



OCTOBER–DECEMBER 2021

## SUMMER ANGO LECTURE

*This Saturday Community lecture was given by shuso Kevin Shindo Souza on August 7, 2021, during Summer Ango at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center.*

I'd like to dedicate this talk to the victims of the Dixie Fire in Northern California. It's now the third-largest wildfire in California history at 432,000 acres. Its presence was felt here yesterday as smoke filled the air. More than 7,000 people have been evacuated from their homes in Plumas County.

I'm going to now read the Kannon Sutra for Prolonging Life and dedicate its merits to everyone affected.

*Kanzeon, at one with Buddha,  
Related to all Buddhas in cause and effect.  
And to Buddha Dharma and Sangha.  
Joyful, pure, eternal being.  
Morning mind is Kanzeon, evening mind is Kanzeon.  
This very moment arises from mind,  
This very moment not separate from mind.*

That was the English translation of the Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo.

My name is Kevin Shindo Souza. First I'd like to thank my teacher Kwong-roshi for giving me the opportunity to give this talk today, and to fulfill the role of shuso for this summer's Ango. We just finished our first week, and it's been a great opportunity to realign and to renew our practice. So we do this by dedicating extra time to zazen and studying the Dharma wholeheartedly. We emphasize that no

matter where we are, online or here on the mountain, that we all are practicing the way together, as one body and one mind. To quote from Roshi's book, "Every year our Zen center offers a special practice period known as Ango, which means peaceful dwelling. This refers to a peace within each person that is so pervasive and deep that it's inconceivable. Ango is part of the annual training cycle traditional at Zen temples and communities. At our temple we offer Ango during the summer and winter sessions where we follow a very rigorous schedule. During this time we're up at 4:30 am before dawn and spend the entire day in practice either bowing or sitting; working, studying, or eating in a formal style and then go to bed after the pillow bell. When you're on this kind of schedule something happens to you. Something substantial and important. You stop thinking about the hours of the day as your time and you surrender to the relentlessness of the schedule."

It's been an incredible first week, first practicing here with everybody and online. Thank you for joining in the mornings and the evenings. Today we know you're here with us and we certainly can feel your presence, so thank you. I'd like to share a few of my experiences in the first week of being shuso. I start each day waking up at 3:45, and at 4:30 each morning one of my duties is to wake up everyone by ringing a bell that sits on the back side of the altar in the zendo. Throughout the temple grounds, emphasizing all the power points of the mandala—Suzuki-roshi's altar, Roshi's dokusan room, the red sign at the entrance facing Sonoma Mountain, facing the altar and the sangha house, the altar in the kitchen, both entries of the bath house, the workshop, the bonshō, and then in between—constant ringing, past all

*continues next page*

the cabins. The purpose of course is to wake everybody up, but the actual experience is really very deep. We're actually waking the entire universe out of delusion. When we do this, it's a very moving and primordial experience. It was something in the beginning that I didn't quite grasp until recently. It was just a struggle to get here in the morning and complete it, but now it's really starting to resonate with me. It's taken a few days to settle into this role, as there were a lot of new tasks and responsibilities that I've had to take on, and at the same time trying to relearn a lot of the forms and tasks that I knew but forgot for not being here for over a year and a half because of the pandemic. Oftentimes I was the one who was supposed to be setting the example and leading the way, but was often looking to others for help. But like I said in the Opening Ceremony, with the Great Assembly's help, I'll do my very best to fulfill this role with dignity and compassion. And the Great Assembly has certainly been helping. Thank you.

For me, offering incense in the first couple days for some reason was challenging. I couldn't seem to get the incense to stand straight up. I would make my bows and approach the altar and offer the incense, and look at it and say to myself, "That looks good," and then come back, finish my bows, go back to my seat, and from my seat I have a perfect view of the of the altar and the incense—and Roshi does too—and oftentimes I'd look at it, and it would be just leaning on a 45-degree angle. It was definitely symbolic of where my mind was in those first couple of days!

**Kwong-roshi:** "Otogawa-roshi's teacher's last words were that when you put the incense in, you have to put it straight. So what I learned is that you do it with your belly, you don't do it with your mind. Usually when people offer incense, they jam it into the ashes, and it's about that deep [gestures]. You don't have to jam it in. The ashes have a life of their own, even though they're dead. And you have a life of your own, and you just rest it there from the belly, and it stands up straight."

Thank you. I will try that next time. The instructions were pretty simple—right in the middle, and stand it straight up—but I appreciate that. Thank you, Roshi.

