



# Berkeley Zen Center



## January 2008 Newsletter

### All-Sangha Gathering

Our next All-Sangha gathering is Thursday, January 10, 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the community room. Following a potluck dinner, we will gather in a circle to discuss whatever is present for us, including what we feel about our practice and what directions we'd like to see it go. The focus will be on some key general issues raised at a recent BZC Board gathering, including matters of leadership transition and style, communication and decision making within the sangha, financial needs and how to meet them, etc. One of the issues raised was the need for increased dialogue with and among the general sangha. We hope that All-Sangha gatherings can be one of the ways through which BZC members and friends can provide more active and timely input on important issues. We thus invite everyone to attend and take part.

### One-Day Study Sesshin with Shohaku Okumura Roshi

On Saturday, January 26, from 5 am to 9:15 pm, we will have a special study sesshin with Shohaku Okumura roshi that will include lecture and afternoon teaching period. The fee is \$40 for members and friends, and \$45 for non-members. For those not able to sit the whole day, there will be a "study sessions only" option. Scholarships are available. Please check bulletin board for sesshin sign-up and more information. Any questions, call sesshin director John Rubin at (510)-339-7068 before 9 pm.



#### 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.

### BZC Schedule January

#### Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 1-3, 6:20 pm

Friday, 1-4, 6:40 am

#### All Sangha Potluck

Thursday, 1-10

#### Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 1-13

#### Kidzendo

Saturday, 1-19

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 1-26, 9:30 am

#### One-Day Sitting (Okumura Roshi)

Saturday, 1-26

### February

#### Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 2-3

#### Founders Ceremony

Monday, 2-4, 6:40 pm

Tuesday, 2-5, 6:40 am

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 2-2, 9:30 am

#### Buddha's Parinirvana

Saturday, 2-16

#### Three-Day Sitting

Saturday-Monday, 2-16 to 2-18

#### Kidzendo

Saturday, 2-23

### Newsletter Online

The newsletter is available online with full color pictures on the BZC website. If you'd like to stop receiving a paper copy of the newsletter, you can sign up to receive an email when the latest newsletter has been posted by contacting BZC Office Manager, John Moge.

# News from the Board of Directors

By Peter Overton, BZC Board President

The Board met on December 16 for an all-day retreat including both our regular meeting and an extended discussion of topics felt to be of importance to the Sangha at this time. Our intent was to create a space to surface whatever concerns and perspectives might be present in this group of people, and to find a way to engage the Sangha as a whole in a similar process. To briefly summarize, after an initial brainstorming session, we followed up on three main categories of discussion:

## Leadership and Transition

There seemed to be a couple of themes here. Some within the Sangha would like to engage in exploration of our style and form of leadership at BZC, which while not presupposing a shift away from having an abbot and other structures we are accustomed to, would allow for any new ideas to find expression and consideration. Sojun and Alan gave a review of the status of the "transition" in the abbacy. They concurred that in the present situation, there is an ongoing process of exploration and adjustment going on between them, and that whatever future changes may take place, no substantive shifts in their roles are immanent.

## Financial

The Board would like to engage with the Sangha on a more regular and sustained basis regarding financial matters. The two main areas related to this are upkeep of the property and temple, and support of teachers. There seems to be both a greater need for an ongoing program of repairs and maintenance of our buildings, and more Sangha involvement in review of proposed projects and their funding. The other area of discussion we focused on was support of teachers. We believe the budget to support teachers will approximately double at some point down the road. While we do not know when a transition in abbacy will take place, we concluded that one strategy addressing this could be to gradually increase our operating income starting

now to help fund this future need. This will involve a detailed examination of all of our sources of support and thorough discussion within the community. The next discussion broke down into three main areas:

**A. Communications**--find ways for open Sangha discussion to become an integral part of decision making. This would better inform our choices, as well as reduce the dissonance and hurt feelings which sometimes occurs when people find themselves surprised by new developments. We would hope to utilize existing structures such as All Sangha Meetings and Open Discussion rather than create new venues (i.e. more meetings);

**B. Conflict Resolution**--explore models which could be used in our community to more efficiently resolve conflicts not involving ethics issues. Some "restorative justice" or other "circle" processes were noted as possibly effective. The EAR committee reported that they are fielding more issues between sangha members than they are capable of handling in a sustainable way;

**C. Communications Skills**--some training in basic skills such as "non-violent communication" (NVC) could help members take effective steps to reduce unnecessary conflict, and have fun doing it! The Board approved sponsorship of an NVC workshop to be held Saturday, February 23, open to all members.

