



# Berkeley Zen Center



January–February 2019 Newsletter

## First Sesshin of 2019

Taking the time to sit still after all the holiday and year-end activity is a great way to begin the New Year. The first sesshin of 2019, led by Hozan Alan Senauke, will take place on Saturday, January 12, from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. We encourage old and new sangha members to participate. 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. Please check the patio bulletin board for the sesshin sign-up sheet, the sesshin information forms, and further information. The sesshin fee is \$35. Place checks marked "January 12 Sesshin" in the slot in the laundry room door or mail to BZC Office Manager, 1931 Russell St., Berkeley 94703. The deadline for signing up and payment is Wednesday morning, January 9, after zazen.

## Beginner's Sesshin

Though Zen practice has no beginning or end, new people sometimes find the forms daunting, and more experienced students can value refreshment and learn about forms in greater detail. This sitting, *(Continued...)*



### 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

### January

**Zendo Holiday**  
Tuesday, 1/1

**Founders' Ceremonies**  
Thursday, 1/3, 6:20pm  
Friday, 1/4, 6:40am

**One-Day Sesshin**  
Saturday, 1/12

**Bodhisattva Ceremony**  
Saturday, 1/19, 9:40am

**Half-Day Sitting**  
Sunday, 1/20

**MLK Neighborhood Engagement**  
Monday, 1/21, 8:30am–1:00pm  
(no earlier morning sitting)

**Beginner's Sesshin**  
Sunday, 1/27

### February

**Founders' Ceremonies**  
Monday, 2/4, 6:20pm  
Tuesday, 2/5, 6:40am

**Buddha's Parinirvana Ceremony**  
Saturday, 2/16, 11:15am

**Two-Day Sesshin**  
Saturday 2/16 to Sunday 2/17

**Zendo Holiday**  
Monday, 2/18

**Bodhisattva Ceremony**  
Saturday, 2/23, 9:40am

*(Beginner's Sesshin, Continued from page 1)*

led by Sojun Roshi, is an opportunity for new and old practitioners to invigorate our beginner's mind. The focus will be on the basics of Suzuki Roshi's practice: zazen, kinhin, and bowing.

The sesshin will run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, January 27. Though shorter than usual, the rhythm of sitting will be similar to our regular schedules, with lecture, a short work period, tea and discussion. Plan to attend the entire day. Please bring a bag lunch — we will not be cooking a meal or doing oryoki. The sesshin fee is \$25. Place checks marked "Beginner's Sesshin" in the slot in the laundry room door or mail to BZC Office Manager at 1931 Russell St., Berkeley 94703.

### **Two-Day Study Sesshin**

Sojun Roshi will lead this year's study sesshin from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 16, and 5:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 17. Each day will include zazen, oryoki meals, soji, and two daily study and discussion sessions. Our study subject will be posted on the bulletin board. Any readings will be available on the bulletin board shelf in advance of the sesshin. The sesshin fee is \$35 per day. Place checks marked "2019 Study Sesshin" in the slot in the laundry room door or mail to BZC Office Manager at 1931 Russell St., Berkeley 94703. Sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board. For further information on any of these sesshins, please contact Sesshin Director Gary Artim (510-676-9756 or [sesshindirectorbzc@gmail.com](mailto:sesshindirectorbzc@gmail.com)).

### **Leadership Celebration**

We would like to invite sangha members to a celebration of service in leadership January 5, 2019, after the lecture during our tea and cookies. Several people will be rotating out of leadership positions in January, after dedicated service. Stan Dewey, Mark Copithorne, and Katy Guimond are leaving the Board, and Ross Blum is retiring as coordinator (being replaced by Gerry Oliva). Come share cake and tea!



*Tokusan Jakusho Jed Appelman (center) with Sojun Roshi, Ryushin Andrea Thach, Hannah Meara, Hozan Sensei, and Gary Artim.*

### **A New Baby Buddha**

On Monday morning, December 10, our dharma brother Jed Appelman was ordained as a Zen priest by Sojun Roshi. The zendo was packed, even when the ceremony began at 5:40 a.m. Sangha members, family, and Quaker friends all gathered to see Jed receive his monk's robes and bowls. On the occasion of this ordination, Sojun Roshi gave Jed a new dharma name to go with his new clothes: Tokusan Jakusho, which means Mountain of Virtue/Serene Illumination. We rejoice with Jed on this auspicious turning of his life.

## **Sewing Buddha's Robe**

Sewing your rakusu in preparation for receiving the precepts at the end of the annual practice period is an opportunity for deepening your practice and relationship with the sangha. Each year as the sewing class participants engage in the devotional practice of sewing and study the precepts together, they prepare themselves for receiving their robe and dharma name from their teachers. The ceremony is a both a time to affirm aspirations to continue practicing and to celebrate with the sangha coming together to support this important event.