Also, eating meals oryoki style has been an incredibly moving experience. We ate oryoki this morning for the first time in the zendo for a while, and it was really nice. For those who aren't familiar, oryoki is a ceremonial practice of serving and eating meals here at the Zen center. It's been the practice in Zen temples since the Tang dynasty in China. The initial o in oryoki means the receiver's response to the offering of food, ryo means the amount or quality, and ki means the container, the bowl that contains the appropriate amount, or just enough. During oryoki we eat our meals in meditation, receiving in our bowls the food that's offered to us by the servers, bowing and chanting together in gratitude with everyone. And then when everyone has finished eating,

Otogawa-roshi's teacher's last words were that when you put the incense in, you have to put it straight. So what I learned is that you do it with your belly, you don't do it with your mind. Usually when people offer incense, they jam it into the ashes, and it's about that deep [gestures]. You don't have to jam it in. The ashes have a life of their own, even though they're dead. And you have a life of your own, and you just rest it there from the belly, and it stands up straight

—KWONG-ROSHI

we clean, reassemble, and rewrap our bowls at our seats.

As shuso, one of my daily tasks is to clean the toilets every day. Every toilet on the property, it's my job to clean them, and I just find this such a humbling experience. It was the perfect congratulations: "You're shuso, now clean the toilets!" It's absolutely perfect, and exactly my style. I found that to be a very humbling experience, and still do.

Just one last thing before I get into the theme. I just want to share my appreciation, a new appreciation, for Ango itself. I usually try to get up here during Ango practice period at least for a talk or a weekend, but I haven't spent much more than that. It's usually spent at home with extra sitting, remotely and trying to get up whenever I can, which is absolutely fine. I just haven't had a chance to experience the schedule like this, so I highly recommend, for those at home that are close by, to come up and join us for zazen if you can, out in the gaitan or for sesshin. The only thing we ask is that you're fully vaccinated and that you email the office before coming up, but we would love to see more people come up and join us for zazen and sesshin. I'd also like to thank everybody who has taken the time to have conversations with me this week about their practice through Zoom and over the phone. It's been a great time to catch up and see how everybody's doing, and check in on their practice and their commitment forms—so thank you for sending in your forms, and we look forward to seeing a few more.

So the theme for this summer's Ango is as follows:

Su Dongpo, a Song poet, was awakened by the sounds of the stream and Lushan one night after having heard his Zen teacher Chang-tsung expound the Discourse of Insentient Beings on the Dharma. He immediately composed the following poem:

*The sounds of the valley streams are his long broad tongue.  
The sights of the mountains are his pure body.  
Eighty-four thousand verses are heard throughout the night.  
How can I relate to others what they say?*

Su Dongpo had just heard his teacher give a discourse on the Dharma of Insentient Beings, and while walking home he's awakened by the sounds of the stream. Eighty-four thousand verses are heard throughout the night. He has a realization hearing the sound of the stream and then asks, How will I be able to tell others what they say? What he just experienced, how does one transmit the Dharma? Have you ever had an experience in your life when something



extraordinary happened to you while you were just going about your day? It could be the way the breeze hits you, the way the moon looks, the way a bird lands in front of you. You realize for a split second that you are part of something bigger than you can even fathom, and then try to explain that to one of your friends. Now picture that times 84,000. That's what I think of when I think of this poem, and what Su Dongpo is experiencing. The eighty-four thousand verses of Buddha, they're alive today; they're not words in a book written thousands of years ago about something that happened in 400 BC. They are living and breathing with us, today, right here, right now, on Sonoma Mountain. The Mountains and Rivers Sutra is not a sutra about mountains and rivers. It's the mountains and rivers sutra: The mountains are the sutras and the rivers are the sutras.

What Dōgen is saying here is, Forget the sutras and open up to the mountains and the rivers. But Dōgen wrote something about this poem before he wrote the Mountains and Rivers Sutra. He wrote on the night that Su Dongpo was enlightened, he had just heard his teacher teaching about insentient beings preaching the Dharma—roof tiles, windows, walls, the floor, all preaching the Dharma. His teacher's words did not instantly awaken him, but when the sound of the stream hit him, it was as if the rolling waves had passed through the air and enlightened him. Was it the sound of the stream, or his master's words that floated to his ears? I would suppose that his master's teaching on insentient beings quietly echoed with the sound of the stream at night. Su Dongpo's teacher's words and the sound of the stream mixed together, and the whole thing became the Buddha's tongue. Dōgen thought very highly of this poem, so highly that he wrote an essay called "Sound of the Stream, Form of the Mountain," which is the 25th book of the *Shōbōgenzō*, Keisei Sanshoku.





