



Berkeley Zen Center



December 2013 Newsletter

New Year's Eve Sitting and Celebration

Join us on Tuesday 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 2013 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
 8:35 Kinhin
 8:45 Zazen
 9:20 Kinhin
 9:30 Zazen
 10:05 Tea
 10:13 108 bells begin
 10:35 Kinhin
 10:45 Zazen
 11:20 Kinhin
 11:40 Zazen
 12:10 Slow 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. If you have any questions, contact Christy at ccalame AT earthlink.net.

A Day with Shohaku Okumura - January 25

BZC is again fortunate to host a day of teaching by Shohaku Okumura Roshi on Saturday, January 25. He will give the public lecture and a second longer teaching in the afternoon, both of which are open to all. Details will follow in next month's newsletter.



Shohaku Okumura Roshi is one of the preeminent teachers of Dogen Zenji's works, and the author of many translations and commentaries, including [Realizing Genjokoan](#) and [Living By Vow](#). He is abbot at Sanshin Zen Community in Bloomington, Indiana.

B Z C S c h e d u l e

December

Rohatsu Sesshin

Sunday, 12/1 – Saturday, 12/7

Suzuki Roshi Annual Memorial

Monday, 12/2, 8:20 pm

Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony

Saturday, 12/7, 11:10 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 12/14, 9:40 am

Winter Break

Sunday, 12/15 – Tuesday, 12/31

New Year's Eve Sitting and Party

Tuesday, 12/31

January

One Day Sesshin

Saturday, 1/18, 5:00 am – 9:05 pm

Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 1/2, 6:20 pm

Friday, 1/3, 6:40 am

A Day with Sohaku Okumura

Saturday, 1/25

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 1/25, 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.

Save the Date!

Please join us for a reception immediately following lecture on Saturday, December 14 for Gerry Oliva, our outgoing Board President. Gerry has served on the Board over the past ten years as Recording Secretary, member-at-large, Vice President, and President.



Photo: Ko Blix

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 are asked to remember a few things:

1. If you need **reimbursement** for money you spent on behalf of BZC, we need to have your receipts by Monday, January 6, at the latest. Please be aware of this, especially if you buy anything for BZC in December.

2. If you want your dues payment or donation to be included in the **2013 tax donation letter**, we **MUST receive** payment by Tuesday, December 31. Checks dated December, but received in January, will be credited to 2014. Please allow time for mail.

3. Make sure your listing in the directory is current and correct. If you have changes, please let the office manager know as soon as possible (bzcofficermanager AT gmail.com) AND check the draft copy available at BZC in January.

4. Members and friends are asked to check that their dues are up to date. Our budget process depends on regular contributions. If your circumstances are difficult, even a small amount, given regularly, helps the 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)."

Family Activities at BZC

Saturday Morning Supervised Play

Supervised play is offered free of charge on many Saturday mornings (see schedule below) for 9:40 am zazen through lecture. Currently supervising is Berkeley High student Lihong Chan. We need to know by noon the Friday before if you are planning to avail yourselves of this service. Phone or e-mail Laurie Senauke, 510.845.2215, or lauries AT kushiki.org.

Coverage for BZC's 8:45 am zazen instruction and beginner orientation is offered by special arrangement; contact Laurie for more information.

KidZendo

BZC's Saturday program for children three and up usually happens twice a month during the school year, typically on the second and fourth Saturdays, from 9:30 am to 11:15 am (see exact schedule below or check online). Several BZC members are teaching in this program: BZC resident Tamar has been trained in offering a curriculum known as The Toolbox. Nancy Suib and Jin Young, longtime practitioners at BZC, have been trained in the Mindful Schools program, and Seicho Judy Fleischman has participated in children's programs in Brooklyn, NY. See details on our website. As always, RSVP if you plan to attend (lauries AT kushiki.org).

Family practice schedule:

November 30	Supervised play
December 7	Sesshin - no program
December 14	Kidzendo
December 21	Interim - no program
December 28	Interim - no program
January 4	Supervised play
January 11	Kidzendo
January 18	Sesshin - no program
January 25	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 AT kushiki.org or Marie at marie_hopper AT sbcglobal.net.

**Please—always RSVP for ALL family activities to lauries AT kushiki.org!
Thank you.**

All People Are Chosen, All Lands Are Holy

Hozan Alan Senauke

This is a shortened version of a talk given on November 1, 2013 at the Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, at the 2013 conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists.