These and any other topics which may be of concern or importance to you will all be open for discussion in our next Open Discussion on Monday morning, January 7, and upcoming All Sangha potluck dinners.





## Burma Witness: Journey to a Land Cloaked in Fear

Last month, in the aftermath of Burma brutal suppression of the monks' nonviolent protest and the rebirth of a popular democracy movement, Alan Senauke led a small BPF delegation to bear witness in Rangoon and along the Thai-Burma border. On **Sunday, January 6, 7-9 pm**, in the BZC Community Room, he will talk about Burma, show slides, and encourage discussion about how we can support Burma's freedom movement for the long haul. Donations are welcome and will go to support education, training, and humanitarian relief in Burma.

## Dharma Group Openings

The Sunday afternoon dharma study/working group has openings for new members wanting to join. This group has been meeting continuously for five years and is presently studying the "Song of the Jewel Mirror Samadhi" that we recite in the zendo on Saturday mornings.

A dharma study/working group is a group facilitated by a senior student, where the senior student participates as one of the members, not as authority or leader. The role of the facilitator is not to lecture but to facilitate the emergence of prajna or intrinsic wisdom in each member. The group meets one Sunday a month from 11:15 to 12:45 and is convened and facilitated by Raul Moncayo. The group asks that potential new members consider their commitments carefully and commit to one-year of participation. At the end of the year all members are free to leave or stay in the group according to their needs and desires. For further questions call Raul at (415) 401-2707 or email: [raul.moncayo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:raul.moncayo@sbcglobal.net)

## Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend; call or email Greg Denny, 595-8162, or [greg@techsperience.org](mailto:greg@techsperience.org).



## Childcare Schedule

January 5	Childcare
January 12	Childcare
January 19	<b>Kidzendo</b>
January 26	Sesshin – no program
February 2	Childcare
February 9	Childcare
February 16	Sesshin – no program
February 23	<b>Kidzendo</b>
March 1	Childcare
March 8	Childcare
March 15	<b>Kidzendo</b>
March 22	Sesshin – no program

## 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 upstairs at the Senauke's household (1933 Russell) for a briefing on forms at about 9:45, then sojourn down to the zendo for the first 10 minutes of lecture starting at 10:10. Afterwards, children may join the regular Saturday childcare program if they wish.

## 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. Before the winter break (mid-Dec), please speak with Sojun Mel Weitsman. After you speak with your teacher, promptly contact sewing teacher Jean Selkirk. Check the bulletin board for further announcements.

# Introduction to Buddhism Class Offered

By Ron Nestor, Class Coordinator

**V**ice abbot Hozan Alan Senauke will teach a six-week Introduction To Buddhism class on Thursday evenings February 7 to March 13. A better class title might be Basic Buddhism as it's directed at practitioners of all experience levels. Classes begin 7:15 pm and end 8:45. The fee for the class series is \$60.00 with no discounts for missed classes. For those experiencing financial hardship, please speak with class coordinator Ron Nestor to arrange a cost reduction.

A sign-up for the class will be posted on the bulletin board the second week of January. If it's difficult for you to make it to BZC before the series starts you may email Ron at the address below to register. Our text will be, "The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching", by Thich Nhat Hanh. Copies are available for \$14.00. To receive a copy in advance of the class for pick up at BZC email Ron at shoppingrk@yahoo.com. Otherwise, books will be available at the first class.

## Interview with Hozan Alan Senauke

*Ron:* Good morning, Alan. I've always thought that our Introduction to Buddhism class was one of the hardest classes to teach because there's so much material. How do you decide what to include and what not to include?

*Alan:* Well, it is daunting, but in this case Sojun, you, and I decided to use Thich Nhat Hahn's "The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching" as a text. That begins with the four noble truths and the eightfold path and then talks about fundamental elements of Buddhist practice that are common to every tradition. So we can use this as a road map. Of course, everything will not be covered. There are many ways to approach an introduction - as discreet practices, or from the standpoint of the Buddha's life. Then, of course, there is a multiplicity of schools. The important thing is to keep pointing ourselves towards practice, to have some intellectual tools and some practice tools, and to get the big picture. For instance in discussing the six paramitas we

have to take up the Bodhisattva ideal. So we'll be talking about some of the broader and later teachings, not just early Buddhism.

