



# Berkeley Zen Center



## December 2012 Newsletter

### Winter Break

#### December 15 – January 1

Our winter break will commence on Saturday December 15, and there will be no Saturday program on that day.

During winter break all formal practice activities are suspended except for our New Year's Eve celebration, which begins on December 31 at 8:00 pm. Otherwise, we will offer informal zazen in the morning and evening for those who wish to attend through New Year's day. A sign-up sheet will be posted for volunteers willing to open and close the zendo. For further information, please contact the zendo manager (Tamar).



### New Year's Eve Sitting and Celebration

Join us on Monday evening, December 31 for the chance to ring in the new year with the quiet and reflection of zazen, punctuated by 108 soundings of the bell to mark the last 108 minutes of 2012 and a bonfire after midnight.

Everyone is welcome to attend any portion of the program, entering the zendo during kinhin or the beginning of a period of zazen.

The schedule is:

8:00 pm	Zazen	10:13	108 bells begin
8:35	Kinhin	10:35	Kinhin
8:45	Zazen	10:45	Zazen
9:20	Kinhin	11:20	Kinhin
9:30	Zazen	11:40	Zazen
10:05	Tea	12:10	Slow chanting of Heart Sutra and sitting

A celebration and potluck will follow in the community room. Watch the bulletin board for details and the sign-up sheets for providing food and help with clean up.

### B Z C S c h e d u l e

#### December

##### **Rohatsu Sesshin**

Sunday, 12/2 - Saturday, 12/8

##### **Suzuki Roshi Annual Memorial**

Monday, 12/3, 8:20 pm

##### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Wednesday, 12/5, 8:20 pm

##### **Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony**

Saturday, 12/8, 11:10 am

##### **Winter Break**

Saturday, 12/15 - Monday, 12/31

##### **New Year's Eve Sitting and Party**

Monday, 12/31, 8:00 pm

#### January

##### **Founder's Ceremony**

Thursday, 1/3, 6:20 pm

Friday, 1/4, 6:40 am

##### **Kidzendo**

Saturday, 1/12, 9:30 am

Saturday, 1/26, 9:30 am

##### **One-Day Sitting**

Sunday, 1/20, 5:00 am – 5:30 pm

##### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 1/26, 9:40 am



#### 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.

## Sojun Roshi's 2013 Study Group

Sojun's winter/spring study group will run from January through April. This time we'd like to try a twice per month schedule rather than the once a month schedule of the past. Our hope is that this provides more continuity and focus from class to class.

A majority of students from 2012 have indicated they would like to try this. We'll meet on the first and third Fridays of the month from 7:15 to 8:45 pm in the community room when possible. The first meeting will be on January 18. The last will be on April 19. The cost for the seven-session series is \$70. As always, significant discounts are an option for those in need. Sojun's text is yet to be determined.

A sign-up sheet will be posted on January 2, or you may e-mail class coordinator Ron Nestor at [rnestor1@yahoo.com](mailto:rnestor1@yahoo.com) any time. If you decide to attend, please give serious consideration as to whether this schedule will work for you. All are welcome.

## January Class with Denkei

Raul Denkei Moncayo will teach a four-week January class entitled "Introduction to Zen Teaching in the Light of Practice at BZC." Meetings will take place on Saturday afternoons from 1:00 - 2:30 pm in the community room. The dates are January 12, 19, 26, and February 9. The cost for the series is \$40. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board December 1. You may also register by e-mailing class coordinator Ron Nestor at [rnestor1@yahoo.com](mailto:rnestor1@yahoo.com). Here is Raul's class description:

In this class we will study the history of Zen teaching from Bodhidharma to Hui-Neng, from Baso to Rinzai and Joshu, from Sekito to Tozan, and from Dogen to Suzuki Roshi and Sojun Roshi. As we traverse the length of Zen teaching, we will pay particular attention to how the various teachings manifest in the style of our practice at BZC. We will also explore the Zen teachings of some of the prominent women who figure in the Zen lineage.

Instructor: Raul Denkei Moncayo began Zen practice in the Paris Zendo of Taisen Deshimaru Roshi. He has practiced at BZC since 1978 and received dharma transmission from Sojun Roshi.

