



April – June 2025

## Return To The Mind Source

*This Dharma talk was given by Jakusho Kwong-roshi at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center on on July 13, 2024, during the Bodhidharma Sesshin.*

You've just entered into a Zen training hall. And this is our Bodhidharma Sesshin. You may not know Bodhidharma, but if you want to realize the truth, you need to know him. If it wasn't for Bodhidharma, you wouldn't be here. I wouldn't be here. This place would not be here. That's how important he was. In this Zen training hall, there's a scroll of Bodhidharma. You see it over there? His eyes are very piercing. In one way, it's good to have someone look at you like that, because maybe in your whole lifetime, you will never have that experience—someone really looking at you in that way.

The legend was that he didn't want to fall asleep in meditation, so he cut off his eyelids. Ouch! And when the eyelids fell to the ground, the first tea plants in China began to grow. The late Zen master and artist Beumju Soensa was known for doing Bodhidharma paintings in Korea. He painted one that's in my home. It is a rare painting of Bodhidharma because he has eyelids. This deeply affected me because I realized Bodhidharma was a person. And all the names we chant in the sutras, they too were actual people who suffered. We can't imagine how difficult it was during their time. And from this suffering, we inherited their compassion.

So just a few years ago, I began relating to him as a person. All our ancestors—the matriarchs and patriarchs—were human beings, people who had bodhicitta: awakened resolve. That's essential to Zen training. Very few people have it, although I think everyone in some way wants to know who

they really are. But because the idea of the self that we have created since birth has a self-existence that is separate from everything, this division produces suffering. Again, our self-existence produces suffering because this idea separates subject from object. When you are not aware of how to dissolve subject and object, your life will be driven by karma, I'm sorry to say. Our world is conditioned because of that. We are ignorant and have no idea of this truth. In upright sitting, these two [conditions] dissolve. Maybe it's already happened to you in your meditation practice, if you sit mostly by yourself. It's best to sit with other people. When you sit by yourself, you're most likely thinking about yourself. When we sit with other people, our behavior changes. We affect each other. We give each other more strength to do things that we normally wouldn't do by ourselves.

Today is a very hot day, 98 degrees. There is a Zen koan that says, Where can I go where there's no hot and cold? I said, San Francisco. [Chuckles] That was many years ago, but because of climate change, even San Francisco is hot now. We caused it. Climate change isn't out there. We cause, and we create. We think everything is "out there." At birth, we were separated from oneness, and through education, tradition, culture, habit, and ignorance, we experience further separation. Our life depends on everything being outside of us. Like Fridays, everybody's preparing to go out, and at this retreat, everybody's preparing to go back in. But where do you go? To the mind source. Have you ever thought of that? Where do your thoughts come from? Return to the mind source and investigate

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what is there.

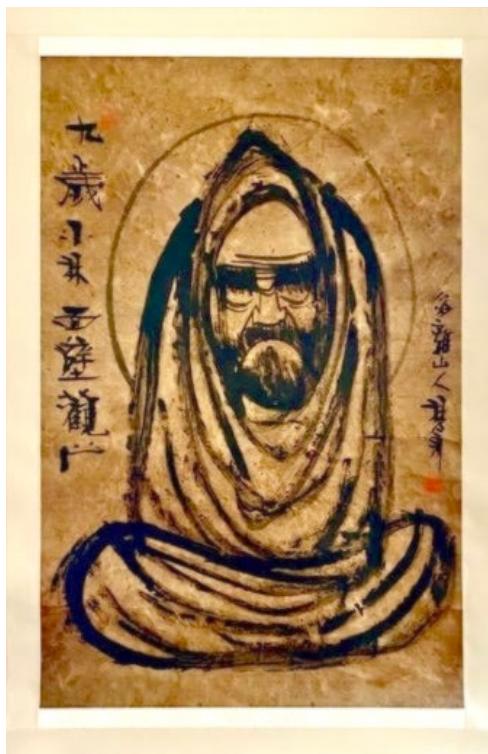
I imagine that people have gone to the place that is profoundly silent and calm. It's beyond thinking. But you still need to complete that by recognizing it, or a teacher needs to point out when you have dissolved the subject and object duality. That's why I think people like to sit because they go to that profound stillness, but often they are not aware of it.

I'm going to read something from the *Shobogenzo*, which is one of the greatest pieces of literature in the world, by Dōgen Zenji, one of our important Zen ancestors. [From the fascicle *Gyoji*, "Pure Conduct and Observance of Precepts, Part 2," Nishijima translation of *Shobogenzo*.] *Gyo* is like action in deeds. Bodhidharma's whole philosophy is about action, what you do and don't do. What you do becomes a reality. If it's not based on your direct experience of Buddha's insight and wisdom, then it is not reality. That's what Dzogchen, the Tibetan tradition of "Complete Perfection," is about: the liberation from subject-object duality.

So in the term *gyoji*, *gyo* means deeds, action, or conduct, and *ji* is observation, or maintaining [the practice]. A few days ago, Shinko and I were at a fitness training session, and I realized that the time went by very quickly. Do you know why? Because we were concentrated on fitness led by the training. In our life, we don't concentrate; we focus on the outer world, and time goes very slowly and forbiddingly. So you need to have concentration. You have it, but you need to be trained to cultivate it. I remember when I was younger, as I walked in San Francisco, I would try to count the stories of the buildings. After many years of zazen, I could count to the top. The Zen hall will perfect this within you.

"The first ancestor in China came from the west to the eastern lands under the instruction of his teacher, the Venerable Prajnatara." He's the lineage holder from Shakyamuni, our 27th Indian ancestor; his successor was Bodhidharma, the 28th from India. Bodhidharma had been with his teacher for 60 years. When he was very young, Bodhidharma already knew the value of the dharma. He was born a prince and received transmission from Prajnatara when he was very young, maybe four years old. He knew the difference between dharma, phenomena, and prajna, wisdom of the universe. It's not even limited to the idea of truth; it's about the universe. Wisdom is more important than a priceless gem.

So he remained and served Prajnatara for 60 years, and finally, his teacher made the request that he go to China. In the *Shobogenzo* it says, "For three years of frosts and spring, during that ocean voyage, how could the wind and snow have been the only miseries?" It took him three years, I think he was over 90, but he still made that life-or-death voyage. "Through how many formations of clouds and sea mist might the steep waves have



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surged? He was going to an unknown country”—that was China, where they didn’t know the profundity of the dharma. “Ordinary beings who value their body and life could never conceive of such a journey. This must have been the maintenance of the practice realized solely from a great benevolent will to transmit”—Here “transmit” means to impart. It’s not instruction, not subject and object. It’s impartial, one of the consummations of an enlightened mind if you have no idea of self. A tree can relate its oneness to you, as you can relate your oneness to the tree.

Listen to this sentence again. “This must have been maintenance of the practice realized solely from the great benevolent will to transmit the Dharma and save deluded emotional beings.” Interestingly, he used the word “emotional.” I mean, human beings have emotion, but most have too much and become attached and suffer, or create karma. Pure emotion is different. It’s almost like unaffected open-heartedness. You can cry and have emotional expression without attachment. That comes from training in Zen. Okay?

It’s interesting, I’ve never seen this phrase before, “save deluded emotional beings.” “It was so because the transmission of the Dharma is [Bodhidharma] himself; it was so because the transmission of Dharma is the entire universe; it was so because the whole universe in the ten directions is the real state of truth; it was so because the whole Universe in the ten directions is [Bodhidharma] himself; and it was so because the whole Universe in the ten directions is the whole Universe in the ten directions.”