If you are interested in preparing for Lay Ordination in 2019, sewing class starts on January 14. Classes are open to those who have asked their teacher if they may participate. Please speak with Sojun Mel Weitsman or Hozan Alan Senauke by the first week in January, and then promptly contact the sewing teacher, Jean Selkirk: [sewingteacher.bzc@gmail.com](mailto:sewingteacher.bzc@gmail.com).

Check the bulletin board for further announcements.

## **Celebrating Martin Luther King Day**

We will be commemorating the MLK holiday again this year by having a special program at BZC on Monday, January 21, from 8:30 a.m. till 1:00 p.m. Our program will begin with sitting, followed by a short talk on the legacy and dharma of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his vision of "Beloved Community." We will then have small group dialogues to reflect on these themes and explore ways BZC can engage in partnership with our neighbors on issues of diversity and inclusion. Our time together will include tea and treats as we continue our conversation. This will be followed by two community service projects.

One project will be setting up a table on Russell Street to invite passersby to create peace prayers and memorial messages honoring those who have died through violence. We then will invite and assist in placing these messages on our streetside Peace Tree. Our second project will be cleaning streets in the immediate neighborhood.

The MLK Day program will be led by Gerry Oliva and Judy Fleischman.

## **Two Class Series**

Sojun Roshi will teach another koan study class series on four Monday evenings, beginning February 4. The particular koans will be announced and material will be made available as we get closer to that date.

Hozan Sensei will teach a class series on five Thursday evenings beginning March 28. The class topic will be Mindfulness, based on the *Satipatthana Sutta* and commentaries by Thich Nhat Hanh. Details will be announced later.

## **Oryoki Training**

The next lessons in our formal meal procedures ("oryoki") will be Saturday, January 19, and Saturday, February 23, 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in the zendo. If you would like to schedule another time to learn or fine-tune your oryoki practice, contact Sue Oehser at 510-339-0243 (voice only) or [soehser@earthlink.net](mailto:soehser@earthlink.net).

You can also receive briefer instruction during any full Saturday morning program that is not a sesshin. After the first period of Saturday zazen, the director will ask if anyone would like instruction in eating in the zendo. Raise your hand and meet the director on the porch, who will assign someone to give you oryoki instruction in the community room before service and breakfast.

## **New Zendo in El Cerrito**

Sunday, January 13, 2019, we will be celebrating the opening of the Blue Mountain Zendo at 1020 King Drive in El Cerrito. We will have an opening ceremony at 5:00 p.m., followed by a templewarming and housewarming party. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have made donations to BMZ to make this opening possible.

The zendo will be open from January 14 on. For those who may be interested in coming and sitting with me at any point, here is the tentative schedule:

Every day except Saturday I will be sitting at Blue Mountain with the squirrels, deer, and blue jays, and anybody who shows up. The weekday sittings will be at 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. The length of sittings and services will be the same as those at BZC. In the morning there will be a clunk at 6:40 for stretching or for anyone who may have to leave. The rest of us will continue to sit through to 7:00 a.m. and then do a short service.

Sunday sitting will begin at 6:30 a.m., with two periods, one of forty minutes, and one of thirty minutes, with kinhin in between, followed by a longer service. When the service ends (around 8:15) we will have coffee, tea, fruit, yogurt, and croissants in the community room. This coffee/tea time will be informal to encourage dharma friendship and right speech. Then we will return to the zendo at 9:00 a.m. for another period of zazen, followed by a short talk.

Beginning in February, I will offer a Dharma Seminar the second Saturday of the month from 2:00–4:00 p.m., followed by a one-hour walk in the El Cerrito nature area two blocks from BMZ, which includes stunning views of the Bay. I will present during the first hour of the Seminar, followed by an open discussion. I also plan to invite speakers, in which case they will present first and I will respond, followed by open discussion. Snacks and beverages will be available.

I will offer zazen instruction as necessary. Zazen instruction in Spanish will be offered during Wednesday afternoon zazen.

I hope to see you at the January 13 opening celebration and look forward to practicing here with any of you who may be interested.

—Denkei Raul Moncayo

## **Earthquake Drill at BZC Sitting/Party**

On October 18, BZC participated in the state-wide Earthquake Preparedness Drill known as “the Great California Shake Out.” At 10:18 a.m. BZC residents and members were encouraged to “Drop, Cover, and Hold-On,” simulating the response to a major earthquake. Residents then checked their personal earthquake kit. This was an opportunity to discuss and reflect on the ongoing issue of preparedness for earthquakes and other major disasters.