The essence of my talk is a simple and challenging principle: All people are chosen; all lands are holy.

I was born into a secular Jewish family in the United States. My grandparents and great-grandparents fled religious repression and military conscription in eastern Europe one hundred years ago. In the course of five thousand years, going back to the earliest Hebrew scriptures, Jews embraced the myth of the chosen people, and the myth of the holy land, a story that continues to bring great suffering to peoples of the Middle East.

I have never accepted these myths. Visions of chosen people and holy lands seduce us. The obsessive nature of religious, ethnic, and national identity is not sustainable, nor does it lead to peace.

At an early age I set aside my religion of birth and began a search for spiritual teachings that fit better with how I saw the world. By my college years, I had come to admire Buddhism. In simple terms the Buddha explained: "I teach about suffering and the end of suffering." This teaching continues to inspire me.

Still, I carry two powerful models in mind. In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam we hear the voice of the prophets, preaching justice and righteousness in society, speaking truth to power. In Buddhism we admire the Bodhisattva, who selflessly places the wellbeing of others before him or herself. Two streams of faith from two sides of the world – Jewish elders and Buddha ancestors – converge in my heart. They speak to each other and I try to listen.

When I consider that all lands are holy, two Zen Buddhist sayings come to mind. The first is: "There is no place in the world to spit." Every place is precious to those who live there. Every place is the center of the world. So, of course, there is no room for actions that defile the land and poison the air and waters. The path of peace is to take equal care of every place.

The second Zen saying I recall is this: "If you create an understanding of holiness, you will succumb to all errors." Just as all lands are holy, we see that elevating one people splits the world in two. An exclusive holiness plants poisonous seeds of "us and them" – my people, my religion, my nation. War and hatred grow from such seeds. In the name of holiness, the soil of nations has absorbed the blood of crusaders, soldiers, defenders, martyrs, and countless innocent people.

From a Buddhist perspective our self-centered attachment to these views is the source of suffering. Self-centeredness causes us to live at the expense of others. From there grows a kind of cultural or national self-centeredness, with individual suffering manifesting as policies of religious and ethnic intolerance, generation after generation, forging chains of suffering out of fear and anger. We use violence to enforce this identity.

Verses 3-5 of the *Dhammapada* say:

He insulted me, hit me, beat me, robbed me
– for those who brood on this, violence isn't stilled.
Violence is never stilled through violence, regardless.
Violence only ceases through love.
This is an unending truth.





Buddhism and Islam prevail in Southeast Asia, and over the last decade we have seen the rise of inter-communal tensions between Buddhists and Muslims in Thailand, Indonesia, the Maldives, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The International Network of Engaged Buddhists' mission is to recognize our common humanity and common right to life. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with recognition that "...the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world..."

The enlightened center of Buddhism, the peaceful heart of Islam, and the essence of all religious traditions, are often lost in a world that is governed by global politics and multinational corporations. Where religion, the state, and economics join forces, narrowness and prejudice arise. This unholy alliance is more about power than faith. In a religious state the religious community in power has the preponderance of authority, resources, and weapons. We begin with words, but peace and sustainability in Southeast Asia or anywhere depend on much more than words. We can talk about equality, generosity, and all kind of high-minded principles. But until we recognize that all people are chosen, that we are our brother's brother and our sister's sister, nothing will really change.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 25 puts this in concrete terms:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services..."

Sustainability is a global issue. Southeast Asia suffers from overpopulation and from global warming. Agricultural output is threatened and fresh water is at a premium as oceans rise and overrun low-lying coastal areas. The exponential rise of CO₂ from factories, energy production, and fossil-fuel-powered vehicles has destabilized weather patterns; cyclones, hurricanes, tornados, and floods rake across our continents.

These man-made crises will not just go away. Nor will they be resolved by the actions or technology of any one nation. If all beings are chosen in the sense that our deepest nature is enlightened being, we are also chosen together to face all the self-created challenges and crises that beset us.

In one of his last books, Robert Aitken Roshi wrote a Zen fable with talking animals. The wise Owl and Brown Bear discuss the Buddha's eightfold path. Owl asks, "...where does right realization come in?"

Brown Bear said, "Right Views! Right Views!"

Owl said, "What are Right Views?"