## New Study Group Forming

Andrea Thach will be starting a new dharma study group in January. It will meet about every three or four weeks. The time is to be determined based on who is interested, likely either Wednesday evenings or Sunday afternoons. We will possibly start with the Sandokai, but this too is open for discussion. If you are interested, please give her a call or send her an email at [andrea.thach@gmail.com](mailto:andrea.thach@gmail.com).



## Family Activities at BZC

**Saturday Morning Childcare** Childcare is offered free of charge on many Saturday mornings (see schedule below), for 9:40am zazen through lecture. Currently childcare is being done by Berkeley High student Lihong Chan. We need to know by dinner time Friday if you are planning to avail yourselves of childcare on the following day (so she can sleep in if not!). Phone or e-mail Laurie Senauke, 510.845.2215, or [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org). Childcare for 8:45 am zazen instruction and beginner orientation is offered by special arrangement; contact Laurie for more info.

**Toolbox/Mindfulness Kidzendo Expands.** Beginning in January 2013, our new Toolbox and Mindfulness for Families program will expand to two days per month, typically meeting on the second and fourth Saturdays, from 9:30 am to 11:15 am. We hope this will support more continuity and cohesiveness. (We are always open to feedback from parents about our program.) Check the calendar online or in the newsletter for exact schedule. RSVP if you plan to attend ([lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org)).

**Kidzendo** A program for children three and up is offered on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month (beginning January 2013). Currently we are offering a special curriculum called The Toolbox. BZC Resident Tamar has been trained in offering this set of materials. Nancy Suib, a longtime practitioner at BZC, will be co-leading this program using *The Mindful School Curriculum*. During this period, the kids will not be attending the first ten minutes of lecture. See details on our website or in the September newsletter.

December 8	Sesshin – no program
December 15	Interim – no program
December 22	Interim – no program
December 29	Interim – no program
January 5	Childcare
January 12	KIDZENDO
January 19	Childcare
January 26	KIDZENDO
February 2	Childcare
February 9	KIDZENDO
February 16	Sesshin – no program
February 23	KIDZENDO
March 2	Childcare
March 16	Sesshin – no program
March 23	KIDZENDO

**Family Practice E-mail Group** To make it easier to publicize, announce and remind ourselves about family practice activities at BZC, we have a Yahoo group. We only send, at most, ONE e-mail per week—just a short reminder of upcoming events. To join, e-mail Laurie at [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org) or Marie at [marie\\_hopper@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marie_hopper@sbcglobal.net).

## Why Do You Practice?

Thoughts from Sojun Roshi

December, 2012

Sometimes I am asked “Why do you practice?” There are a variety of possible responses. In the old days in China, the question was “Why did Bodhidharma come to the West?” This became a well-known koan that appears often in the koan collections, and there are a variety of seemingly puzzling responses.

Sir Edmund Hillary’s response to “Why do you want to climb the mountain?” was “Because it is there.”

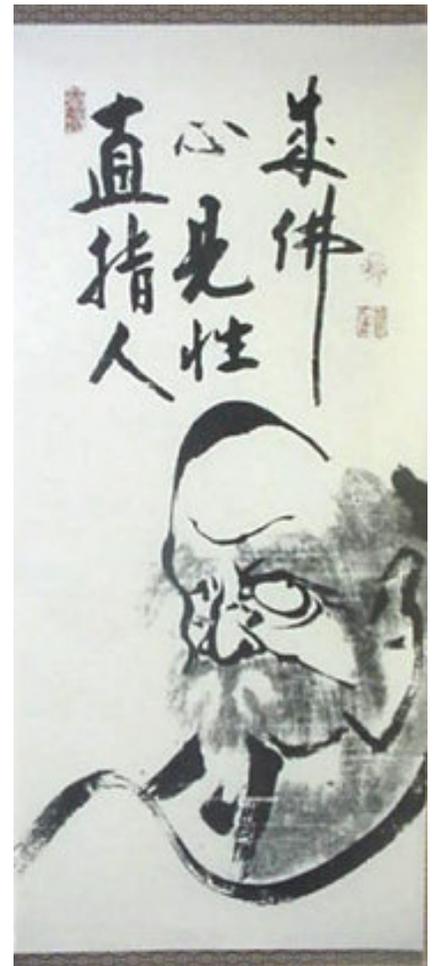
That is a little nugget one can keep unloading for a long time. When Dogen returned from China, he was asked what he brought back. He said that all he had learned was that his eyes were horizontal and his nose vertical. When I sat down the first time for zazen, I knew I was home. I was like the prodigal son in the Lotus Sutra who had stumbled into the doorway of his father’s house. This is not an uncommon experience for a Zen student. I had found zazen and a teacher whose practice was patience and sincerity. He said that those who have the most difficult time, and persevere, no matter what obstacles they meet in the way, in the end usually become very good teachers.