More discussion, planning, and preparations are planned for the coming year. If you are interested in participating, send a note to Bruce Coughran at [brucecoughran@gmail.com](mailto:brucecoughran@gmail.com).

**Saturday Speakers, 10:15 a.m.**

January 5	Susan Marvin
January 12	Hozan Alan Senauke
January 19	Sojun Roshi
January 26	Laurie Senauke
February 2	Peter Overton
February 9	Mary Duryee
February 16	Sojun Roshi
February 23	Hozan Alan Senauke

**Friday and Monday Talk Schedule**

January 4	Fri 5:50pm	Sojun Roshi
January 7	Mon 6:25am	Open Discussion
January 14	Mon 6:25am	TBA
January 21	Monday	MLK Neighborhood Engagement Day (no early program)
January 28	Mon 6:25am	Sam Melton
February 1	Fri 5:50pm	TBA
February 4	Mon 6:25am	Open Discussion
February 11	Mon 6:25am	Laurie Senauke
February 18	Monday	Zendo holiday
February 25	Mon 6:25am	Carol Paul

*Come Sit with Us*

**Monday through Friday:**

5:40–7:00am: zazen, service, soji

5:40–6:30pm: zazen, service

**Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday:**

Noon–12:30pm: informal zazen

**Friday Tea Time**

Our Friday Tea begins every Friday at 4:45 p.m. It takes place on the patio or in the community room (depending on the weather) and is open to everyone. Please join us as we discuss and question Dharma practice while sipping tea and opening our body and mind to harmony and lightness of being.

# Row the Current You Are In

The first day of sesshin Sojun spoke of cultivating “flexibility,” “proficiency,” and “actualizing the fundamental point.” This seemed to raise a lot of questions for practice discussion. One person wondered: How does one know when one is actualizing the fundamental point? This is an important question: Why do we do this difficult thing called sesshin? One needs inspiration, needs to have one’s motivation quickened, even to know one is in the right ballpark. But then, how does one navigate this path without falling into expectations – fixed notions of how it should be?

I have long thought expedition-length river trips bear striking similarities to sesshins. In addition to the elaborate preplanning required, the whole world condenses down for a period of time to *these* people—*this* place, *this* journey. The motley group becomes a tribe: different from a family, more manageable than a neighborhood, with shared goals and shared operating principles. One is completely reliant on the group, and the group safety depends on the activities of each person.

Wilderness travel teaches one to appreciate silence and vastness. Extended exposure to silence seems to change one’s nervous system in a very satisfying, settled direction. For many years I tried to capture the feeling I carried from a river trip and bring it into my ordinary life. After many failures, I finally concluded that this deep, settled feeling required some kind of continuing daily nurturance, and ultimately found my way to Zen practice.

Rivers were my first teacher. Water behaves the same way the world over: it flows around obstacles and through channels in predictable ways. The first task is to learn to read what the current is doing on flatwater and whitewater. The ability to read current is affected by conditions: water on a cloudy day is more difficult to read than on a sunny one, where the differences in the colors are more dramatic. Likewise, a river full of sediment changes the colors to a monochrome, requiring a shift to reading textures of water. This is a beginning lesson in flexibility.

In a raft, the *only* current that matters is the current immediately under your boat: your boat will be taken where *that* current is going. Immediately on either side of you the current may be doing something else, which may affect the pull on your oars, but unless you put some portion of your boat in that other current, it has no effect, no matter how close, strong, or alluring it is, or how much you would like to go where it is going.

In addition to current, one needs to attend to one’s downstream oar. Most of the time one floats at an angle to the current so as to be able to respond more quickly, which means the downstream oar points at the obstacles in the current’s path. If it catches on a rock, the press of the current has the effect of driving it back through the oar-right where it can do all sorts of damage—jam a thumb or knock one out of the raft, to name two.

Navigating serious rapids usually requires scouting. All the rafts stop at the top of the rapid, and assess the best path through. Beginning with identifying the preferred place to land at the bottom on the rapid, one works backward, determining where in the river one should be at each turn and obstacle, until one arrives at the best entry point at the top of the rapid. This is Plan A. The most important thing is not to be attached to Plan A. There are rapids—usually those with the word “falls” in their names—which are by definition “Plan B rapids.” Plan C isn’t a plan at all: it is a crash-and-burn route, where success is best measured by being upright at the bottom, with everyone still inside the raft.

