



Berkeley Zen Center



April 2009 Newsletter

Spring Practice Period

Our annual spring practice period will begin with a one-day sitting starting at 5:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 9 and last through the Shuso Ceremony on Sunday, June 21. Sojun Roshi invites everyone to increase their commitment to practice during this period while still minding their obligations outside the gate.

Yakuso Ryushin Andrea Thach –Healing Source/Dragon Heart—will be the shuso this year, sharing the Abbot’s seat and setting an example for us all. Zenkû E-Shin Christy Calame –Zen Sky/Wisdom Heart –will be serving as Benji.

There will be a Thursday night class with Sojun Roshi, subject to be determined. For a detailed practice period schedule, see the insert in this newsletter. Practice period applications will be available on the main bulletin board shelf in early April; please fill out and turn in by Monday, May 4.

Remember that besides signing up for practice period and turning in a registration form, you need to sign up for a number of the individual practice period events.

Practice Period Events

Opening sitting: May 9, 5 am to 9:10 pm
Opening/Shuso Entering Ceremony: May 9, about 11 am
Shuso talks: May 11, 23, 29, and June 6
Classes: Thursday evenings, May 14 to June 11
Bansan: May 15
Dinner and skit night: Saturday, June 6, 6:00 pm
Shosan: June 5 and 15
Lay Ordination: June 13
Five day sesshin: June 17 to 21
Shuso Hossen, June 21

Also, see insert calendar.



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

April

Founder’s Ceremony

Thursday, 4/2, 6:20 pm

Friday, 4/3, 6:40 am

Buddha’s Birthday Celebration

Saturday, 4/4

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 4/11, 9:40 am

Zazenkai (Just Sitting Retreat)

Sunday, 4/12, 8:00 am-5:10 pm

Work Day Sitting

Sunday, 4/19

Mountains and Rivers

Friday-Sunday, 4/24-26

May

Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 5/3, 8:00 am-Noon

New Member Entering Ceremony

Monday, 5/4, 6:20 am

Founder’s Ceremony

Monday, 5/4, 6:20 pm

Tuesday, 5/5, 6:40 am

Practice Period

Saturday, 5/9-Sunday, 6/21

See article this page, and insert calendar for details)

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 5/9, 9:40 am

Changing Hands

Many thanks to **Gary Artim** for his meticulous and timely work as the BZC Webmaster this past year. **Deborah Good** will be our new Webmaster after a few weeks of transition in April.

We are delighted to welcome long-time member and priest **Alexandra Frappier** as a new resident and our new Sangha Support point person. More information about her role will be included in an upcoming newsletter.

From mid-April through practice period, the coordinator duties will be handled by **Hozan Alan Senauke**. **Andrea Thach** thanks Hozan very much.

Mountains and Rivers Sesshin

Our next Mountains and Rivers Sesshin will take place Friday through Sunday, April 24-26, at Point Reyes.

Due to popular demand, all of our Mountains and Rivers sesshins are now three days long. The format is similar to the two-day ones we've been doing for many years—hiking in silence during the day, zazen under the stars in the evening and early morning. The extra day helps us to really settle in with the environment as well as enabling us to rest up during the middle day. Everyone is encouraged to do the full three days, but provision will also be made for people who can take part only in the Saturday-Sunday portion. All meals are provided and camping experience is not required.

Information and sign-up sheet will be posted on the BZC bulletin board. If you have any questions, please call Ken Knabb (527-0959) or email him at knabb@bopsecrets.org.

Dokusan with Hozan

Beginning in April, Hozan Alan Senauke will be offering Dokusan. He has his own sign-up calendar posted on the zendo porch.



Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturdays for zazen from 9:30 to 10:15, then families are welcome to listen to the lecture on the sound system in the community room. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend; call or email Laurie Senauke, 845-2215, or lauries@kushiki.org.

Childcare for 8:45 Zazen Instruction and Beginner Orientation may be offered by special arrangement.

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 in the community room at about 9:45, then sojourn to the zendo for the first ten minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene in the community room as usual. From time to time we offer additional activities at kidzendo.