It’s beautiful, isn’t it? You don’t hear writing like this anymore, anywhere. “What conditions surrounding this life are not a royal palace?” What conditions in your life are not a royal palace? “And what royal palace is prevented from being a place to practice the truth?” “Royal palace” means everything is good, or you could say everything is Buddha. This is one of many realizations in zazen. In other words, the royal palace is your everyday life. You can practice whether your everyday life is negative or positive. In other Buddhist traditions, they call it the Pure Land. You’re free from subject and object. When you go to the cleaners, for example, that person is the object and I’m the subject. But when you go in, it can become a royal palace. By nature, you smile, and as you acknowledge the person, you remember their name. And then the Pure Land begins to appear, and they even clean your clothes quicker because there’s a relationship established. Every place can be a royal palace.

But you have to do research to know what conditions surrounding this light are not a royal palace. You have to find out what’s the hindrance, what’s the obstruction. It’s not psychology, but philosophy in action to be realized.

“For these reasons, he came from the west like this.” Not as idealism, but because of reality. “Because the saving of deluded emotional beings is [Bodhidharma] himself...”

The deluded emotional beings are Bodhidharma himself, so it’s no problem. “He was without alarm and doubt, and he was not afraid.” Because saving deluded emotional beings is the entire Universe, he was not alarmed, and he was without fear.

“He left his father’s kingdom forever. He made ready a great ship, crossed the southern seas, and arrived at the port of Koshu [present-day Guangzhou]. There would have been a large crew, and many monks to serve the Master with towel and jug, but historians failed to record this. After the Master landed, no one knew who he was.” And so they didn’t know how to receive him.

Bodhidharma Day is October fifth. Is it his birthday, or when he landed in China? Bodhidharma Day is tomorrow, and it’s when he completely passed. We call it Parinirvana. So like in a seven-day session, it’s intensive sitting for three days, and after the third day, you get a second wind. Your idea of self is exhausted, and something else begins to appear. This is how it’s designed. You’re exhausting the idea of self, that which locks you into the reality you think you’re living in. It’s a projection; it’s not real.

Gee, when you hear that, don’t you want to do something about it? This is important. It’s a free country; you can do what you want. But you have to remember, you’re always in the palm of Buddha’s hand. So what are you going to do?

This talk was inspired by a Zen Buddhist monk who decided to disrobe. He was unknown to me and wanted to briefly visit by dropping off things that I did not need. I said, that’s a Bodhidharma scroll, and it’s very rare because he has his eyelids. I went on to say something more about the story. The ex-monk snapped, “I heard the story! I heard it already!” This talk was inspired by whoever he was.

So the story is that Bodhidharma finally met the emperor. There was no authentic Buddhism at that time, and probably no Buddhism in Korea yet either. So Emperor Wu asked him, “It would be impossible to list all the temples built, and all the sutras copied, and all the monks delivered since I assumed the throne? What merit have I acquired?” He was very egotistical. And the Master Bodhidharma said, “No merit at all.” You can tell that Bodhidharma was fearless. He could have had his head cut off, standing in front of the emperor with his spontaneous response. The emperor asked, “Why is there no merit?” Bodhidharma said, “These things are only the trivial effects of human beings and gods, and the cause of the superfluous. They are like shadows following the form: though they exist, they are not the real thing.”

Emperor Wu asked, “What is true merit?” The Master again said, “Pure wisdom being subtly all-encompassing, the body being naturally empty and still. Virtue like this is not sought by the worldly.” The body and mind being naturally empty and still means one is open to receive what

is transmitted, just like an empty glass is able to receive water.

Bodhidharma makes the point that virtue like this is not sought by worldly people. Emperor Wu asked further, "What is the paramount truth among the sacred truths?" Master said, "It is that which is glaringly evident and without anything sacred." Koreans have a saying that everything that's in front of you is the ultimate truth. But you need to realize it. That's the difference. If you have the awakened resolve, you do it—with other people. "Glaringly," right in front of you. Evident.

The emperor asked, "Who is this person facing me?" and Bodhidharma said, "I do not know."

Again, the emperor could have had his head, because that's not how you should talk to an emperor. But Bodhidharma knew that there is a person, and yet it isn't the person. He can't say, "I'm the person." Neither it is, nor it is not. Like this table: neither it is, nor it isn't a table. We are not talking about objects here. There's a third dimension to it. Neither it is nor it isn't. Bodhidharma's "I do not know" is where the thinking mind reaches its end, and cannot go further. It's not stupidity or ignorance.

So Bodhidharma left. He knew that the emperor didn't understand. He went north and across the Yangtze River, up to the Shorin-ji temple, where he sat facing the wall in silence. Ordinary people lived in caves in those days, but no one sat for nine years. The emperor was too inept to recognize Bodhidharma. And he didn't even know that this was cause for shame.

Bodhidharma was a crown prince in South India. "He had long ago acquired familiarity with the ways of royal palaces in the great nation. In the vulgar customs of a small country, there were habits and views that might be shameful to the prince of a great nation, but the mind of the first Patriarch [of China] was not moved: he did not abandon the country and he did not abandon the people."

So just to make this story short, the people of China wrote him off as someone trying to learn "dhyana." They even thought he was "learning Zen meditation." They wrote him off as having the value of "withered trees and dead ash," because he was always facing a wall learning how to meditate. He sat nine years in a cave. And the longer he sat, they knew he was authentic. Then Bodhiruci [a monk from northern India] and a precept master called Kozu tried to poison him. They tried many times. Also, he had imparted or transmitted the dharma to four of his successors.

I'm going to end here. I mentioned to someone earlier that the ritual we do is not about ceremony, the ritual is to discover who you are. In Soto Zen, we have lots of ritual. I discovered that the gassho, palms together, is an acknowledgment of myself and you, facing our true nature. Not the idea of who you think you are, but your true nature. And so we bow together—you bow in exhalation, we see



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each other, and it's actually humanity's best gesture, because everyone does it, whether religious or not. We see each other as we bow, acknowledging. And as you bend on the exhale, go slowly, and near the end of the bow your thinking might stop, and you come up with that spacious and calm feeling.

Is it true? Yes? No. I had one student in Poland who said no. I asked him what happened, and he said that when he got here, he ran away. But it's not just Zen students; hu-

manity has the same capacity. Everyone is endowed with the same dharma spirit. It's like untying a knot. You've been conditioned since birth, controlled by the government and armed forces. It's like we are in a factory. We are born, then immediately go through this factory of tradition, culture, habit, and education, where we separate things by names—who are the good students, who are the bad students. We create this condition of separation because, from birth, even our nourishment is from the outside. This outside is confirmed as reality. The good students are the first students, and the bad students are the last students. That's already a disaster, but we're the ones making it so. The factories that you make condition you to these conditions that you live in. After college you get a job, you have a profession, you make money, have a family, have a house, get a car, and then slowly the kids grow up. Is it happiness? Is it joy? We should be joyful toward the end of our lives.

There are quite a few new people here, and you can ask me anything you'd like.

**Student:** Roshi, is there part of the legend about when Bodhidharma stood up? When he stood up after nine years, is there any story?