In it he writes:

What a pity that so many times we seem to have missed the teaching method of ‘manifesting a body to preach the Dharma.’ How does he further see the form of the mountain and hear the sound of the stream? Is it one phrase? Is it half a phrase? Is it eighty-four thousand verses? We should regret that there are sounds and forms hidden in the mountains and waters; we should also rejoice that there are cases of time when sounds and forms appear in the mountains and waters. The mark of the tongue does not weary. How could the form of the body persist and expire? Nevertheless, should we learn that when they appear they are close, or should we learn that when they are hidden they are close? Are they one piece? Are they half a piece? For the preceding springs and autumns, he had not seen or heard the mountains and waters; on the occasion of “this evening,” he sees and hears a little of the mountains and waters. Bodhisattvas who study the way today should also open the gate that enters the study from the “mountain flows; the water does not flow.”

On the day before the evening when this layman awakened to the way, he had asked the Chan Master Zhong about the saying, “insentient beings preaching the dharma.” Though, under the words of the master, he did not yet exhibit the behavior of flipping the body (i.e., awakening) when he heard the sound of the stream, the waves of the water reversing struck the heavens on high. Therefore, when the sound of the stream startled the layman, should we take it as the sound of the stream,

or should we take it as the pouring forth of Chang-tsung? What I wonder is whether Chang-tsung’s words on ‘insentient beings preach the Dharma’ may still be echoing, secretly mixed into the even voice of the valley stream. Who could confirm this as one shō (measurement of two quarts) or ‘gather the currents’ as one ocean? Ultimately speaking, did the layman awaken to the way, or did the mountains and water awaken to the way? Who with clear eyes would not sharply fix their eye on the mark of ‘the long tongue and the immaculate body’?

The Chan Master Changsha Jingcen was asked by a monk, “How does one turn the mountains, rivers, and earth back to the self?” The master said, “How does one turn the self back to the mountains, rivers, and earth?” This saying means that the self is naturally the self, that while “the Self” may be “the mountains, rivers, and earth,” it should not be restricted by “returning.”

We should realize that, were it not for the mountain form and stream sound, “holding up a flower” [as the Buddha did on Vulture Peak] would not expound [the dharma]; “getting the marrow” would not “take its place” as Huike did in response to Bodhidharma. Because of the virtues of the stream sound and mountain form, “the earth and sentient beings simultaneously achieve the way” [as it is said of the Buddha’s awakening], and there are buddhas who see the bright star and awaken to the way as the Buddha did under the Bodhi tree. Skin bags such as these are the prior wise men whose resolve to seek the Dharma was extremely deep. Their traces, people of today should study without

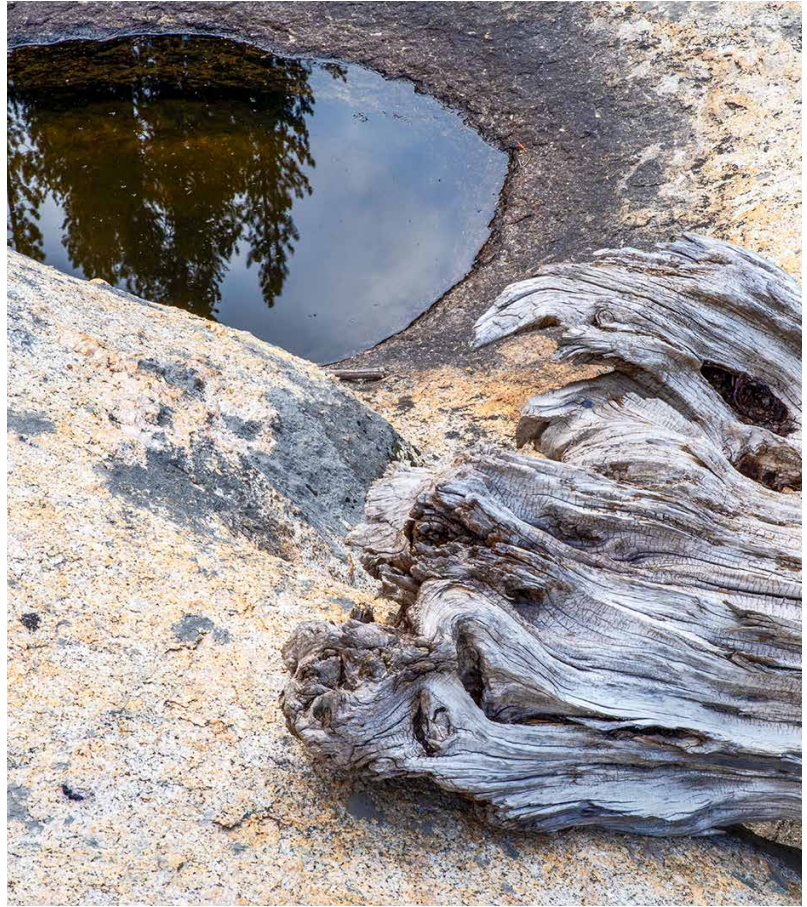
fail. Even today, the true study that has nothing to do with fame or profit should establish such resolve.