Childcare Schedule

April 4	Buddha's Birthday Pageant
April 11	Childcare
April 18	Kidzendo
April 25	Childcare
May 2	Childcare
May 9	Childcare
May 16	Kidzendo
May 23	Childcare
May 30	Childcare
June 6	Childcare
June 13	Childcare
June 20	Sesshin - no program
June 27	Kidzendo

Sojun would like to make a request for a volunteer to transcribe lectures. Thank you for considering this.



From Sojun Roshi

Our Approach to Practice Period

During the six weeks of practice period we have the opportunity to renew and concentrate our effort, and reestablish our practice in beginner's mind. The practice period has some minimum requirements, but within these requirements each person can create his or her own schedule. This is the nature of lay practice. Some will be able to do only the minimum, while others, who have the opportunity, will be able to extend or stretch themselves much more.

It should be clearly understood that in no way is any sangha member required to participate, nor is there any pressure to do so. You should all feel free to continue to come as usual if you are not part of practice period.

When you include your zendo schedule in your calendar it incorporates zazen into the rhythm of your life as an intention rather than as a random or arbitrary activity. When we design our schedule for a limited time period, taking into consideration all of the other factors and responsibilities in our life, we have a foundation for practice. It is also necessary to honor our commitments and to be realistic about how we create our schedule.

I like to think of the spirit of practice period as the wish to do it all, and then narrowing it down to what is practical or possible, rather than simply picking or choosing pieces of it based on preference or convenience. This helps to create an edge; something to push against but not enough to be inhibiting. When we all have this attitude it creates a strong sangha feeling of mutual support and encouragement.

It is also important to manifest the spirit of zazen in our home life and work life as continuous, well-rounded practice; not just something we do on the cushion.

This can also provide a good atmosphere for those who are sitting and are not in a position to practice as fully. What makes the difference is the requirements and commitments. Except for that, we (participants and non-participants) are all practicing together.

Practice period can set the tone for the whole year, which is one of the reasons we changed it back to spring, rather than continuing to have it in the fall.



From a lecture given February 11, 1984:

We call our practice Shikantaza. Shikantaza means something like just to sit. To "just do" means acting without self, or ego, or some extra purpose. This is the opposite of a materialistic way of life. Much of our usual effort is materialistic, to "have" or "accumulate," or to improve."

Shikantaza is the other side: "to be." But when we practice to be, sometimes our materialistic side (desire) raises questions like, "Where is this going? What do I get from this? Where's the reward?" Those are natural questions to ask. But if we want something in a materialistic sense, we should not seek it in zazen. There may be many things to accomplish, but zazen is "just to be." It's enough just to be. If you can settle on just being, you can experience your completeness. But if self-centered desire takes over, we are easily pulled off our seat.

Often we get bored in zazen because we're not getting or accomplishing anything in the usual materialistic sense. We feel we have to have some justification for being alive. When we first come to zazen, we don't know why we like it. It feels right because it's enough just to be. If we can settle on just being in that way in all of our activity, then whatever we do is zazen. Shikantaza, just sitting, is just doing something without any "gaining idea," as Suzuki Roshi used to say.

Shikantaza is a total offering, holding nothing back. Merge completely. Be complete. Sit zazen with your whole body and mind, with full function and complete attention. It's hard! It's very hard to be here, completely awake and merged with reality, moment after moment. But if you're completely merged in zazen, you won't be pulled by desires. Your body and mind will be refreshed, ready, and open for the next moment.

We need to rediscover how to practice over and over again so that our effort stays fresh and we don't fall back into the realm of craving. We have to live our life in the world of desire. We have to do that and at the same time be free from it, choosing to continue our active samadhi. When we're engaged in selfless activity, our samadhi is very strong, and we come to enjoy pure activity more than we enjoy selfish activity. We practice zazen to learn which is which.



BUSYNESS, BUDDHISM, & ENNEAGRAM HABITS - A WORKSHOP WITH SANTIKARO Sunday, April 5, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Our dharma friend Santikaro will be visiting BZC again to explore the overlap between Buddhist practice and the Enneagram.