**Roshi:** Actually, it really doesn't matter. The fact is that he had to sit for nine years. The scroll that I have at home, that the late Beumju Soensa painted of Bodhidharma, on the right side of his shoulder it says, "Nine years, Xiao Lin." And then underneath, it says, "The face looking straight, just slightly to the ground." So you are in the ground before the present. Under that it says, "Kan Shin." That means "self" and "contemplating the mind." So what I discovered after 50 years of sitting [all night] Tetsuyas in Rohatsu a few years ago, I remembered this word, "contemplation." It's on an intellectual level. But contemplation means clearing the calculator to zero. You have to clear your mind. If you do not clear your mind, you will have addition, multiplication, and algebra in your next answer. Zazen is clearing your mind to make good decisions. So contemplation is like sitting, one sitting maybe; it's the forbearance of non-arising. Nothing has arisen. Nothing is now arising. Nothing will arise. You are not interested in thoughts. That's the untying of the knot. Yeah, he stood up already. That's why we're here.

**Student:** So in regards to our egos and our self, do you believe, besides connectedness, there really is one mind? And aside from connectedness and no separation, do you believe it is all one? For ourselves?

**Roshi:** Underneath it is, but because of the separation, there's not one. Everyone has the same nature, Buddha nature. We're endowed with the Buddha nature. So the first line in the Wisdom of the Heart Sutra is written, "kan ji

zai bo sa tsu," which means "Bodhisattva is an enlightened being." Kan is contemplation again, ji is self, zai is where you are. We're not talking about a Bodhisattva outside of ourselves. We're talking about this enlightened being, yet to be enlightened. We're talking about this [gesturing around the zendō]. All these statues represent aspects of ourselves. They're not outside of ourselves. So the basic nature is emptiness. When you look hard at one thing, and you pull up layer after layer, you find nothing is there. But that emptiness includes cognizance. It's full awareness. It's not just empty, like space.

**Student:** Is there a difference between clearing your mind of thoughts and clearing your mind of feelings?

**Roshi:** Everything comes from thought. Feeling comes from thought. It's good to have good thinking because it makes for good feeling. I used to think that feeling and sensation were better than thinking, but it all comes from thought. You can't have the feeling without the thought.

**Student:** Roshi, you talk about the importance of thought, but not the importance of thinking. The difference between thought and thinking?

**Roshi:** Oh, if you have one thought in zazen, it's not thinking. But that one thought over a long period of time is very important because it means that you're not dead. If you have two thoughts, you have to go back to zero again and start over. That's contemplation, that's Zen training. As you train yourself while you sit, one thought, and then two thoughts together is thinking. So you return to zero and start over. That's the Zen method. We should try not to judge or discriminate, like saying that this sitting was good or that was bad, because then we're off dividing everything again.

**Student:** Oh, Roshi, the ten thousand things that need to be done, it interferes. When I have to focus on the things I have to do, the ten thousand things, it seems to separate me from that peaceful zazen way. And I try to retrieve it. Is there a way to retrieve it that may help?

**Roshi:** First, ten thousand things is the symbol of perfection. Not how many. So the relative is connected to the absolute. They coexist because the opposites are not in conflict with each other. The moon is connected to the sun. The dark is connected to the light. If they didn't coexist, the universe would collapse. So in your everyday life, and in your thinking, it coexists. In your upright sitting, you have to know how to dissolve the opposites.

**Student:** Roshi, how important is this willingness to return that you talked about? The willingness to, you know, when you're thinking, to return to not thinking?

**Roshi:** The willingness to return to your true nature? Yeah, you can at will. You can will it to return. ♦

# Buddha's Birthday



# New To The Sangha

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*We offer a warm welcome to our newest members.*

**Rosalba Rubinger**, Santa Rosa, CA (Member since 7/14/25)

I immigrated from Sicily, Italy, in 1960 at age 9. My family opened an Italian bakery in Brooklyn, where the whole family worked. After high school, I briefly worked as a secretary at an insurance company on Wall Street, then decided to pursue a career in nursing. I met my husband in the hospital where he was training as an MD. We moved to California, where he resided, and have three wonderful children, all living within one hour of Santa Rosa. I've been retired for seven years and enjoy volunteering for different organizations and attending cultural and nature-oriented educational events. We've raised our kids Jewish, more in the traditional sense than religious, and also enjoy our Italian heritage. It's a great combination. As we say, the only difference between Italians and Jews is the sauce. I have little experience in meditation, but I am in a state of being where I need guidance to balance my physical and mental selves.

**Jesse Sparks**, Cotati, CA

I moved to Santa Rosa from Olympia, WA, a little over six years ago in what I thought would be a temporary move for a contract job, but instead found myself putting down roots here. Shortly after I moved, I met and married an incredible woman who is and will probably always be a lifelong Sonoma County resident, unless I can convince her to retire to Japan. I have grown immensely from my role as a father to her two wonderful teenage boys. Through them, I have discovered a love of coaching sports and helping young people grow. I now coach soccer at San Marin High School in Novato.

While I originally became interested in Buddhism 20 years ago, my life took a different course until a recent inspiring trip to Japan, and learning to be the best teacher I can be, led me to pick up Phil Jackson's book *Sacred Hoops*. That led me to the lineage of Suzuki-rōshi, which I realized exists just down the mountain from where I live. I feel very fortunate to find myself in such close proximity to SMZC and am excited to join this Sangha.

**Chris Fugan CJ Johnson**, Portland, OR

I am a student of Nyoze Kwong and Jakusho Kwong-roshi. I received Jukai in Suzuki-roshi's lineage from Ko-shin Flint Sparks-roshi, under whose guidance I have been studying and practicing since 2017. I entered the Zen path in 2001 through the Kwan Um School of Zen founded by Zen Master Seung Sahn (Dae Soen Sa Nim). From my root teacher Zen Master Ji Haeng Thom Pastor, I received initial precepts in 2013 and Dharma Teacher-in-Training precepts in 2015. Until recently, I've worked in the mental and behavioral health field and have introduced contemplative practices to adjudicated youth in residential treatment centers, high school students, and military and first responders. I enjoy composing and improvising on the piano, instructing and training in the martial art of jiu jitsu, and being playful. Currently based in Portland, OR, with my wife Liz 'Myogetsu', we are seeking to move to CA so that I can deepen my study and training at Genjo-ji. ♦



# Polish Sangha News

by Eko Ania Mills

The Polish Kannon Sangha is building a new Sangha House at our center in Kąciki, about 31 miles southeast of Warsaw. For many years now we have been practicing in Kąciki during the warmer months, holding angos and week-long sesshins in several cabins we built on the property and also a large tent for summer ango. The new building will allow us to practice there during the winter months as well, and provide more comfortable housing for guests and for teacher Kaiin Jarek Chybicki, who will be living there.

The first phase of construction will include a meeting room with a kitchen, bathrooms, a place for Kaiin, and additional accommodations for Sangha members. We hope to build a Zendo in the second phase over the next few years.

Construction began in June, and we hope the Sangha House will be completed by winter. The main structure is being built at the manufacturer's workshop and will be transported on site at the end of June. The design chosen by the project team consists of two stories with a kitchen, large living room (about 164 square feet), bathroom, and guest room downstairs, and a teacher's bedroom and study, bathroom, and two guest rooms upstairs.

We are celebrating this giant step for the Polish Sangha joining efforts to make this project a reality. Many people have contributed work and money to support the project, for the benefit of all.