When one repents in this way, one will invariably have the unseen aid of the buddhas and ancestors. We should expose and announce to the Buddha the thoughts of our minds and the conduct of our bodies: the power of exposure causes the roots of our offenses to be destroyed. This is right practice of a single color; it is the mind of right faith; it is the body of right faith. When we have right practice, “the sound of the stream” and the form of the stream, “the form of the mountain” and the sound of the mountain — none begrudge the “eighty-four thousand verses.” When the self does not begrudge the body and mind of fame and profit, the stream and mountain are also ungrudging in this way. “This evening” may be one in which the “sound of the stream” and “the form of the mountain” express or do not express the “eighty-four thousand verses”; but, were the stream and the mountain to exhaust their strength without success in “telling them” of the stream and mountain, who would see and hear you as the sound of the stream and form of the mountain?

Shōhaku Okumura states in the final paragraph of the *Sound of the Stream and the Form of the Mountain*:

Dōgen writes when we are truly practicing the sounds and the colors of the valley streams, the colors and the sounds of the mountains, all unbegrudgingly expound their eighty-four thousand verses. This means that the sounds of the valley streams and the color of the mountain do not hide the Dharma, the teaching, the truth, the reality of all beings. The reality is always revealed and nothing is hidden. What’s important is the condition of the person. Are we ready to listen to what the valley stream is really saying to us? Are we ready to see the Buddha’s body through the forms of mountains, through the form of everything?

Thank you. ❖



## Theme for Summer Ango 2021

### Shuso – “Shindo, Mind Ground”

#### Shindo Kevin Souza



The sounds of the valley streams are his long broad tongue.

The sights of the mountains are his pure body.

Eighty-four thousand verses are heard throughout the night.

How can I relate to others what they say?

—Su Tung-p’o (1036-1101)

*Su Tung-p’o (1036-1101), a Sung poet, was awakened by the sounds of the stream in Lu-shan one night after having heard his Zen teacher, Ch’ang-tsung (1025-1091), expound the discourse of insentient beings on the Dharma. He immediately composed the above poem.*



# SANGHA NEWS AND MEMBERSHIP

by Erik Zenjin Shearer

## SANGHA NEWS

SMZC reopened to the public on August 1 with limited programming, including work practice, zazen, and services. This has included a return to regular morning and evening sitting schedules for a limited number of guests on site. Proof of vaccination and registering in advance are required to participate. Mask requirements for indoor activities, including chanting, remain in place for visitors. Reservations can be made online at [smzc.org](http://smzc.org) for each event listed on the calendar.

The response has been robust. Our sangha and community members are eager to return to in-person practice. Many events have been completely booked. Online participation on Zoom, developed during the pandemic, is being integrated into the regular practice going forward. New cameras and audio equipment have been installed in the zendo, allowing members and guests to continue joining us from all over the globe. Summer Ango allowed us to work out the kinks and establish a rhythm for this new format that allows the greater sangha to participate in daily practice at Genjo-ji. We learned a lot about the potential of technology to connect our sangha over the past year and a half. We continue to welcome participation by everyone, either online or on the mountain.

As we return to in-person practice, the Board of Trustees is meeting to re-examine the SMZC strategic plan completed in 2018. Recently we met to review the goals that have guided our work to expand programming, membership, and fundraising, as well as our hosting programs now that our new residence buildings are available for occupancy. All of these activities and the revenue they generate are critical to ensure the stability of SMZC in the decades to come. In the coming months the board will be working to update the plan to incorporate online practice, new staff, and expanded opportunities to provide access to our practice, both physical and virtual. We greatly appreciate the ongoing support of our membership and greater community throughout the past year. Generous donations and volunteer efforts have allowed us to weather a financially difficult period and emerge healthy and ready to offer Zen practice for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Please watch for updates on full reopening, which is currently scheduled for November 1. We

will provide more information on expanded capacity in the zendo and other programming. We are continuing to work with our public health experts to guide our reopening plans, and full reopening may change based on covid case rates over the next few months.