Someone asked me what my teacher was like. Well... he was very gentle and kind, and at the same time very firm and strict. During zazen, he would say, “don’t move.” Once he said, “don’t chicken out.” We liked it when he used our colloquialisms. We had to come face to face with our difficulties, and through our own effort find the way through. And there was no escape. This is an example of his compassion and strictness. He knew how to push and ease off, when to hold firmly and when to let loose. He never stopped encouraging us and never gave up on anyone. He never made a judgment as to who was the best horse and who was the worst. For him the worst horse in the long run might actually be the best horse, or was already. Sometimes the one who is having the hardest time and practicing wholeheartedly and unselfconsciously is actually stimulating the practice without knowing it.

In my early years of practice I had a very hard time. I feel that I have experienced most of the difficulties that everyone does: the pain, frustration, sitting through emotional problems, mental stress, and so on. I was never suspicious of the practice, but have rather looked at my own shortcomings as practice opportunities. When we can offer ourselves to practice wholeheartedly, together with all our defilements, the dharma can do its work of transformation. Why wait?

I think I practice for the sake of practice. As a longtime gardener, I love to make compost—wonderful loamy soil. As a by-product, wonderful plants come forth from the soil. As a Zen student I like to encourage others. In Soto Zen a teacher is like a farmer carefully raising his/her crops. Through steady, constant practice we cultivate the ground, nurturing the wonderful variety of flowers, and enjoy helping them to mature and bloom, each one singular and beautiful. People sometimes ask if offering so much dokusan is tiring or exhausting. Actually I thrive on encouraging others. So dokusan is usually energizing. When I give a talk, I mostly want to encourage people. This is the practice of *jijuyu zanmai*, the joy of fulfillment, and our offering to everyone. When we give in this way, unselfishly and without a motive, we are one with the ring of the way. I often think a Zen student is like that ice plant on a cliff facing the ocean. The winds blow, the sun beats down, the ocean mists and storms, and the ice plant simply weathers it all. What a life! My old teacher once said to me with a smile when I was having a really difficult time “If you can find something more difficult you should do it.”

Such compassionate encouragement has kept me on track for a long time.



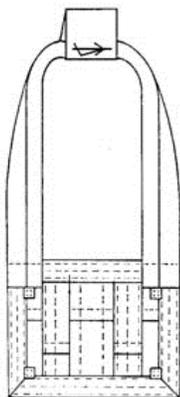
*Bodhidharma by Hakuin Ekaku (1685 to 1768). The calligraphy reads: "Zen points directly to the human heart, see into your nature and become Buddha."*

## Sewing Buddha's Robe

If you are interested in preparing for Lay Ordination next year, sewing classes start in the last half of January. Classes are open to those who have asked their teacher if they may participate.

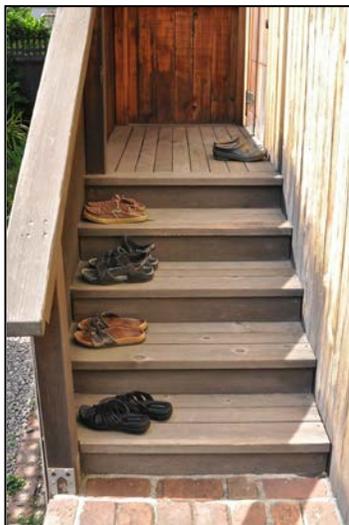
Please speak with Sojun Mel Weitsman or Hozan Alan Sensei before the sewing class begins (and preferably before the winter break).

After you speak with your teacher, promptly contact the sewing teacher, Jean Selkirk. Check the bulletin board for further announcements.