We will continue to share news of this special project as it progresses. ♦♦



*Top: Foundation preparations for the Sangha House in Kąciki.*

*Bottom: Procession following the mondo ceremony at the end of Ango. Group photo with Shuso (lead student) Gosia Yūko Krauze (holding staff).*

# Sangha News From Iceland— June 2025

by Zenki Traustason

As the seasons turn, it is with gratitude and joy that I look back on the events of the past year for our Icelandic Sangha. It always amazes me that a small Sangha can thrive amid all the chaos in the world. In this noisy world of human striving, our Sangha remains a wonder. In the rush of daily life, it's easy to miss the whisper of the Buddha's teachings. But in daily practice, supported by the Sangha, we cannot help but hear the roar of silence. Although our fundamental, life-giving activity is zazen and daily practice, our Sangha expresses itself in many other ways, including talks, reading groups, pottery, and social gatherings, as well as sesshins. Each year, we carefully take down our zendo and retreat to the countryside for a sesshin. Last year, we broke the tradition of going to Skálholt, as we have done for the last 20 years, and tried Eirð, a beautiful place about an hour's drive east of Reykjavík. We decided to return there this year. It was a beautiful sesshin held in the heart of nature, the deep roar of silence inviting us into a profound stillness. Twelve people participated.

Last summer, my friend Zenki Nishimura came for a visit and stayed with us for a few days. Zenki currently serves as secretary of the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center, the global outreach program of Japan's Soto Zen headquarters. I first met him at Nyoze's Shinsanshiki, and his visit to Iceland was delightful and meaningful, deepening our connection and strengthening our relationship with Sōtō-shū.

In October 2024, I traveled to Paris for the annual Sōtō-shū meeting in Europe, as I had done the year before. These gatherings offer meaningful opportunities to meet other Zen teachers and practitioners from across the continent. Each time I make new friends, share experiences, and have rich discussions about the life and practice of our Sanghas.

Last November, I had the honor of giving Jukai to five new practitioners. I am always moved by the sincerity and courage needed to take this step and accept the Buddha's precepts, taking a clear, compassionate stand against violence, greed, and delusion. Many of our senior students used the opportunity to renew their vows, a deeply moving gesture that offered a tender moment of peace and strength during the ceremony. Witnessing these commitments reminds me of the living power of the Dharma and the strength that arises from walking the path together.

## The Jukai recipients from November:

Sigríður Karen Shinko Jokumsdóttir  
Vigfús Tenshin Bjarni Albertsson  
Viktor Kakuon Ingi Jónsson  
Luke Shogen Starkey  
Thomas Taizan Josef Fleckenstein

I am saddened to share the news that our beloved Sangha member of 25 years, Ómar Shoshin Ívarsson, passed away on October 23. He was a dedicated, contemplative practitioner whose steady presence and kind spirit touched each of us in unique ways. His passing is a great loss, and his absence is felt profoundly. We miss him dearly.

I sincerely wish you all a joyful and grounded Dharma practice until we meet again soon. I'd like to leave you with the enlightenment phrase of Keizan Zenji, which continues to inspire me:

*A black lacquer horse runs through the night.  
At tea time I drink tea, at lunch time I eat rice.*

**Ástvaldur Zenki**, Teacher of the Icelandic Sangha ♦



**Aug 2** **Meditation Instruction**  
**(Includes Saturday Community)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT  
Perfect for beginners wishing to learn meditation form. Meditation is a way to calm the mind and find balance in your daily life. Join us for our regular Saturday Community program (included in the fee) immediately following instruction. Please arrive at 8:50 am at the Sangha House to check in.

**Summer Ango Opening Ceremony**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
10:30 AM –12:00 PM  
Join us for Summer Ango Opening Ceremony with Shuso Fugan Chris CJ Johnson. 10:30–11:00am Zazen, 11:00–11:45am Opening Ceremony.

**Aug 4** **Special Guest Teacher Talk for Commit to Sit Summer 2025**  
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM  
Dharma Talk will be given by Nyoze Kwong Roshi for New York Zen Center's Commit to Sit: The Roots of Goodness (a 90-day guided online Zen meditation).

**Aug 8** **August Fusatsu Ceremony**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
7:30–9:00 PM PDT  
Be present for & experience the Fusatsu At-one-ment Ceremony of release, purification, and presence with the full moon. 7:30pm–8:00pm Zazen, 8:00pm–9:00pm Service.

**Aug 9** **Meditation Instruction**  
**(Includes Saturday Community)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT  
See description in previous event, Aug 2.

**Summer Ango Shuso Talk by Fugan Chris C.J. Johnson**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
10:30 AM –12:00 PM  
Join us for Summer Ango Shuso Talk by Fugan Chris CJ Johnson. 10:30–11:00am Zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Shuso Talk.

**Aug 16** **Meditation Instruction**  
**(Includes Saturday Community)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT  
See description in previous event, Aug 2.

**Summer Ango Shuso Talk by Fugan Chris C.J. Johnson**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
10:30 AM –12:00 PM  
Join us for Summer Ango Shuso Talk by Fugan Chris CJ Johnson. 10:30–11:00am Zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Shuso Talk.

**Aug 17–24** **“Actualizing the Self”**  
**7-Day Sesshin (1–7 Days)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
Aug 17, 7:30 PM PDT – Aug 24, 4:45 PM PDT  
Sesshin, literally “to touch the Mind,” is a period of time set aside for an intensive meditation retreat to let go of the conditioned self and resume our original nature.

**Aug 30** **Summer Ango Closing Ceremony and Mondo**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
10:30 AM –12:00 PM  
Join us for Summer Ango, Revealing the Dharma, Closing Ceremony and Mondo with Shuso Kakuryu Noel Makenna. 10:30am–11:30am Zazen, 11:00am–11:45am Closing Ceremony and Mondo.

**Sept 1–3** **SMZC Closed**

**Sept 5** **September Fusatsu Ceremony**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
7:30–9:00 PM PDT  
See description in previous event, Aug 8.

**Sept 13** **Meditation Instruction**  
**(Includes Saturday Community)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT  
See description in previous event, Aug 2.

**Saturday Community**  
**(Talk by Shindo Kevin Souza)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
10:30 AM –12:00 PM  
Talk will be given by Shindo Kevin Souza, following 10:30 am zazen. 10:30–11:00am Zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Talk.

**Sept 20** **Fall Sangha Gathering & Potluck**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
10:30 AM–1:30 PM PST  
We are hosting an informal get-together for Sonoma Mountain Zen Center's sangha members. This is an opportunity for members to connect, give feedback and hear about SMZC's direction and plans for the future. Please bring your favorite dish (for 6–8 people) to share with everyone.

**Sept 27** **Meditation Instruction**  
**(Includes Saturday Community)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT  
See description in previous event, Aug 2.

**Saturday Community**  
**(Talk by Ron Berger)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
10:30 AM –12:00 PM  
Talk will be given by Shindo Ron Berger, following 10:30 am zazen. 10:30–11:00am Zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Talk.

**Sept 28 Fall Workfest**

**On-site**

8:30 AM – 12:30 PM PDT

In the spirit of together-action, come help breathe new energy into the center with friends and families of the Sonoma Mountain Sangha. Bring a pair of work gloves if you have them. Vegetarian lunch will be provided afterwards. RSVP to offer your hands of compassion!

**Sept 29 SMZC Closed**

**Sept 30 Fall Study Group (Week 1 of 8)**

**On-site or Online**

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM PDT

Explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and build a foundation for daily practice through discussions on the book “The Roots of Goodness: Zen Master Dogen’s Teaching on the Eight Qualities of a Great Person” commentary by Kosho Uchiyama Roshi, translated by Daistu Tom Wright.