The fall calendar is full of opportunities for practice. Please join us for morning and evening zazen, Saturday Community, Dharma talks from senior students and teachers, Kids Community, the Fall Study Group, the Rohatsu sesshins, special guest teacher talks, one-day sittings, and more. And mark your calendars for December 31, when we will gather for practice to ring in the Year of the Tiger.

## NEW MEMBERS

**Jo Beyler** has been studying Zen Buddhism for quite some time. Some forty years ago she saw a Japanese tea room and wanted to move in, which was about the same time she took a Japanese art history class from a teacher who was living part-time at Daitoku-ji in Kyoto. It took a good bit longer for her interest to mature beyond the visual. She has joined us to deepen her practice and is grateful to become a member of this Sangha. In her words: "My bio is so twentieth century: I married young, started college when my last child was in first grade, and after grad school had an interesting career hanging out in university art museums. I live in Napa, where my daughter is involved in, what else, wine. My son is an architect and is interested in regenerative farming and alternative architecture. I also have grandchildren and great-grandchildren in the area. In those days before we admitted we knew better, my late husband and I drove MGs and toured from coast to coast and beyond our northern and southern borders."

**Keiko Ohnuma** has practiced Zen on and off for twenty years, since following a boyfriend to Suan Mokh in Thailand and fleeing after three days. Although her father's family is Soto Zen, and she learned about the Eightfold Path as a child, most of what she knows about Buddhist teaching was absorbed through her Japanese heritage and more serious Buddhist friends. Keiko worked as a journalist and writer in the Bay Area, Honolulu, and Albuquerque before retiring in Sonoma County with her husband (a former engineer) in 2019. She holds an MFA in Ceramics, enjoys cycling, knitting, cooking, yoga, and has maintained a daily sitting practice since 1998.

**Ilene Wolf:** Hi Dear Sangha! I am the "new girl." My name is Ilene. Thank you for welcoming me into the sangha. I would like to meet you. My root teacher was Trungpa Rinpoche way back when I was 18 years old, in 1978. I was given the name Thubten Kunga, which I strive to embody. It means Transcendent Illuminated All Encompassing Joy. While joy is something I marvel at, it eludes me more than ever, the more I strive for it, and can only be attained in my case if I am willing to give up everything I have come to know and rely on. I have grown up as an idealist, to think I am a certain way. We lose everything we love. But what I do also love, which might be less transitory, are the teachings on emptiness and to accept the laws of impermanence.

*Please join me in welcoming our newest members to the Wisteria Wind Sangha at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center! ❖*

# KIDS' COMMUNITY NEWS

by Mike Genrei Persinger



Kids' Community Day took place on September 25, and was a wonderful return to in-person gathering for parents and children. We began with a short sitting under the big oak tree, then took the long walk to Chogyam Trungpa's and Suzuki-roshi's stupas. After trekking back, we closed the morning with some mindful movement led by Katsuzen and then a short standing meditation.

On December 11 we plan to make mochi! Kashin will host as we mash and pound steamed rice to make little cakes filled with sweet bean paste in an early celebration of the new year. Come and get your hands sticky for some yummy fun!



*Children's Community visiting  
Trungpa Rinpoche's stupa.*



# RESIDENT REPORT

By Susan Gesshin Frey



After a long, long wait, we are finally starting to reopen. In September we had our first Saturday Community day in which anyone (who has been vaccinated) could attend and stay for lunch (outside) afterwards. We are opening to new ways.

## NEW LONG-TERM RESIDENTS

In June we started accepting new long-term residents and guests.

Residents **Alexander Cook** and **Carol Adams** came in June and July. Alex is working with Koten on land and maintenance projects, and Carol is working in the office, where she had previously worked as Office Manager.

In September we welcomed two more year-long residents, **Kristine Bell** and **Ben Ihrig**. Kristine came for Summer Ango sesshin and decided that a year of practice (or more) at SMZC was a good fit for her spiritual journey. She has a 16-year background in yoga practice and is currently pursuing an MA in yoga studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. In the future she may be interested in pursuing their chaplaincy program.