Brown Bear said, "We're in it together, and we don't have much time."

— from *Zen Master Raven: Sayings and Doings of a Wise Bird*

We are all in this world together and we don't have much time. Even in the United States—a nation whose lands were stolen from indigenous people and whose wealth was built on the backs of slaves—there are many of us from all religious and political traditions who know that our privilege and empire are not sustainable.

We begin with words, but words are not enough. Buddhists and Muslims, living in the same cities, farming the same lands, fishing the same rivers and seas, must work hand in hand. As all people on this planet must.

If there are differences between us we must learn to respect and even treasure those differences, even when they seem to contradict our beliefs. We have to do this carefully and kindly. It will not be easy, but it is necessary if the world itself is to survive. Let us dedicate ourselves to this common purpose. Warm hand to warm hand.

The Sounding Board - December Transitions

The BZC Board goes through an annual cycle during which several at-large members are elected and their predecessors step down after serving a two- or four-year term. In the upcoming year it appears that we are going through a mega cycle change in which several key position-holders, in addition to the at-large members, are changing.

Our President, Gerry Oliva, will step down after four years as President, four years as Vice President, and two years in the at-large position and Recording Secretary. Vice President Jake Van Akkeren will take over as President and Mary Duryee will become Vice President. Our Treasurer, Paul Farber, almost one year into his position, will take over accounting responsibilities from accounting consultant Jean Selkirk. Office Manager Lisa Nelbach will turn her position over to a new manager, yet to be selected.

Along with these major changes, Vice Abbot Hozan Alan Senauke will take an administrative leave of absence for 2014 while continuing to teach, schedule dokusan and practice at BZC. There are also a number of other position changes set to take place in 2014 as well.

The Board-related changes affect core practice positions in BZC's administrative and financial management. Much of the day-to-day effort and the complexities associated with these positions is unseen by the sangha at large. When things go smoothly we tend to take these functions for granted, but in fact this smoothness is the result of lots of discussion, compromise, e-mails, homework, and meticulous effort. The time and care that some of these folks have devoted to their positions is huge. As we enter a new phase and new position holders take over, we expect them to bring their particular personality and collaborative style to the mix. As conditions change we naturally build on the past and move on.

With much appreciation for those transitioning out of their current positions, we welcome those coming on board. Our common effort is grounded in zazen and sangha practice, which extends to the wider community as well.

2014 BZC Board Election Results

We are happy to announce the results of our recent Board elections. All of the Officers proposed by Sojun were confirmed:

- President: Jake Van Akkeren
- Vice-President: Mary Duryee
- Treasurer: Paul Farber

The three at-large board members proposed by the Board and approved at the all-sangha meeting were confirmed:

- Shelley Brock
- Laurie Senauke
- Stephanie Solar

By-laws revision on the process for both the selection and approval of Board members/officers when a vacancy occurs and for the Board confirmation and sangha approval of a new abbot were both approved.

Thank all of you who took the time to vote.

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 Senauke 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.

BZC E-Com Committee Forms

In an effort to reach out to more members and potential members to practice at Berkeley Zen Center, we have created the Electronic Communication Committee, or the E-Com Committee for short. The committee will develop BZC's social media presence, initially focusing on developing and maintaining a BZC Facebook page and expanding our existing website.

The new Facebook page will post BZC events in a timely fashion, post updates to generate conversation and community, respond to messages and posts from visitors to the page, and cultivate some virtual discussion of the dharma. Other social media presences may be added in the future. The purpose of this presence is not to create a "virtual sangha," running in parallel to our practice center on Russell Street, but to support and enhance our in-person practice.

Sangha members with interest in this effort should contact me at edherzog AT comcast.net.

- Ed Herzog, At-Large Board Member



An Easy Way to Support Our Temple With Online Monthly Bill Pay

Have you signed up for bill pay yet? If you are like me, you often forget to pay your 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.

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 having your bank set it up in person or using your bank's on-line automatic bill pay function.** You can pay monthly at any interval of your choice. You can also use this system for one-time donations. You indicate the purpose of the payment when you are prompted. It's easy and free both to you and to BZC.

After you sign up, every month the bank will send 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 for automatic bill pay today.

- Ed Herzog, At-Large Board Member



Photo:
Ko Blix

To Chiden is to Walk Through a Door, Bowing, with Your Hands Full

New Chidens needed for 2014!