**Oct 2–5 Bodhidharma 3-Day Sesshin**

**(1 to 3 Overnights)**

**On-site or Online**

Oct 02, 6:00 PM PDT – Oct 05, 4:00 PM PDT

This retreat is a period of time set aside to let go of the conditioned self and resume our original nature. RSVP and we will email you to complete your registration. \$85/night & up. 10-20% discount for members. (Log in first to receive the member discount.)

**Oct 6–7 SMZC Closed**

**Oct 10 October Fusatsu Ceremony**

**On-site + Online (Zoom)**

7:30–9:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, Aug 8.

**Sept 13 Meditation Instruction  
(Includes Saturday Community)**

**On-site + Online (Zoom)**

9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, Aug 2.

**Saturday Community**

**(Talk by Tom Jakuryu Huffman)**

**On-site + Online (Zoom)**

10:30 AM –12:00 PM

Talk will be given by Tom Jakuryu Huffman, following 10:30 am zazen. 10:30–11:00am Zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Talk.

**Morning Zazen: Monday–Saturday, 5:15–7:00 am**

**Evening Zazen: Tue–Fri, 7:30–9:00 pm**

Ongoing online Zazen on Zoom. For more info, visit the online Zendo at <https://www.smzc.org/online-zendo>.



Several years ago, Janet Myoho Buckendahl was recognized as Sonoma Mountain Zen Center’s ‘Dharma Treasure.’ Because of her years of unwavering support of the Zen Center and work managing the Zen Dust Store, Kwong-roshi and the Board of Advisors, designated Myoho our first ‘Sangha Treasure.’ This gray rakusu, with calligraphy by Kwong-roshi, was awarded to Myoho during the ‘Sangha Treasure’ ceremony.

*(see ‘Honoring Janet Myoho Buckendahl’  
page 17)*



# Zuise Ceremony And Pilgrimage

by Kashin Kwong

*"I felt as if I were capable of almost anything. Not that I have done anything big or courageous. I was reflecting on the meaning of just doing something, whether capable or not, and remembering that it is the trying that makes a difference. Every day, try to practice the Dharma in all ways, small and challenging."*

In March, I made a special pilgrimage to Japan with (Abbott) Nyoze and our 17-year-old son Ejo to participate in a formal ceremony known as Zuise (abbot for one day and night). It is considered a way to pay respect and return blessings to the two main founders of our Soto lineage, Eihei Dogen Zenji and Keizan Jokin Zenji. Zuise is held at Soto Zen's two head temples, Daishonzan Eiheiji training monastery, founded by Eihei Dogen in 1242, and Daishonzan Sojiji training monastery, founded by Keizan Jokin in 1324. The last time we traveled to Japan as a family was for Nyoze's Zuise ceremony in 2015, with Kwong-roshi and transmitted teachers Kimyo from Iceland and Uji and Zenki from Poland, a very special trip for all of us.

A few weeks before my journey, I began to review, practice, memorize, and prepare body and mind for what was to come. Nyoze and I worked out a tight schedule of visits to temples and people deeply connected to our Soto Zen lineage. Our suitcases were overflowing with gifts for families, friends, and kids in Japan, but most of the space was taken up with robes and ceremonial accessories. After a restless plane flight from San Francisco to Narita airport in Tokyo, we managed to catch the right express trains and Shinkansen (bullet train) to arrive at Yaizu train station on time. We arrived around 8:30 pm at Rinsoin, the Suzuki family temple around 8:30 p.m.. It was quiet, and the flood light was on when we opened the big sliding door and out came Chitose, Hoistu Suzuki, and Shungo and Kumi Suzuki to greet us. They took us to a ramen shop nearby for a quick bowl of noodles before the evening bath and bed-time.

It felt so good to be back at Rinsoin and experience again the night sky, the sound of bamboo in the wind, the temple incense, dimly lit corridors, the feel of tatami under one's feet, and the comforting warmth of the electric heaters after cold dawn zazen. I had not been in Japan since my five-month training at Aichi Senmon Nisodo nunnery in 2018. Many things had happened since then, including the pandemic and Shinsanshiki, when Nyoze was installed as Genjoji's second Abbot. The last time Ejo was in Japan, he was 8 years old and remembers playing with the Suzuki kids, just as Nyoze did when he was a child.

Our three days at Rinsoin were filled with zazen, shopping for gifts, rummaging in temple antique shops, daily soji, samu at Shunryu Suzuki-roshi's memorial gravesite, and special tea and celebration dinners. Ejo spent time re-



*Standing at Daishonzan Eiheiji's 275 year old Sanmon (Main Mountain Gate) during a short tour.*

connecting with the teenage children of Shungo and Kumi Suzuki, riding local trains between Yaizu and Shizuoka. Also, a friend of Nyoze, Rev. Mitsuhide (Manei) Hattori, came to visit. They trained together at Eiheiji in 2011. His family temple is also located in Shizuoka. Over tea and sweets, Manei happily announced that he had just become a father to a baby boy.

Leaving Rinsoin, we took the Shinkansen bullet train to Kyoto and visited the sights. One of the highlights was Kenninji Temple, founded by Rinzai Zen master Eisai, where Dogen became a student of Myozan after returning from China in 1227 after finding his teacher Tendo Nyojo and wrote his first writing, Fukanzazengi (Universal Promotion of the Principles of Zazen). One day in Kyoto, Rev. Koyu Osawa-Mori visited with her two children, driving five hours from her home in Shikoku to see us. Rev. Koyu, who was first sent to SMZC by the Soto Zen organization, has stayed on Sonoma Mountain many times over the

years, along with her husband, Rev. Jitsugen Yamato Mori.

The whole time we were in Kyoto, I couldn't keep from thinking about my upcoming Zuise ceremony at Eiheiji. After another Shinkansen ride and other trains, we took a bus to the entrance of Daihonzan Eiheiji. We could see that there was a good three feet of snow piled by the road from a storm the previous week, making us a little nervous about the cold.

It was the afternoon of March 23, Nyoze's birthday, and he and Ejo were traveling relaxed, the complete opposite of me before my early morning ceremony. "We can't be late!" I kept saying. "They told us to arrive on time!" Don't worry, Nyoze said as we wheeled our luggage toward the international visitor department. We arrived right on time. Upon entering Eiheiji, we were told to store our street shoes in lockers and given a pair of slippers to use for our entire stay.

Eiheiji is enormous, consisting of 75 buildings located by the Sea of Japan, where winters are cold and harsh. The giant enoki cedar trees near the Sanmon (mountain gate) were planted 850 years ago by Dogen's disciples. Eiheiji's Daibonsho (great bell) weighs as much as five cars.

After checking in, I was put on an extremely tight schedule and quickly shown to my room on the fourth floor of the international wing, while Nyoze and Ejo shared a room down the hall next to the zendo used by visitors. With not a moment to think, I changed into my formal robes and was given a pair of bright red Zuise slippers to begin my orientation and practice for the next day's ceremony. Fortunately, I would be joined by a young monk from southern Shikoku who was having his Zuise as well. The afternoon was filled with reviewing and practicing procedures for the following day. Back in my room, I was served a shojin-ryori, simple, traditional vegetarian dinner, and spent the rest of the evening studying before a quick bath and bed.

