



Berkeley Zen Center



April 2015 Newsletter

Spring Practice Period

Our annual spring practice period will begin with a one-day sitting on Saturday, May 2 and continue through the Shuso Ceremony on Sunday, June 14. Sojun Roshi invites everyone to increase their commitment to practice during this period while still tending to their obligations outside the gate.

Sojun Roshi has invited Sentei Kunka Susan Marvin—*Spring Garden/Virtuous Influence*—to be the Shuso this year, sharing the Abbot's seat and setting an example for us all. Chodo Kaiku Dean Bradley—*Wild Bird Path/Open Sky*—will serve as Benji, assisting the shuso.

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Buddha's Birthday Saturday, April 4, 8:30am

This year Buddha's Birthday will be celebrated at BZC on April 4. Please bring family and friends! Children are especially encouraged to attend. The celebration will include a song by the children and birthday cake.

An important part of the day is bathing the baby Buddha. Everyone is invited to help decorate his flower bower from 7:30 – 8:30am. Flowers from your garden such as iris, daisy, ranunculus, sweet william and camellia are appreciated.

The Saturday program will begin at 8:30am with a work period, followed by zazen, a short lecture, and the ceremony. Information is posted on the bulletin board. Questions? Please contact head chiden Stephanie Seaborg at slseaborg@gmail.com.

B Z C S c h e d u l e

April

Founder's Ceremonies

Thursday, 4/2, 6:20pm

Friday, 4/3, 6:40am

Buddha's Birthday

Saturday, 4/4 (regular program starts at 8:30am)

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 4/11, 9:40am

One-Day Sesshin

Sunday, 4/12, 5:00am – 5:00pm

May

Spring Practice Period

Saturday, 5/2 – Sunday 6/14

One-Day Sesshin/

Open Practice Period

Saturday, 5/2, 5:00am – 9:00pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 5/2, 9:40am

Founder's Ceremonies

Monday, 5/4, 6:20pm

Tuesday, 5/5, 6:40am

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 5/17

Practice Period Dinner and Skit Night

Saturday, 5/23



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.

Spring Practice Period – continued

There will be a Thursday night class with Sojun Roshi, with the topic to be announced. 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 April. Please fill one out and return it to the shuso's box on the community room porch by Mon., April 27.

In addition to signing up for practice period and turning in a registration form, sign up separately for a number of the individual practice period events. See the bulletin board for sign-up sheets.

Practice Period Events

Opening sitting: May 2, 5:00am to 9:00pm

Opening/Shuso Entering Ceremony: May 2, about 4:00pm

Shuso talks/lectures: May 4, 16, 22, and 30

Classes: Thursday evenings, May 7-June 4, 7:15-8:45pm

Bansan (tea and dharma discussion with the abbot): Friday, May 8, 5:40pm

Dinner and Skit Night: Saturday, May 23

Shosan (dharma dialogue with the abbot): June 5, 5:40pm and June 8, 5:40am

Lay Ordination: Saturday, June 6, 3:00pm

Five day Sesshin: June 10 to 14

Shuso Hossen (dharma dialogue with the shuso): Sunday, June 14



Rocky-Roshi presents Case 38 from the Mumonkan. He still has the taint of self but vows to practice harder.

- Ross Blum

Family Activities at BZC

Saturday Morning Supervised Play

Supervised play is offered many Saturdays (schedule below) from 9:40am zazen through lecture, supervised by Berkeley High student Lihong Chan. To use this service, or for coverage for 8:45am zazen instruction, contact Laurie Senauke, 510.845.2215, or lauries@kushiki.org by noon the Friday before.

KidZendo

BZC's Saturday program for children 3 and up is offered during the school year, typically on the fourth Saturday of each month, from 9:30am to 11:15am (see schedule below or online). BZC members create this program, which includes songs, stories, offerings, art activities and a snack. For more information, and to RSVP, contact Laurie.

Theater Games

We are continuing our monthly Theater Games offering suggested by sangha member Thea Gold. It's a way to be silly and free together, while cultivating creativity, body awareness, spontaneity, relaxation, expressivity, trust, laughter, and concentration. It is suitable for all ages, and for the shy as well as outgoing. Through games, storytelling, and improvisation, we practice fully opening to each moment. It is held typically on second Saturdays (see schedule or online) from 9:30am to 11:15am. To RSVP, contact lauries@kushiki.org. Family practice schedule:

April 4	BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY
April 11	Theater Games
April 18	Supervised play
April 25	Kidzendo
May 2	Sesshin - no program
May 9	Theater Games
May 16	Kidzendo (note date change)
May 23	Supervised play
May 30	Supervised play
June 6	Supervised play
June 13	Sesshin - no program
June 20	Supervised play
June 27	Supervised play

Family Practice E-mail Group

Our Yahoo group makes it easier to communicate about family practice. We only send, at most, one event e-mail a week. To join, e-mail Marie at marie_hopper@sbcglobal.net or Laurie.