Care of the altars at BZC is a quiet, meditative, and mindful way to deepen your own practice while supporting the practice of all. It is also a way to become familiar with the forms of our practice, including the details of the altar, the secrets of the keys, the locations of supplies, and many other wonderful bits of lore. This means that you can step up like an expert to keep things going whenever a chiden is needed.

As a chiden, you commit to a week or two of daily altar care during the year, usually once in spring, once in fall. The checklist of tasks can be completed in about 30 minutes, at a time of your choosing, Monday - Friday, whenever the zendo is not in use. Some chidens add a few minutes private zazen for a peaceful grounding in your busy life.

If you'd like to be included on the 2014 roster, call new head chiden, Stephanie Seaborg, at 925.376.8281.

Out-going head chiden, Catharine Lucas, expresses deep appreciation to current and past chidens for making her job a joyous one over the past three years. She will turn over the head chiden position to Stephanie Seaborg at the first of the year.

Thanks to 2013 Chidens!

Time to say a heartfelt thanks again to the thirty-four 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 maintain calm practice for all of us. Deep bows from your head chiden and from your sangha!

Office Manager Job Opening

The BZC Board is currently welcoming letters of interest for the paid position of Office Manager which will begin with a two-week training program beginning on January 15, 2014. Please note that this is also a BZC practice position.

Responsibilities

The Office Manager handles sangha administrative duties under the supervision of the Treasurer. Duties include:

1. Accumulate monies received and write checks for sangha expenses and enter these transactions into QuickBooks. Make bank deposits as needed.
2. Assist the Treasurer in monitoring cash flow and maintaining checking account balances at appropriate levels.
3. Assist the Treasurer to monitor dues payments.
4. Assist the Treasurer to prepare financial statements.
5. Handle and record payroll.
6. Work with sangha position holders (e.g., tenzo, sesshin directors, book sellers, head gardener) to assist them with accounting functions.
7. Coordinate contractor payments with project managers.
8. Maintain member database and prepare BZC directory.
9. Handle mail distribution.
10. Attend Monday morning Practice Committee meetings.

Applicant Requirements

1. Be an active, current dues-paying member of BZC.
2. Be able to interact flexibly and harmoniously with sangha members and friends, including those holding practice positions.
3. Be familiar with BZC's institutional history.
4. Have facility with QuickBooks or comparable accounting software.
5. Have a working knowledge of Microsoft EXCEL and WORD; be comfortable with using the Internet and with using or learning Microsoft ACCESS.
6. Some experience with non-profit management and procedures is recommended.
7. Be willing to make a two-year commitment to this position.

Compensation & Time Requirement

- Salary @ \$900.00 per month.
- Work hours: 12-15 hours/week (or more as needed) with a minimum of two partial days per week spent at BZC office
- Flexibility to respond timely to important Office Manager e-mails while not at BZC office.

Please send your letter of interest for this position to Jake Van Akkeren at: jvanakkeren AT comcast.net no later than Friday, Dec. 13. If you have any questions beforehand, please also contact Jake at this e-mail address. Interviews for this position will be held during the weeks of Dec. 9 and 16 at BZC. The interview team will be composed of Paul Farber, Ron Nestor and Laurie Senauke. Jake will coordinate the scheduling of all interviews.

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Photo: Lisa Nelbach

Library News

Look for the "New Books" section coming soon to the BZC Library. Also, the librarian finds herself in the library almost every Tuesday from 4:15 - 5:15pm in case you would like to drop by to say "hello" or ask a question. Finally, as the year comes to an end, it would be a good time to return overdue books. Please check around your space for books from the BZC library. E-mail reminders will be going out soon. You may also contact me by e-mail if you wish to renew a book for one month. - Ellen Webb, Librarian

Support Cushions and Heat

As winter is approaching, please be mindful not to push anything back up against the zendo heating convectors underneath the tans. In order for our heater to work efficiently, we need to provide air space in front for the cool air to circulate through and be reborn into that lovely warmth we've come to appreciate this time of year. Also, we're stacking some support cushions behind the sutra boxes for easier retrieval to minimize the quantity to be managed below the tans.

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE
Third Friday of the month before each issue.
Submit to [bzcnewsletter AT gmail.com](mailto:bzcnewsletter@gmail.com).

January deadline:
Friday, December 20, 8:00 pm



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