Early the next morning, we navigated long flights of stairs and dimly lit halls to the Joyoden (Founder's Hall), Dogen's mausoleum, where the entire assembly recites the Daihishin Dharani and offers prostrations after morning service in the Hatto (Dharma Hall). The Joyoden is fairly small and feels intimate, with a special, timeless atmosphere: dim lighting, high cedar ceiling, shiny black diamond floor tiles, three cedar pillars on each side, and a pair of colossal instruments, the mokugyo (wooden fish drum) and a huge keisu (gong). The mokugyo is so large that it has a small staircase to strike it. Every time I visit Eiheiji, my body is imprinted with the mokugyo's deep resonance. With each beat, a heavy pulse sounds in my heart while reciting the sutras with Eiheiji's monks, one of the most memorable parts of my Zuise ceremony.

Behind the Joyoden's main altar, steep, polished wooden stairs lead into the blackness of the mausoleum's inner sanctum, which contains the Koso Joyo Daishi (Great Master Eihei Dogen Zenji) portrait and sacred



*Kasbozan Ryugein Mirokuji Temple known for its enormous Tengu mask. Temple of Hani Sodo Fukujukansho's Eiheiji's Vice Abbot. From left: Narumi Suzuki-Kobayashi, Nyoze, and Kashin Kwong*

relics, surrounded by statues and ashes of several of his transmitted dharma heirs. Offerings are given every day, as living teachers. Needless to say, I was in great awe and disbelief at being in the presence of the Joyoden of Eihei Dogen Zenji to do a service. I prostrated wholeheartedly before all the ancestors, offering them incense.

After reciting the Daihishin Dharani and exiting the Joyoden with the hossu (horse whisk) between my hands, I heard the one sound of all the assembly's slippers as we walked down the hall toward the Hatto (Dharma Hall), the unsui, novice monks bowing their heads low in reverence with hands in shashu as I passed. We proceeded through the Hatto, down an inclined corridor to the Komyojo (Radiant Light Treasury Hall), where Eiheiji's abbot gives his morning lectures and receives special guests. Formally entering the Komyojo Hall, we received our Zuise certificates, offered incense, and had a ceremonial tea (dipping umeboshi into sweet water), followed by green tea. The bitter, astringent taste of the ceremonial tea is meant to give strength and good health for the long journey of maintaining the Buddhadharma.

The most stressful part of Zuise was leading morning service in the Butsuden (Buddha Hall) with Eiheiji's daishu (assembly of monks and teachers) surrounding me. Bringing awareness to the movement of my body, letting go of my thinking mind, I began to trust my feet, enacting being the abbot. Holding the hossu between my palms at eye level, opening up my zagu (bowing cloth), making the prostration at the right time, I honor Shakyamuni Buddha. Slipping my red slippers on and off at various parts of the service was very hard to do gracefully at such a fast pace. In a flash, I found myself facing the Butsuden and hearing the small keisu bell to make my exit bows. Moving quickly down a few corridors and up flights of stairs, I was escorted to Eiheiji's Kanin-ryo (general directors' depart-

ment). There I was greeted by Shodo Kobayashi Kanin-roshi, Narumi Suzuki's husband, and we were served tea and sweets with the words closing my Zuise visit.

Back in my room, with the ten-e (changing color of robe), my Zuise ceremony came to an end. The ceremony also serves to confirm one's Shiho (Dharma transmission), which I had completed in fall 2024, and register with the Sotoshu Zen School in Japan. Novice monks served me a fantastic congratulatory breakfast made up of many small dishes on formal trays, including Eiheiji's signature dish: deep-fried kombu seaweed shaped like an intricate flower. I couldn't bring myself to eat it, and put it in a box to bring back and share with everyone at Genjoji.

After breakfast, the head of Eiheiji's International Department escorted Nyoze, Ejo, and me back to the Komyozo Hall, where I had a formal photo taken with hos-su in hand, symbolizing the authority to teach, and given a large bag of congratulatory gifts. We planned to drop by several temples, including Shodo and Narumi Suzuki's home temple in Gunma. But Shodo-san told us we needed to leave Eiheiji an hour earlier than planned to visit Daijoji and arrive at his temple, Tokuganji, before dark. Little did we know that Narumi, who is the daughter of Hoitsu Suzuki and a childhood friend of Nyoze's, had a secret plan. After Nyoze gave us a whirlwind tour of Eiheiji's seven main buildings, Adachi-roshi had our luggage loaded into a van and rushed us off, driving us to Fukui train station.

Nyoze had dreamed of visiting Daijoji for years. We left our luggage behind the guardian statues in the san-mon, and walked around the grounds. The temple is in a grove of giant trees, by an old cemetery with hundreds of gravesites. Rev. Kosho Ichibori came out of the office while we were walking, and ended up giving us a tour. Daijoji, founded in 1283, belonged to the Shingon Buddhist sect. In 1293, Tetsu Gikai became the chief priest. Tetsu Gikai was the main person who helped finish the construction of Eiheiji when he was its third Zenji, and his Dharma heir Keizan Jokin founded Sojiji and helped spread Soto Zen throughout Japan. Until 2021, Daijoji was one of a handful of training monasteries left in Japan, but it has since been abandoned and is now occupied only by lay practitioners on weekends. Rev. Ichibori lives nearby and helps with temple administration. We learned that he was going to visit SMZC a few years ago, but ended up at other California Zen centers instead.

When we found Narumi at Tokuganji, in the town of Minakami in Gunma prefecture, she surprised us with a treat: an unforgettable overnight stay at a ryokan, or traditional mountain hot springs. She also drove us deep into the Numata mountains to visit Kashozan Ryugein Mirokuji, founded in 848 and a cultural and political center during the spread of Buddhism in Japan. When the Zen Master Tensatsu passed away Nakamine announced that he was Mahakashyapa's incarnation when he finished



*Top: Official Zuise Ceremony picture Daibonzan Eiheiji's Komyozo. From Lft Nyoze, Kashin and Ejo Kwong (17)*

*Below: Last days ending our journey at Shogakuzi, Tokyo. From left, Yuko Wakayama-roshi, Anju-sama, Kashin, Nyoze and Ejo.*

*Bottom: Morning Samu (work practice): weeding Rinsoin's Ancestral Supas with Kumi Suzuki and Nyoze. Preparing for Spring Higan (families express gratitude to their ancestors).*



his work. He then ascended to the heavens from Kashyapa Mountain and left behind a long-red nosed Tengu mask. Folklore says the power of the Tengu mask brings boundless merit and great fortune.

We went straight from Tokuganji to Daihonzan Sojiji monastery, where I was to do my second Zuise ceremony. Upon arrival, I met Rev. Shogen Geppert, director of the International Department at Sojiji, and felt an immediate kinship with him because he is originally from Germany, and I am from Denmark. He has lived in Japan for many years and is the abbot of his temple. I was impressed by his fluent Japanese and English, with which he guided me patiently through all the practice I needed for the next day's Zuise. This time, I was terrified to discover that I would be all by myself, with no one else to rely on. It's unusual to be the only one doing Zuise, with so many candidates around the world. Still anxious, I borrowed an extra lotus-shaped scepter to practice late into the evening by myself, worried about how to gracefully put on and take off the red slippers, fold the zagu (bowing cloth) while holding the large scepter straight, do full prostrations and remember every detail of the sequence for the next day's formal morning service, while everybody watched.

