not skillful? I feel like it's quite curative.



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