*Ron:* Thich Nhat Hanh is known as a Zen master but he's also a consummate scholar. We might think that Zen emphasizes just sitting, but his practice has included lots of study. He's an example of a Zen teacher who is erudite about the traditional Buddhist teachings.

*Alan:* Yes, of course. Most of our teachers were and are well versed in the basic teachings. Sojun is studying all the time. The practice of Zen Buddhism is not just sitting; it's actually how you make your whole life. All these other practices and traditions are about that. Thich Nhat Hanh's Vietnamese Zen is strongly infused with the whole range of traditional teachings. And I will add that to the class. Among my early memories at BZC are Sojun's lectures and classes on basic Buddhism--the factors of enlightenment, the hindrances, and so on. I appreciated the fact that we were getting the building blocks of Buddhism.

*Ron:* Can you present this vast subject in six weeks and still have time for discussion?

*Alan:* Well, we won't get to everything but these classes have to be interactive, so we have to find a balance. If I'm just presenting material, then it's actually not so interesting for me or for other people. That means limiting the amount of material that we cover.

*Ron:* I imagine we'll have folks attending your class with a wide range of practice experience, from beginners to old-timers. How will a basic Buddhism class be helpful to people who've practiced for a long time at BZC or other places?

*Alan:* These teachings are bottomless. Each time I approach them I see fresh ways that they apply to my life and zazen. There is no end to this study.

*Ron:* Thank you, Alan.



# The Character of Soup and the Soup of Character: *Offering hindrances to evoke Bodhisattva spirit*

By Raul Moncayo, Senior Student

In the Tenzo Kyokun or instructions for the Zen cook Dogen writes about the office of Tenzo that is responsible for managing and cooking the meals for the monks. He uses cooking practice as a way to talk about the manifestation of the dharma in everyday life and ordinary activities. Ordinary mind is the way, has been a daily staple of monastic Zen for many generations and of the Mahayana teaching and the bodhisattva ideal. This teaching is also particularly meaningful for the Berkeley Zen Center because from its outset Sojun our teacher had the vision of bringing the forms of monastic Zen practice into the daily and ordinary lives of modern North Americans living an urban city life.



In our practice we ground zazen mind in ordinary activities and do not think of zazen mind as some rare state radically different from ordinary activities. On the other hand, when we ground zazen mind in ordinary activities then ordinary activities shine with the rarity of the udumbara flower. When we cook a soup in the kitchen, the character of this soup does not differ from the soup of character that we cook in the zendo during zazen. The soup is the soup of life itself as both the soup that nourishes our bodies and the primordial cosmic chemical soup that gave rise to our bodies.

We don't have a name for this teaching that follows from Suzuki roshi's beginner's mind. Sojun roshi calls it Nothing Special. We could also call it the emptiness special that practitioners cook in the kitchen of life as an offering for all beings. Emptiness is not something special or different from the ingredients of our life, but rather the very ingredients of our life, what we are made of, as seen and practiced from the perspective of emptiness or no-self. This is the taste of ambrosia, or the food of the gods, as the manna or Buddha-nature revealed in the wholesome food eaten by monks and Buddhist practitioners.

In the Tenzo Kyokun Dogen says that we have to use tenzo practice as the practice of both arousing and expressing the bodhisattva spirit within ourselves. Bodhisattva is the enlightened being or activity at the service of the Buddha-Dharma that includes doing things for others as well as for ourselves. Just like in zazen or sesshin, in kitchen practice we put all our effort and energy into the activity itself. Zazen is the side of the stillness of activity whereas cooking represents the activity of stillness. Out of the stillness of zazen practice we cook the dharma food that will sustain zazen practice. Within the context of zen practice, the mundane and the supramundane, become a continuous circle, like the mudra and the gassho posture of our hands.



## PEOPLE

A deep bow to Zendo Manager **Andrea Thach** for her offerings of careful attention to detail, revitalized ceremonies, updated chant books, and more. **Leslie Bartholic** will be taking over this demanding role in March, assisted by resident **Catherine Cascade**. More thanks to **Shelley Brock**, Head Jikido for the last two years, overseeing all-important zendo cleaning; stepping up to the zabuton is resident **Jim Tomlinson**. And many thanks to Head Chiden **Alexandra Frappier**, who is passing that position on to resident **Anke Perkert**.

**Lost and Found:** A nice pair of what look like reading glasses was found amongst the plants in the garden in front of BZC by the



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