What is the role of busyness in our meditation and in our lives? We'll look at craving, clinging, and emotional and cognitive habits. Freed from habit-driven busyness, what would healthy "dhammic



busyness" look like? Santikaro will give some instruction from the Buddha-Dhamma and Enneagram perspectives; there should be ample time for discussion and sharing. Lunch will be bag lunch—bring your own, or purchase one from the Thai temple next door or the Berkeley Bowl. The cost is \$50, scholarships available.



MUTUAL SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS

Many sangha members are in the position of caring for family members or friends – whether it is an adult child in difficulty, an elderly parent, a spouse with a chronic illness, or some other situation. On **Friday, April 10**, we'll hold the first meeting of a support group for caregivers. The first meeting will be facilitated by Alexandra Frappier, BZC's Sangha Support point person. At that meeting, the group will decide together when to meet and how to structure the group. For more information, including time and place of the first meeting, contact Alexandra at 415-613-9210, or at her new email, afrappier1@gmail.com, or Elena Maroth, 524-2607.

ZAZENKAI: SILENT ONE-DAY SITTING Sunday, April 12, from 8 a.m. to 5:10 p.m.

Maintaining silence throughout the day, the simple schedule will include only zazen, kinhin, bowing, and eating.

Participants are encouraged to come for the whole day, but morning or afternoon half-day registration is also an option. A break from 12:20-1:00 will allow time for bag lunches to be eaten in the community room or, if we're enjoying fair weather, outdoors.

There will be a ten-minute period of bowing at your own pace prior to the lunch break, and we will have two periods of fast kinhin. Both of these activities can be adapted to harmonize with individual needs and abilities.

Additional information and a sign-up sheet will be posted on the courtyard bulletin board. Suggested donation for the day is \$20.

The zazenkai will be co-led by BZC priests Andrea Thach, andrea.thach@gmail.com, and Catherine Cascade, catherinecascade@sbcglobal.net. Please feel free to contact them if you have any questions.

IMAGES OF TASSAJARA AND THE GREAT 2008 BASIN COMPLEX FIRE

On Friday, April 17 at 7 p.m. in the community room, Ko Blix will present slideshows and videos revealing the drama of plants, rocks, animals, people, and clouds generated by the Basin Complex Fire as it approached, engulfed, and departed the wilderness surrounding Tassajara in July 2008.

Features:

- Excursion by mudcar towards Tassajara as the fire approached
- The Nasons interviewed as they evacuate Ventana Ranch
- Tassajara residents telling their experiences
- Tassajara and environs shortly after Guest Season reopened
- Recent hike to the Wind Caves, showing the beauty of spring returning to the blackened landscape

Everyone is invited to share the drama and Ko's marvelous photography and creative multi-media story telling.

ARE YOU COMING ON JULY 5?

Come celebrate Sojun's 80th birthday!

We'll party in the afternoon at Sequoia Lodge in Oakland. Everyone is invited to join in our homemade celebration. The plans are in the works, and help is needed.

Please contact Gerry Oliva, olivag@fcm.ucsf.edu, or Alexandra Frappier, afrappier1@gmail.com if you'd like to lend a hand.

APRIL WORK DAY:

Sunday April 19, from 8:30 a.m to 4:30 p.m.

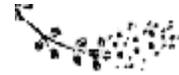
Please join us for this upcoming Work Day Sitting. There will be a period of sitting to start and to end the day. Twice a year we take a full day to do deep cleaning of the areas in the temple buildings, the garden and to accomplish repair and maintenance projects that require more time than our sesshin work periods give us. The bliss of the Sangha Jewel comes forth when we share our labor; many hands make light work, and it is an opportunity to do work practice and actually talk with each other.

Lunch will be provided! Come to all or part. There will be a sign-up on the bulletin board for work and meal planning. Please check there for details, and to let us know if you will be coming for all or part of the day. If you have questions, please contact Ken Powelson, powelson@earthlink.net, or Andrea Thach, andrea.thach@gmail.com.

**NEW MEMBER WELCOMING CEREMONY
Monday, May 4, 6:20 a.m.**

After the morning sitting, we will have our annual ceremony for welcoming new members. People who have become members since our last ceremony, or who have been members for a while but never participated in the ceremony, are invited to join us.

If you would like to be included, please contact the zendo manager, Leslie Bartholic, at lbartholic@comcast.net.