Please RSVP for ALL family activities to lauries@kushiki.org. Thank you!

Does Life Have Meaning?

This morning, March 19, a warm and sunny day, I walked out of the house and wandered into our fenced-off vegetable garden. I walked over to visit the lemon tree that I planted in January. It had been in a pot for 2 years. It was doing quite well; producing nice new soft, shiny leaves, and new buds. Then I spotted our new cat Willow lying under the shade of the yellow, (dynamite) pepper bush. She seemed very happy that I was there with her in her territory, her garden. It then came to me that tomorrow the 20th is the first day of Spring. I just stood still silently participating with her zazen. Little by little the whole garden was coming alive and revealing itself. The new small lettuce, the green carrot tops, the new leaf buds on the blueberry bushes. I could feel the tremendous energy of the earth all at once reaching for the sun, being expressed through this green world.

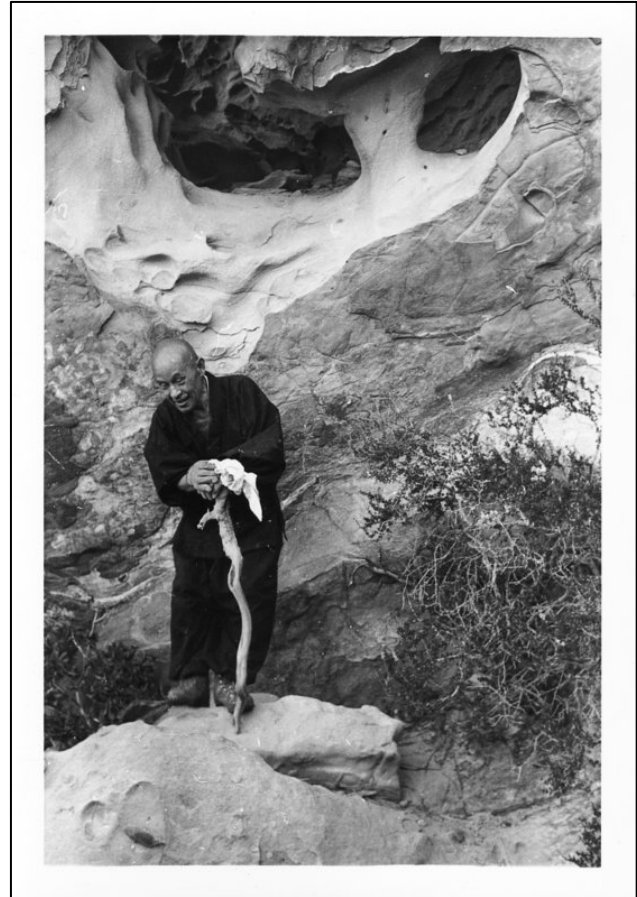
A few years ago I made a little housing for Liz's garden figure of St. Francis, the patron of the animals. She had hung a ceramic sign on it that said, "We come from the Earth and return to the Earth and in between we garden." I

remember one time reading somewhere, something like, "Cultivating the Dharma in the Garden of the Heart." This reminded me that the seeds of all of our thoughts and actions are stored in our subconscious mind-ground, the Alaya Vijnana, the garden of the mind. These wholesome and unwholesome seeds sprout and manifest according to our actions and thoughts, causing happiness or suffering.

A question was presented to me the other day about the meaning of our life. What is that? What could be more meaningful than dropping our self-absorption and devoting ourself to cultivating the Garden of the Mind? We are vegetable, animal, mineral and human. When we take off the coverings, and open our eyes we can realize all of these qualities in ourself. Our body/mind is not separate from the world. When we take care of the world we take care of ourself and vice versa.

The blood runs through our body. The heart beats, the breath-door swings, the thought bubbles come and go, the body ages, and none of it is controlled by "me." It is the universal activity. This is what we belong to. There is a deep satisfaction that comes from cooperating with this universal activity, which is our true self. Maybe this is what self-respect is. Our practice is to find the meaning in each moment, taking nothing for granted.

A monk asked Joshu, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the west?" He said, "The oak tree in the garden." He also had a great awakening when he saw a peach tree in full bloom.



*Suzuki Roshi at the Ventana Wilderness
Wind Caves near Tassajara. From cuke.com.*

- Sojun

One-Day Sesshin Sunday, April 12, 5:00am – 5:00pm

Denkei Raul Moncayo will lead a one-day sesshin on Sunday, April 12, from 5:00am–5:00pm. This is a good way get ready for Spring Practice Period in May. We encourage old and new sangha members to participate. Please sign up on the patio bulletin board by Wednesday morning, April 8 after zazen.