There was a time when I spent hours watching videotapes of runs through serious rapids. After a while, it was clear that the rowers and paddlers divided themselves into several camps. On one end of the spectrum were those who flailed their way through, oars and paddles in wild, continuous movement. At the other end were those whose movements were minimal and precise—a dip of an oar here, a back-row there, each move accomplishing just the right amount of leverage on the raft to place it in the precisely right current. I called these folks zenrowers. I endeavored to be a zenrower. Over the years, I came to feel that I approached it, at least some of the time. Once, I even had a profound experience in a very difficult rapid on the Colorado River, which has become something of a touchstone: after I was through, it did not feel as if I had rowed it; rather, rowing happened.

Then there was Blossom Bar, on the Rogue River in southern Oregon. It is the most difficult and complex of the rapids on the Rogue—a long, boulder-strewn slalom requiring several mid-rapid lateral course corrections. The entrance is guarded at the top by a small-house-sized rock, incidentally also known as a wrap rock. At certain water levels it is easy to pin a raft against this rock with the whole weight of the river’s current. The is known as “wrapping” one’s raft, and it

requires hours of lines and pulleys and effort to undo, and is very inconvenient. The whole of the river current pushes one toward this rock, so the first move is to pivot in such a way as to slide to the *left* of it, where most of the current continues.

As we scouted, our whole tribe watched as a “zenrower” paused briefly above the rapid, and then, with an oar dip here and there, navigated effortlessly through the boulder field. I wanted to *zen-row* this rapid in the worst way, because in the bow of my raft was our Vice Abbot *and* his son. Not being confident of any other zen-ness I might manifest, I wanted to *zenrow* this rapid.

We slipped into the current after scouting, floating briefly at an angle to the current. Immediately, I caught my downstream oar – the very oar I needed to make the essential pivot – on a rock. The oar sailed out of the oar-right, coming completely untethered from the raft, loose in my hand. I watched helplessly as we moved toward the rock – then, up the pillow of water forming on the its upstream side, our noses a few inches from the granite. While I calculated the danger of wrapping, the raft slipped around to the *right* of the rock. The celebration lasted a micro-moment. I had never been down this side of the river, nor had I known anyone who had. It turned out to be what is called a “rock garden.” While I tried to reset the oar in the oar-right, we pinballed off one rock after the other. The river goddess was kind: we ended upright, all still in the raft, at the bottom, grateful for sufficient waterflow to have avoided getting stuck.

I entered this rapid with a fixed idea about how it was to go, how I wanted it to go. There was little bandwidth left to meet the actual circumstances. I had limited flexibility to respond to this rock, this current, this oar and oar-right.

What is the fundamental point? In various ways our dharma speakers this week have alluded to this: touching big mind; realizing buddha nature; bodhicitta; returning to balance; flexibility. The Vice Abbot said: “Enlightenment is not something added on. It is the thing itself. Activity. Not a performance. Not trying.”

Here we are in this ark of a zendo, traveling together. There is no way out but through. This effort we make, to surrender to the schedule, to surrender to our positions, to become one with our circumstances, is in the service of tuning up. Becoming attuned. And then we turn everything over – our effort, our service, our activity – and the next crew carries it forward just as the cook turns the offering tray over to the head server. Whatever effort the cooks have brought to the food, it belongs to the servers now. We bring forth the dharma together in this way.

Someone mentioned the koan of jumping off a 100-foot pole to describe this letting go. For me that imagery has a bit of the quality of samurai Zen to it. Perhaps a more grandmother-mind way of saying it would be: “There is nothing to hang onto . . . *and this is not bad news.*” It is the freedom to respond in any situation without any fixed notion, without having to have something happen. Letting what arises arise. You turn yourself over to the river: you can count on being floated.

Suzuki Roshi said: “This Sesshin was wonderfully done. . . . It is because of your bodhisattva-mind, which is to do things for others rather than yourself. . . . We (should) understand that each one of us is a tentative form of the absolute being – whatever we do is the activity of the absolute being, which is not possible to be known by us completely. This is the origin of our life. . . . So the purpose of our practice is to get accustomed to live without being attached to many things but this unknown being. When we find our meaning of life in this way, naturally we can help each other. We will love each other, keeping a harmonious way between us, and between other sentient beings. We are all friends.”

This week we heard some of Aitken Roshi’s gathas. This one was especially apt for our ark:

When I sit with my friends in zazen  
I vow with all beings  
To touch and receive and convey  
The mind of rivers and stars.

*Lecture by Mary Duryee (Rohatsu Sesshin, Day 6, December 7, 2018)*

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE**  
is the Third Friday of the month before each  
issue. Please submit items to  
[knabb@bopsecrets.org](mailto:knabb@bopsecrets.org).

**March–April 2019 deadline:**  
Friday, February 15.

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