With hardly any sleep and a cold developing, it was time for zazen at the outer deck of the Sodo (Zazen Hall). Then Rev. Geppert escorted me to the Daisodo (Great Hall of the Founders) to start the Zuise ceremony. I felt very small standing at the thousand-tatami Great Hall, facing Keizan Jokin Zenji's mausoleum, with all the ancestors behind the main altar and hundreds of monks, high-ranking teachers, and guests, including Nyoze and Ejo—small and completely unworthy. But somehow I and my good friend nervousness managed it together. Don't think, just bow. Being in the form really saved me.

Before walking up the steps to Keizan's mausoleum, behind the main altar, one has to bow to the roshi who maintains the mausoleum and ask for permission to enter. I had to walk sideways in gassho the whole time. Usually one avoids turning one's back to the altar out of respect, but as I climbed, it was as if my back was now my front, so I was acutely aware of each step as I approached the high altar with unknowing mind. At the top, facing the mausoleum, I couldn't see anything. There was nothing to see! A half curtain covered the relics and statues of Keizan Zenji and the ancestors before and after him. Respectfully, I did my full prostrations in the prescribed manner before descending in the same strict form to the steps opposite the main altar. I was then led to the guest receiving hall in the abbot's living quarters to receive my Zuise certificate and have the ceremonial tea and visit with the director of Sojiji. Before I knew it, the time had come for the official photo.

While Ejo, Nyoze, and I had our celebratory breakfast, Jitsugen Yamato came with gifts. His wife Koyu, is an



*Official picture taken at Daihonzan Sojiji wearing the red kesa with Zuise certificate and holding the lotus scepter.*

officer for Sotoshu International North America, and he attended his first sesshin at SMZC in 2022. He has been training at Daihonzan Sojiji now for 3 years. Jitsugen was kind enough to show us around Sojiji for more than two hours. I think we saw everything!

We spent our last few days in Tokyo, just in time for cherry blossom viewing along the Sumida River. We stayed in the Asakusa district, known for Sensoji, the oldest temple in Tokyo, and home to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. On an impulse, Ejo had contacted Momoyo the day before, and she took the train from Rinsoin to spend the day with us. We met at the famous Hachiko dog statue in Shibuya.

Next, we visited the Daianji family temple of Rev. Shogen Hisamatsu. He had been sent by Sotoshu to practice for a few weeks at SMZC in 2022, and returned for Nyoze's Shinsanshiki. Shogen's mother served us matcha and yokan sweets, and we briefly met his father. Shogen then took us to Chokokuji, a sub-branch temple of Eiheiji, which has an immense wooden Kannon Bosatsu approximately 30 feet high, with hardly any ornamentation.

Our last two days were spent at Shogakuji, the temple of Yuko Wakayama-roshi and Senshu Yamada-roshi in the heart of Tokyo. Wakayama-roshi was one of my teachers at Aichi Senmon Nisodo, and she has given several guest lectures for us on Denkoroku (Transmission of Light) by Zoom. They were having a Sunday zazenai with three hours of zazen, after which Nyoze spoke about the history and practice at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Rev. Hojun Szpunar from Polan, who has been living in Japan for many years, translated. The next morning, we took a quick, spontaneous trip to Tokyo Tower before heading to Narita Airport for the flight home.

As I reflect on my Zuise, I realize what an amazing honor it was to take such a rare journey. It is still working within me, and I realize that I must step forward under my own authority, no matter how overwhelming it may seem, profoundly trusting the intimate part of myself that wants to do it. Discomfort is needed to help me grow. Nothing is outside; believe in the spirit of just doing and keep trying. ♦

# From Your Board Of Trustees July to September 2025

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On Saturday, April 26, the board met in the Sangha House for the second quarterly meeting of 2025.

Kwong-roshi opened the meeting by expressing his excitement with progress toward building the new Sanmon mountain gate, and Kashin receiving Dharma transmission in Japan.

Abbot Nyoze Kwong (Hojo-san) reported robust participation in our practice programs. The Saturday Community programs are often full, and sesshins have been well attended. He perceives a strong energy in practice at Genjoji and asks for patience from everyone, given the demands of his administrative responsibilities, along with leading practice. He also reported on new residents who have arrived, including Carol Seizen Adams, who has returned full-time. Finally, Hojo-san expressed gratitude for having been able to accompany Kashin on her two-week pilgrimage to fulfill Zuise and receive transmission in Japan. (See article on pg. 12)

Kashin also expressed gratitude for the privilege of being at Eiheiji and Sojiji temples, and the demanding rituals that brought her transmission to be authorized by Sotoshu. She noted the overwhelming support from Zen ancestors and everyone, especially Roshi and Hojo-san, and what a joy it was to have her son Ejo accompany her back to Japan as a young man.

## Sonoma Mandala Summer Update

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by Michell Hoden Katzel and Cam Shunryu Kwong

We reached a key milestone in April with the issuance of the building permit for Mountain Gate (Sanmon), nearly a year and a half after submitting our application to Sonoma County. We are now focused on preparing for construction. Architect Shizue Seo of Irongrain is finalizing the design for the roof, floor, and steps leading from the parking area to the Mountain Gate. After months of considering options for the roofing material (corrugated tin, metal shingles, clay tile), we settled on a traditional temple-style tile. About 1,300 tiles will be custom-made in Japan, and the tile contractor will come to Genjo-ji this winter to install them.

Huffman Engineering & Surveying was recently on site to survey the exact position of the gate, to be oriented directly in front of the future Buddha Hall. Additional survey work will be performed to guide the grading and pouring of the concrete foundation. Then Berger Concrete will pour the concrete foundation and steps in early fall.

Contractor Lucas Benjamin of Heritage Woodworking has been drying the cedar lumber for the gate at his workshop in Richmond and a local kiln. When that is complete, Lucas will plane, dimension, and prepare the wood at his shop over the next few months. We anticipate that

Much of our energy is currently focused on completing the Sanmon gate. Purchased wood has been curing at builder Benjamin Lucas's shop in Richmond. Building permits have been approved by the county, and we are moving forward with engineering decisions for the concrete and roofing. Great thanks to Mitchell Hoden Katzel for all his work on this project. Construction is targeted to begin in October with pouring concrete and conclude by next spring.

The Zen Center's financial condition remains steady. We will be deciding soon on timing for our next fundraising outreach in support of the operating fund, and the broader effort of the Mandala Project.

The board meets quarterly in the Sangha House, and all Sangha members are welcome to attend. Our next meeting is on July 12 at 1:30 p.m.

As always, on behalf of the entire board, we want to express our gratitude for the privilege of serving the sangha, which supports all practice on the mountain. ♦

*With Three Bows,*

Tensan Chuck Ramey, President  
Lizbeth Myoko Hamlin, Secretary

he will begin construction on site in the fall, for completion around the beginning of 2026. Plans are being made to offer Sangha workshops to assist with the Mountain Gate floor and celebrate key construction events as we move forward. Stay tuned for more information as we firm up construction dates this summer.

Our architect, Chris Dorman of Dorman Associates, submitted documents for the Sangha House Remodel last month and is currently working on addressing comments by the County Permit Resource Management Department (PRMD). With Shunryu, Dorman Associates has started contacting potential contractors for construction estimates. They would prefer to find a local contractor who can handle this four-to six-month job in the fall. Please contact the Zen Center office if you have any contractor leads. The Sangha House Remodel is scheduled for completion next spring.