## Changing Hands

Warm recognition and gratitude to Laurie Senauke and Tamar for their dedication and sense of humor as the Zendo Manager duo. And yes, we welcome Christy Calame and Ross Blum, as they step into these shoes beginning in the new year. Ross will be handling well-being and memorial services, so if you need to schedule one, please contact him at [rossblum@gmail.com](mailto:rossblum@gmail.com) beginning in 2013.



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I gained it so—  
By Climbing slow—  
By Catching at the Twigs that grow  
Between the Bliss—and me—  
It hung so high  
As well the Sky  
Attempt by Strategy—

I said I gained it—  
This—was all—  
Look, how I clutch it  
Lest it fall—  
And I a Pauper go—  
Unfitted by an instant's Grace  
For the Contented—Beggar's face  
I wore—an hour ago—

-Emily Dickinson



*Bikunibashi setchu (Bikuni bridge in snow). Ukiyo-e print shows a porter walking in ankle-deep snow at the approach to the Bikuni bridge. No. 114 in the series Meisho Yedo Hiakkei (One Hundred Famous Views of Edo). Location is near Ginza 1-chome station, Tokyo.*

## Election Results

Much gratitude is extended to the six sangha members who so generously agreed to run for the board this year: Colleen Busch, Andrew Corson, Ed Herzog, Tamar, Marie Hopper and Jeff Taylor. Andrew is a newly elected member-at-large, and Colleen and Ed have been reelected to member-at-large for a second term. Abbot Sojun Mel Weitsman, Vice Abbot Hozan Alan Senauke and Office Manager Lisa Nelbach (paid positions) were confirmed for 2013, as were President Gerry Oliva, Vice President Jake Van Akkeren and Treasurer Paul Farber.

## Our New Treasurer

At our October board meeting we discussed Sojun Roshi's recommended appointment of sangha member Paul Farber to be our new treasurer. According to our bylaws, the abbot appoints our treasurer, subject to confirmation by the sangha in our annual board election. Generally the abbot seeks board agreement before submitting the proposed appointment for sangha confirmation. The overall process of discussions with Paul, and settling on him as Sojun's choice, took longer than originally planned. As a result, the board was polled by e-mail and voted its approval in September rather than at our regular meeting a month earlier. This gave us less time to communicate with people outside the board and to discuss more fully amongst ourselves the fact that Paul is the partner of our president, Gerry Oliva. We saw that it raises, at least, questions of appearance to have these two important positions, closely connected to BZC's finances within the same family. However, in various e-mails, the board expressed its complete trust in both Paul and Gerry.

The October 21 board meeting discussion centered on the concern that Gerry's and Paul's dual roles of domestic partners and president/treasurer be further discussed with a BZC body outside the board, namely the practice committee. We also felt that the sangha should be made aware of how Paul's background in finance and as a BZC member qualified him to be treasurer. Subsequently, on October 22 the practice committee discussed and agreed with Sojun's and the board's proposed appointment. A biography describing Paul's 45-year career as a certified public accountant and thirteen-year connection with BZC was also posted on the patio bulletin board along with the other board candidates, albeit only in the last week of elections, due to the previous delay.

A key factor in the practice committee's and board's whole-hearted acceptance of Paul's appointment, other than his qualifications and integrity, was the difficulty of filling this key position, which demands a prior level of specific training and experience far more extensive than our other practice positions. We've been very fortunate to have David Weinberg, our current treasurer, do a superb job over the last three years. Some years ago David was treasurer at San Francisco Zen Center. Before David, John Rubin took care of our finances for ten years! John came from a life-long career in banking and brought that stability and assurance to his role at BZC. Thus we are delighted to have Paul function in this capacity and to join the board for the one year remaining in Gerry's term and beyond.



## An Easy Way To Support Our Temple with Online Monthly Bill Pay

*by Ed Herzog, At Large Board Member*

If you are like me, you often forget to pay our monthly BZC membership dues. BZC doesn't send out bills and we rarely remind people with phone calls. Yet, as a board member, I have come to understand that the upkeep and operations of our wonderful and valued temple depend on the monthly dues and donations from all of us. It's also really hard to budget during the year when dues come in fits and spurts. So, what to do?