If this is your first sesshin at BZC, we recommend that you first participate in a full Saturday program and also speak with the sesshin director. The fee is \$35 and should be paid in advance (a discounted fee is possible; please speak to the director). Put checks marked “April sesshin” in the mail slot in the courtyard laundry room door or mail to the BZC Office Manager at 1931 Russell St., Berkeley 94703. You can also use the bill pay



option on your banks’ website and make the notation “April sesshin fee.”

If you have questions, contact the sesshin director, Gerry Oliva at sesshindirectorbzc@gmail.com or 510.652.7217.

Sounding Board April 2015

Issues and concerns about BZC’s board member recruitment and election process have been surfacing over the past several years. Among them:

- What is the reason for the difficulty of finding members willing to run for the board? In recent years, it’s been extremely difficult to come up with a slate of five-six people willing to run.
- Perhaps the current election process relies too much on name recognition, rather than skill identification. Losing an election is disheartening, to say the least, to promising candidates. BZC should not be in the business of discouraging potential board members; there are ample slots on committees as well as the board that annually need

to be replenished with capable and interested members.

- One possible solution would be to recruit members initially for committees, which would give people a chance to see what board service is like and “get their feet wet.” Among other advantages, this might give sangha members who are interested in providing service more visibility.
- Another solution might be to change our election structure. The board would identify skilled and interested sangha members, regardless of their visibility to the general sangha, as potential board members, who could then be presented to the sangha for a vote of confirmation, rather than a contested election.

This process of initiating people into board service through the route of serving on various committees has already begun.

The board is pondering the question: Should the board recruit and put forth a slate of three candidates (or whatever number needed) for affirmation, with additional ability for the sangha to include a write-in option? This would be instead of asking six members to run for three board seats, creating the inevitable win/lose situation. How would this impact the “democratic” aspect of the election process? How much concern do sangha members in general have about this issue?

SFZC recently switched to this kind of “affirmation” vote and have found that it has enabled them to find qualified people who would never be chosen by an open election, either because they are not sufficiently well known to the membership, or because, quite understandably, they are not willing to subject themselves to the possibility of rejection by their own sangha. Does this model fit BZC? How similar is our situation? How do we understand sangha leadership at the board level in the context of our practice?

The board committee exploring these issues welcomes input from the sangha. Direct your comments to the committee chair, Ed Herzog: edherzog@comcast.net. The next few months are critical, if we want to make changes before the September All-Sangha Board Nomination meeting.

Opening of Practice Period Sesshin Saturday, May 2, 5:00am – 9:00pm

Sojun Mel Weitsman will lead a one-day sesshin on Saturday, May 2, from 5:00am–9:00pm. This will include an entering ceremony for our shuso for the Spring Practice Period. We encourage old and new sangha members to participate. This is a great opportunity to start off the practice period and to support the shuso. Please sign up on the patio bulletin board by Wednesday morning, April 29 after zazen.

If this is your first sesshin at BZC, we recommend that you first participate in a full Saturday program and also speak with the sesshin director. The fee is \$35 and should be paid in advance (a discounted fee is possible; please speak to the director). Put checks marked “May sesshin” in the mail slot in the courtyard laundry room door or mail to the BZC Office Manager at 1931 Russell St., Berkeley 94703. You can also use the bill pay option on your banks’ website and make the notation “May sesshin fee.”

If you have questions, contact the sesshin director, Jake Van Akkeren at sesshindirectorbzc@gmail.com or 925.933.3486 before 9:00pm.



Photos by Ko Blix



CPR/AED Training

BZC is offering a class for training in adult and child Lifesaver CPR and use of our AED. The class will be held on Saturday April 18 from 12:30-2:30pm. Attendees will receive CPR certification. The cost is \$40. It’s very important that we have sangha members trained and certified in these skills, so please consider joining this class. See Margret Wotkyns, Health & Safety Manager with any questions. Sign-up deadline is April 1.

2015 BZC Directory Errata

Dear friends, unfortunately the 2015 directory has some errors in it. We are planning to send out an errata sometime soon. If you have not already done so, please check your entry and email any changes you want made to bzcoffice manager@gmail.com by April 15. You can also call the office with changes at 510.845.2403.

Dharma Group Opening

There are a few openings in Jake and Leslie's dharma group. We meet in the zendo about once a month on a Saturday, 12:30-2:30pm. Our time together includes zazen, a short check-in, and reading and discussing a text. We are currently reading *Not Always So*. Our intention is to relate our Zen teachings to our everyday lives through our discussion of these texts. Please contact Jake or Leslie at lbartholic@comcast.net if you are interested in joining this group.