When the remodel is complete, the library and Zen Dust Store will move back to the Sangha House. After construction of the Wisteria House (Community Building), the Sangha House will become senior student housing, and the library and Zen Dust Store will move there. ♦

# Honoring Myoho Buckendahl “Subtle Dharma”



Top: Myoho ringing Zendo densho – 1998

Middle: In Zen Dust Store – 2021

Bottom: During samu work circle with Shunryu  
and Nyoze Kwong

With deep sorrow, we share the news of the passing of our beloved Dharma sister, Janet Myoho Buckendahl. On the morning of June 26, at the age of 91, Myoho died peacefully at a private senior care home in Petaluma, California, surrounded by her family, following complications from surgery for intestinal issues.

Janet was a pillar of our Sangha. For many years, she lovingly managed the Zen Dust store, attending to every detail with care. A gifted seamstress, she created countless meditation cushions, sitting robes, oryoki cloths, and utensil holders—quietly offering her work in service to the practice of others. Her steadfast dedication, humility, and quiet presence embodied the spirit of true practice and inspired all who practiced alongside her.

On the very morning of her passing, her daughter, Carol Seizen Adams, offered her first Dharma talk at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. In her heartfelt talk, Seizen shared reflections on her mother’s profound strength, deep spirit, and the subtle teachings she offered simply through the way she lived. The following words, drawn from an email Seizen sent to Kwong-roshi, were included in her talk.

*“Dear Roshi,*

*She is surrounded and supported with loving care by family, and despite her body beginning to shut down, I have never seen her spirit glowing so gently and brightly.*

*I am now sitting here in my room with my heart overcome and overflowing with emotion, flowing out like a waterfall...not for the sake of my own sadness, tho I am sad...but for the sake of my heart overflowing with a tender kind of happiness for her great gentleness. A gift of transformation to behold. Her courage and inner strength inspire me to immeasurable depths! Right before my eyes, I am receiving the direct experience of how to die with dignity...by seeing the reflection of great courage, peace, and dignity reflecting back at me from eyes glowing deep and wise. What I am witnessing in Myoho...this blooming of great dignity, this great surrender, this great courage...this to me is the living expression of Zen practice...or the embodiment of actualized Zen.*

*Will keep you posted as we learn more about Myoho’s condition. Thank you again for the prayers.”*

In keeping with her simple and humble way of living, Myoho has requested that no memorial service be held for her. ♦

# Zen Dust News

by Carol Seizen Adams

As summer's warmth wraps us in its soothing embrace, and the long, light-filled days encourage creative endeavors, Zen Dust continues to offer sewing workshops for its team. We have been meeting periodically to learn oryoki cloth sewing techniques and eventually will move on to learning how to sew zafus and zabutons. The sewing team will also be bringing new life to worn zafus and zabutons through mending and repair.

We continue to cover all your meditation needs with Zen-made items such as zabutons, zafus, jubons, support cushions, and more. Please come visit Zen Dust during Saturday Community practice. Store hours are Saturdays from noon to 1:15 p.m.

For orders or questions, email [zendust@smzc.org](mailto:zendust@smzc.org), or call (707) 545-8105. ♦

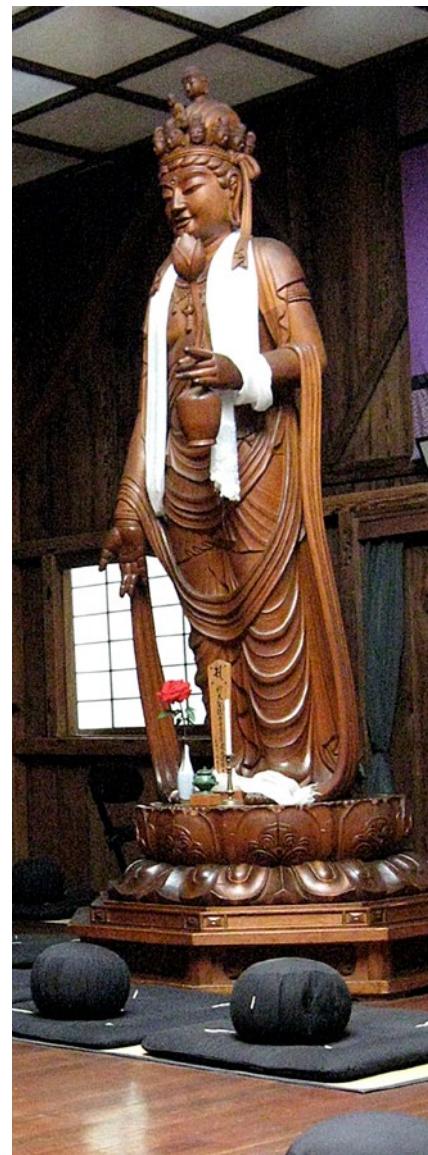
## The Zen Dust Team:

Janet Myoho Buckendahl (sewing)  
Carol Seizen Adams (admin and sewing)  
Lin Naylor (store steward)  
Lori Zarr (sewing)  
Alex Thomas (sewing)  
Pat Preston (sewing)



When you don't understand,  
you depend on reality.  
When you do understand,  
reality depends on you.

— BODHIDHARMA



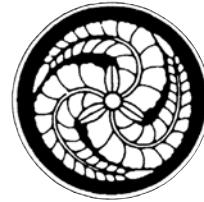
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Help Maintain  
the Buddhadharma!

## DONATE ONLINE [SMZC.ORG](http://SMZC.ORG)

In order to continue to offer our programs and ensure the future of SMZC, we are asking for your support. Your donation is tax deductible. Sonoma Mountain Zen Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Tax ID #23-7304793

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We invite you to become a member of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Our purpose is to offer Soto Zen meditation practice and its basic teachings to people of all religious faiths. The practice of meditation allows us to see beyond our one-sided perception of ourselves and the world so that we are able to participate in society with clarity and peace. We are a lay residential practice center and a non-profit organization relying on membership dues, guest practice programs, Zen programs, and contributions to sustain our operating cost. *Call or visit soon to join us in actualizing the Dharma!*

## ONLINE RESOURCES ~ Dharma Talks & Events

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**SMZC's website** conveys the essence of our practice to others and invites their participation at the Zen Center. It is found at [www.smzc.org](http://www.smzc.org).

A selection of Dharma Talks by Jakusho Kwong-roshi and more are available online in video, audio, and podcast formats.

Roshi's **Vimeo** channel offers several of Roshi's and Shinko's Dharma talks plus other notable events from SMZC. Please check it out! Just go to [www.vimeo.com/smzc](http://www.vimeo.com/smzc).

Talks by Kwong-roshi and senior students are now available on the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center **YouTube** channel (search by **@sonoma-mountainzencenter**). Talks will be posted one month after the live talk.

## CONTACT US

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## Newsletter Subscriptions

This newsletter is available to all members of the SMZC sangha. If you are not a member of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center and would like to receive the newsletter, the cost for a one-year subscription is \$25. Please call the office to request a subscription, or visit online at [www.smzc.org](http://www.smzc.org) and donate via PayPal. When subscribing via PayPal, once you have made your donation, please email us your receipt and include your newsletter format preference (print or electronic), and your contact information. If your subscription is due to expire, please renew. We also welcome submissions of poetry, prose, and art relating to the Zen experience.



## SONOMA MOUNTAIN ZEN CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

“For the Beneficial Protection  
and Awakening of All Beings”



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