Ben grew up in Washington state, where he is completing a degree in computer science and philosophy. He is taking a (pandemic) year off to practice, having been introduced to Zen through his father. He listened to Kwong-roshi's audio of Breath Sweeps Mind and decided that it was here he could best learn to embody the teachings in his everyday life to help others.

## RECENT GUEST RESIDENTS

**Ethan Grove** is set to arrive this week and is planning to stay for a month. Ethan has a BS degree in biochemistry, and because of his interest in meditation practice and how it may help people, he wants to undertake graduate study in neuroscience as it relates to the meditative experience. He found SMZC online.

SMZC member **Andrew Penners** came to practice here in July and extended his visit to include nearly all of Ango, until his school year resumed. Andrew originally found us online and participated on Zoom. As an interesting side note, a long time ago his father, a dentist, helped the whole Kwong family by providing them dental care at no charge. Andrew is currently studying communications at the Pacific Union College in Angwin, and continues to join us for Zoom practice.

## SUMMER ANGO PRACTICE IN PERSON

This summer's Ango was the start of reopening, with **Kevin Shindo** leading as shuso. It was the first time in two years we had in-person Ango practice. First to join us was new Zen practitioner **Jaclyn (Jack) Dean**, who initially came for four days of Ango practice and then came back for sesshin. Jack lives nearby in Petaluma and has two young children. Jack has traveled extensively abroad and conducts leadership training courses.

**Jitsugen Yamato Mori** joined us for two weeks, including sesshin. Jitsugen is married to the Rev. Koyu Osawa, a Dharma friend of Kashin and Nyoze who works for Soto Shu international in San Francisco. Jitsugen was recently ordained in Japan and wished to attend Ango here as part of his priest training.

SMZC member **Dr. Michael McCulloch** came for the entirety of sesshin. Michael is Research Director for the Pine Street Foundation in San Anselmo, and has been the physician of, and student to, Kwong-roshi for many years. He also provided expert advice to SMZC in navigating through the covid pandemic.

Many types of journeys bring determined people to live and practice here at Genjo-ji. In Suzuki-roshi's commentary on the Sandokai, a text written more than 1200 years ago by our lineage ancestor Sekito Kisen, Suzuki-roshi makes it clear that because everyone is different, that difference is their value; it is absolute value. People are equal in value because they are different, and each "holds their own place."

As we head into fall, we are very, very grateful for the generally mild weather we have had this summer, without frequent fire danger and/or power outages. We sincerely sympathize with the many people and lands affected by the massive fires in many areas of our state this year. ❖



# ZEN CENTER MANDALA ACCOMMODATIONS

by Shunryu Kwong

After much work, the Genjo Building, Ando Quarters, and the Sangha Cabin are ready for your visit!

The Ando Quarters and Genjo Building grew out of a county requirement to bring the existing SMZC cabins up to code on energy, structural, accessibility and safety features. The county required that these residential buildings be built before the zen center could build the new zendo. After careful consideration, it was decided that the most efficient, cost-effective and logistically easy approach would be to replace most of the existing cabins with these two new residential structures.

Nestled beneath oak and madrone trees and a short walk from the zendo, the 1700-square-foot Genjo Building was designed for small groups, but is also great for individual guests. Its bedrooms surround a large, 550-square-foot multipurpose space where its ten guests can gather or relax. The room can also serve as an event or retreat space. The building has radiant floor heating and is insulated to keep out summer heat. Two restrooms, wi-fi access, and wheelchair accessibility complete the upgrades.

Further down the hill is the Ando Quarters, an 1100-square-foot residence with six bedrooms that can accommodate up to two people. Each room opens to the exterior and looks east towards oak trees and the Valley of the Moon. Radiant heat and other design features keep the rooms warm on chilly winter mornings and cool during the summer afternoon heat. The two end units have private restrooms.

Steps away from the sangha house and zendo, the remodeled sangha cabin consists of two rooms measuring 350 square feet that can sleep up to four. The structure's floor, ceiling, and wall framing were preserved from the original, built more than eighty years ago. The lower bedroom looks through a stand of redwoods to the valley below and accesses a small deck. The rooms can be separated by a sliding door, as each room has its own entrance.