SAVE THE DATE

**FOURTH ANNUAL WOMEN'S RETREAT,
JUNE 25-29, EMPTY NEST ZENDO, NORTH
FORK, CA**

This year's retreat will focus on the ways practice can most benefit women Zen practitioners. For the past three years we have practiced together and discussed what helps women to enter and commit to Zen practice. This year we will share our collected wisdom, and expand and refine our view of the topic.

The program will feature several independent female Zen Dharma heirs in collaborative teachings with honored Buddhist scholar and translator Miriam Levering. We will have the rare opportunity to enjoy the friendship of other women practitioners, to do zazen, to receive Zen trainings

from several women Zen Dharma heirs, and to hear teachings on female Zen ancestors that include discussion of issues facing women in Zen practice—all in an intimate setting that will make time for swimming and relaxing.

Surei Darlene Cohen will teach body-centered meditations; Angie Boissevain will help us

express our practice through combined meditation and writing exercises; and Myoan Grace Schireson will continue highlighting specific women who have historically practiced and led Zen communities and what we can learn from them.

We are also most fortunate that Professor Miriam Levering, a pioneer in the study and translation of female Chinese ancestors, will be joining us. For more information on Professor Levering see <http://web.utk.edu/~religion/people/levering.html>

Retreat fees - \$45 per day

Accommodations - \$35 per night for a room, \$15 per night for tent space

For more information or to register, please contact Retreat Registrar: Piper Murakami, piperjay@mac.com.



Notes from the Board

Lately, our attention has been taken up with money matters, which are usually pretty routine, but is anything routine anymore? At our annual potluck meeting to review and approve the budget, many people shared how the current economic situation has affected them, and the people they know. Board members have been aware of a need for more attention to administrative details, and presented a budget which includes greater support for our Vice Abbot Hozan Alan Senauke. We've also been able to work out a "group plan" to substantially reduce Alan's health insurance costs, which is a huge relief.

In connection with our ongoing maintenance needs at the Zen Center, we've been testing out our new project development protocols. The case in point is about how we can increase the seismic stability of our buildings and get the most bang for our bucks.

The first task is to look carefully at what we would like to achieve in the way of earthquake safety, and then figure out how much we can do that will be both effective and cost-effective. Courtney Gonzalez has been heading up this effort, with the support and participation of various sangha members who have experience in construction, earthquake readiness, and project management at BZC. Once we arrive at clarity about exactly what we'd like to see happen in this regard, I think we can more successfully focus our energies on generating the needed financial resources.

If you have any questions, comments, or anything else regarding the Board's ongoing discussions, don't hesitate to get in touch.

Peter Overton
President

BZC CAMPOUT!

July 18-19

Our annual BZC Campout for Members, Families, and Friends will be coming up again in July! The campout will be in Tilden Park, a mere 20-minute drive from BZC, at a beautiful spot close to hiking trails. We'll start in the afternoon on Saturday, have a potluck dinner and then a campfire, wake up to birds singing and a breakfast is provided. It's all over at noon. Folks can come just for the evening or just for the morning if you don't want to sleep over. Details will follow closer to the time. For more info, talk to Katherine Ogburn, klo999@yahoo.com, or Laurie Senauke, lauries@kushiki.org.





BEES ARE GOOD!

Did you know that a large percentage of our food crops is pollinated through the activity of honey bees? And that there's been a steep drop in the honey bee population world wide? Scientists are not sure what all the factors are, but we do know that bees love rosemary plants, and rosemary plants are inexpensive, easy to grow, and they thrive in the bay area climate. Plant a rosemary bush in your yard and make some honey bees very happy!

DEEP GASSHOS

For many years, Belinda Sweet has gifted BZC with lovely scrolls, but this year she has made an especially generous offering. The new altar table in the community room is an antique Korean trunk built especially for holding Buddhist scrolls. The wood and workmanship are quite beautiful additions to our community room. And in it are *three* new scrolls, which will be displayed in the upcoming weeks. A deep bow of appreciation to Belinda for adding this beauty to our practice.



Dean Bradley found this family of hummingbirds living in the maple tree across the fence from our dokusan hut, and caught them mid-meal! She says she only wishes she'd had a quarter to put next to the nest to show its size!

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