Working from the Underside

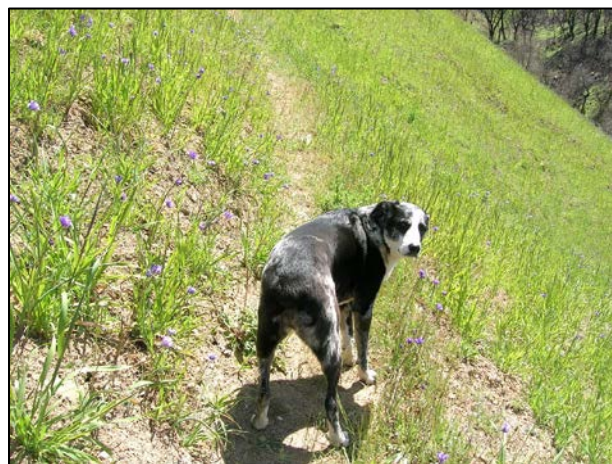
Weaving our lives
We're working from the underside
as tapestry makers do.
We're looking at the wispy bits of yarn
and the knots. It looks so messy.
Only toward the end of life
can we turn it over, see the whole.
Then we say—

"Oh yes, there is a pattern here."

- Meghan Collins

Changing Hands

You may have already noticed that we have a new Saturday work leader. Ed Herzog has stepped into this role and is now responsible for leading us during our Saturday work period. We offer many thanks to Bruce Coughran for filling this position for almost two years. His quiet steady presence on Saturday mornings helped us all pay attention as we worked together to care for our temple.



Does a Dog?

So tell me, Daisy, destroyer of tennis balls and pine
cones,
Those big brown black-lab eyes,
Does a dog have Buddha-nature?
What about your new friend, Lola?
She reeks of strong puppy-nature, that's for sure!

Sunday, I moved the zafu to the garden shed.
Bare wood, a pile of boards for an altar.
Tonight the rain drums on the roof,
Dribbles from shingles to puddles on the path,
Transports me across time and space to the attic
Of the big old house on Dwight.

No roosters here, nor fire trucks,
Only Daisy snuffling through the bushes.
She steps into the light from the candle,
Her big, blunt snout hovers over the altar
Next to the incense. Without a sound
She sets in place an old wet pine cone.

- Bud Bliss. Bud writes from Oregon: "Some readers may remember sounds from sitting in the attic zendo on Dwight. We buried Daisy with this poem from 1999 a couple of years ago."



Rakusu Berét

Morning moon gives birth to a shadow
Robe chant reveals a rakusu-berét
Moon sets, sun rises and the bell ends this movie
Au revoir

-Ross Estes Blum

On Notice This Rock

Dawn. I stepped onto the deck. I lay back and exposed myself to the sun rising in warm, soft air. I had just climbed from the cold stream, preceded by the hot, mineral spring. A prize, dawn, still and priceless, scent of manzanita wafting over me. I would meditate, burrow into the sublimity, my heart showing.

All at once, a terrific rumble. From overhead, racing down the hillside, a boulder, careening, down, down. Before I knew it, it crashed five inches from my head, splintering into segments, one of which landed on the bench behind me, the other vaulting across the redwood span. I lay pinioned by the sudden silence, and then peered at the rock-sized stone hooked into the plank as if by a claw. Dark-brown, coppery with bronze flecks, this slab, five inches from my ear, my temple, my skin.

Slowly, I pulled myself up. Around the deck, the trees still stood. The railing still held, and, as I inched back, I saw the moist oblong where I had lain. Beside it, the yellow striped towel, still folded. There, I thought, just there. I bent and pulled out the stone from the wood and lay it on my palm. Warm it felt and smelled burnt, as if it had flown through fire on its run to the ground. Of course it told me none of that. Nor its name, purpose, or plan.

I turned it over. over. Who sent you I wanted to say, but kept the silence the speeding missile whistled to, turning me witness rather than victim.

“So, this is how it is then,” I said, “this.”

Every day, I study this messenger, its blank presence impelling me to wake.

- Lois Silverstein, Tassajara, 2000



Saturday Speakers, 10:15 am

April 4 – Sojun Roshi (Buddha's Birthday)
April 11 – Bob Rosenbaum
April 18 – Jake Van Akkeran
April 25 – Sojun Roshi
May 2 – Sojun Roshi (open practice period)

Friday and Monday Talk Schedule

April 3 Friday 5:50 pm – Mike Cole
April 6 Monday 6:25 am – Open Discussion
April 13 Monday 6:25 am – Charley Ware
April 20 Monday 6:25 am – Raul Moncayo
April 27 Monday 6:25 am – Stephanie Solar

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE

**Third Friday of the month before each
issue. Submit items to
bzcnewsletter@gmail.com.**

**May deadline:
Friday, April 17, 8:00 pm**

Berkeley Zen Center
1931 Russell Street
Berkeley, CA 94703