Well, here's an easy way for all of us to pay our dues and not have to think about it, write a check, or buy stamps: sign up for the automated, on-line bill pay system at your bank, using the option of "pay by check," either by going into your bank and having them set it up or by using your bank's on-line automatic bill pay function. You can pay at any interval of your choice. You can also use this same system for one-time donations. Just indicate the purpose of the payment when you are prompted to enter the purpose on the memo line as you would on any check that you write. It's easy and free both to you and to BZC.

After you sign up, every month they will mail your dues to BZC for whatever amount you specify. We get a check every month, and you get great satisfaction from supporting our center. And it's one less thing to think about in our busy lives. Help us keep our temple going and sign up at your bank for automatic bill pay.

## Photo Hike 2012

At the recent fundraiser, folks signed up to pay \$25 for a “Photo Hike” conducted by trip planner Jake VanAkerren and photographer Ko Blix. On November 4, ten packed lunch and cameras to Sculpture Beach, where we had a lot of fun and took a lot of photos (a couple of photomaniacs hundreds, and others a reasonable number)! And maybe we learned some technique, and more important, a fearless curiosity. The collective results are posted on BZC’s private photo site—a must-see. If you don’t know how to see it, contact Ko Blix.



## Calling Would-be Chidens!

Did you ever wonder what's really up there on our zendo altars, or who arranges the flowers? Care of the altars at BZC is a quiet, meditative, and mindful way to extend your own practice while supporting the practice of all. It is also a way to become familiar with the forms of our practice. Even relative newcomers can sign up, heightening the sense of connection with our zendo.

As a chiden, you commit to a week of daily altar care, usually twice a year. The simple tasks are usually complete in about 30 minutes, and can be done at a time of your choosing, Monday - Friday, whenever the zendo is not in use. Some chidens add a few minutes of private zazen for the perfect break in a busy week.

If you'd like to be included on the 2013 roster, contact Catharine Lucas, head chiden, at 510.526.3100 or [clucas@earthlink.net](mailto:clucas@earthlink.net).

## Thanks to 2012 Chidens!

Time to say a heartfelt thanks again to the nearly forty sangha members and friends who have faithfully tended the zendo altars this past year. Your conscientious care to the many details of chidening has helped create "calm practice" for all of us. Deep bows from your head chiden and from your sangha!



## Office Manager's Corner

### *108 Bells Coming to a Zendo Near You*

The holiday season will soon be in full swing, bringing the end of BZC's fiscal year and the beginning of a new one. Our supporters, members and friends need to be alert to a few deadlines and requests.

1. If you want your dues payment or donation to be included in the 2012 tax donation letter, we MUST receive the payment by January 1, 2013.
2. Make sure your listing in the Directory of Members and Friends is correct. If you have changes in contact information or need to clarify your membership/friend status, please let the office manager know as soon as possible ([bzcoffice manager@gmail.com](mailto:bzcoffice manager@gmail.com)) AND check the draft copy available in January.
3. All Members and Friends are asked to check if their current dues are up to date. Our budget process depends on your regular contributions. If your circumstances are difficult, even a small amount regularly given is very helpful to the whole sangha.

Here is our current dues policy: BZC is supported solely by dues and donations. We ask members to make a regular monthly contribution to support BZC. The current dues amount is \$40 per month. We recognize that each person's financial circumstances are different and we are grateful for whatever contribution a member can make.

If distance or some other reason keeps you from coming regularly, we appreciate your support as a friend, with a suggested contribution of \$15 per quarter (\$60 per year).

## Some Sutra Books Forms

The person retrieving and returning the sutra books from their box bows to them before and after, respectively. This bow is for all of us, thus you needn't raise the stack as you pass it along.

The sutra books contain Buddha's words. Please don't lay the book on the floor, but rather lay it on your zabuton.

When holding the book up to chant, please do so with your thumb and little finger on the inside against the pages and your ring, middle and index fingers on the outside.

Thank you to Richard Haefele, who made and gave to BZC these well-crafted boxes!



**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE**  
Third Friday of the month before each issue

January deadline:  
Friday, December 21, 8:00pm

**Berkeley Zen Center**  
**1931 Russell Street**  
**Berkeley, CA 94703**