Please come participate in our programs in person, and enjoy the accommodations! Call or email the office for room rates and membership discounts. ❖



Above: Front entrance to the Ando Quarters  
Left: Inside the recently renovated Sangha Cabin



## November 6 **Saturday Community Sr. Student Talk:** **Jundo Mike Farrand**

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST

Student talk will be given by Jundo Mike Farrand, senior student of Kwong-roshi and ordained priest, following 10:30 am zazen. Visit the online zendo. BY DONATION (\$10 suggested donation)

## November 9, 2021 Fall Study Group (Week 10 of 12)

September 7 to November 23

Tuesdays 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST

An opportunity to explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and build a foundation for daily practice through discussions on the book "Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness: Zen Talks on the Sandokai" by Shunryu Suzuki-roshi. This 12-week course occurs every Tuesday from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST starting September 7.

A short talk during zazen & Eleventh Talk: We Should Not Stick to Words or Rules (Page 151–160)

\$12/week. Register to attend week ten online or on-site.

## November 10 **Introduction to Zen 4-Week Online** **Week 2 of 4: Buddhist Thought**

Wednesday, November 3, 10 & 17, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST (Online)  
Saturday, November 27, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm PST (On Site)

You will be introduced to Buddhist thought, beginning with Eihei Dogen, the monk who founded the Soto Zen lineage in 1247, Japan. Dogen taught Zen Buddhism as a practical mysticism for everyday life. We will talk about the principles of no self in Mahayana philosophy. You will learn the origins of Buddha's noble truths: life is suffering, all things are impermanent, and liberation is possible for all beings.

This workshop will be taught by Kaian John Jennings and Genzen Ed Cadman.

Register Online (\$20 admission)

## November 12 **"Peacefully Settling Down" One-Day Sitting** **(On-Site and Online)**

Friday, November 12, 7:30 pm to Saturday, November 13, 5:00 pm PST

An introductory retreat for both beginners and experienced sitters to plunge into the heart of Zen practice. Register Online

## November 16 **Fall Study Group (Week 11 of 12)**

September 7 to November 23

Tuesdays 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST

An opportunity to explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and build a foundation for daily practice through discussions on the book "Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness: Zen Talks on the Sandokai" by Shunryu Suzuki-roshi. This 12-week course occurs every Tuesday from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST starting September 7.

Twelfth Talk: Do Not Pass Your Days and Nights in Vain (Page 161–175)

\$12/week. Register to attend week eleven online or on-site.

## November 17 **Introduction to Zen 4-Week Course Online** **Week 3 of 4: SMZC Lineage and History**

Wednesday, November 3, 10 & 17, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST (Online)

Saturday, November 27, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm PST (On Site)

Learn about our lineage, the silent illumination lineage. The teachings

of Buddha are transmitted from the mind to mind of teacher to student. SMZC practices as the 92nd generation of its lineage which stretches all the way back to Shakyamuni Buddha. Discover key teachers in the lineage of Zen as it moves over the centuries from India to China to Japan, and to San Francisco in the 1960s. You will learn about the founder of SMZC, Jakusho Kwong-roshi, our abbot and leader of practice for nearly 50 years.

This workshop will be taught by Nyoze Kwong and Tensan Chuck Ramey. Register Online (\$20 admission)

## November 20 **Saturday Community Sr. Student Talk:** **Genzen Ed Cadman**

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST

Student talk will be given by Genzen Ed Cadman, senior student of Kwong-roshi and ordained priest, following 10:30 am zazen. Visit the online zendo. BY DONATION (\$10 suggested donation)

## November 23 **Fall Study Group (Week 12 of 12)**

September 7 to November 23

Tuesdays 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST

An opportunity to explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and build a foundation for daily practice through discussions on the book "Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness: Zen Talks on the Sandokai" by Shunryu Suzuki-roshi. This 12-week course occurs every Tuesday from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST starting September 7.

Talk given to a visiting class: We Are Just a Tiny Speck of Big Being & The Sandokai, compiled translation by Suzuki Roshi (Page 177–191)

\$12/week. Register to attend week eleven online or on-site.

## November 27 **Saturday Community Student Talk: TBD**

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST

Student talk will be given by TBD.

## November 27 **Introduction to Zen 4-Week Course** **Week 4 of 4: SMZC Tour/Visit**

Wednesday, November 3, 10 & 17, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST (Online)  
Saturday, November 27, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm PST (On Site)

Come visit the grounds at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Using the





guidelines for social distancing, our group will walk through the sacred land of the mountain. Our temple sits in 85 acres of redwoods and oaks overlooking the Valley of the Moon. We will walk in the woods to the memorial grounds and stupas for teachers Shunryu Suzuki-roshi and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Enjoy guided tours of the hundred-year-old barn which has been our original meditation hall and see our new temple currently in construction.

This workshop will be taught by Nyoze Kwong and Kashin Kwong. Register Online (\$20 admission)

## **November 29 Rohatsu Five-Day Sesshin (On-Site and Online)**

November 29, 7:30 pm to December 4, 4:00 am PST

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 in order to resume our original nature. This sesshin is a special time of practice that will allow us to dive into the core of Zen training. A silent meditation intensive for experienced sitters to still the mind from moment to moment manifesting the realization of the Way.

Each day, the schedule begins at 5:00 am and includes 10 periods of meditation, chanting, mindful work at home, and private interviews with teachers upon request and ends at 9:00 pm. The retreat begins at 7:30 pm. Monday and ends at 4:00 a.m. Saturday. You are welcome to attend partially if you cannot attend the entire retreat due to work commitments. In the spirit of Buddha’s enlightenment, on Friday night we will be in tetsuya, which means we will “sit through the whole night,” from 12:00 am to 4:00 am. Register Online

## **December 4 Online Tetsuya (All Night Sitting) & Founder's Sunrise Ceremony**

12:00 am to 4:00 am PST Tetsuya (On-Site and Online)  
6:30 am to 7:00 am PST Ceremony (On-Site Only)

Settle in on an all-night sitting to commemorate Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment on December 8th and Shunryu Suzuki-roshi’s Parinirvana on December 4th, 1971. We sit continuously from midnight to 4 a.m. ending with atonement vow. At 6 a.m. we gather together for a memorial procession to Suzuki-roshi’s stupa where we chant, express our gratitude, and watch the sunrise through the trees.

Online registration to come...

## **December 11 Saturday Community Dharma Talk: Jakusho Kwong-Roshi**

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST

Dharma talk will be given by Jakusho Kwong-roshi, founding abbot of SMZC, following 10:30 am zazen. Visit the online zendo. BY DONATION (\$10 suggested donation)

## **December 11 Kids Community: Make Mochi!**

10:30 am to 12:30 pm

We will mash and pound steamed rice and make little cakes with sweet bean paste inside for an early celebration of the New Year. Come and get your hands sticky for some yummy fun! Register Online

## **December 16 SMZC Closed for Winter Break**

December 16 to 30

SMZC is closed from December 16 to December 30 both on site and online.

## **December 31 Ringing in the New Year: Welcoming 2022**



## **Year of the Tiger**

10:30 pm to 1:00 am PST

A wonderful chance to get together and renew our commitment to practice for the New Year. Join the community for traditional, informal noodles in the sangha house. After a short zazen to close the year, at exactly midnight, everyone will get a chance will ring SMZC’s great bell 108 times to welcome the New Year of the Tiger. Bring a small piece of paper inscribed with any Karmic hindrances you wish to burn away during the ceremony. Refreshments offered following the ceremony. Register Online (\$20 admission)



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

**Evening Zazen : Tuesday – Friday 7:30 – 9:00 pm**

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

# SHUSO INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN SHINDO SOUZA

by Brion Butsuden Baer



*Shuso Shindo Souza and Kwong-roshi at close of Ango practice period.*

*Thank you so much for guiding SMZC through summer Ango. Did this experience give you a different perspective on practice, or anything else?*

It definitely gave me a different perspective on practice. Roshi says, “When you enter a practice place, the schedule is your first teacher.” I feel that following the Ango schedule every day shifts your practice, sometimes without you even being aware that a shift is occurring. I feel the shift more as I am transitioning back into my normal day-to-day schedule with work and family. There is more of a pull for me to sit more each day and study more in my down time. Practice period is a great chance for us to realign and re-energize our practice. I’m starting to feel those effects a little more now that it is over. It felt like a tuneup for all aspects of practice: zazen, kinhin, zendo forms, chanting, bowing, eating oryoki, etc.

*What were the biggest challenges?*

I think for me the biggest challenge was the amount of talks that I was asked to give. The talks do not come easy for me, and they take a lot of time to prepare. Public speaking is not something I am very comfortable with, and speaking about the Dharma can be extra challenging. It is something I continue to work and practice with. Another challenge was relearning the forms. It had been over a year and half since I had been to SMZC, and it took me a couple of days to relearn the forms. This was challenging

because I knew I was supposed to be leading by example, but often I found myself looking around the room for guidance. When I was faced with these situations, I reflected back on my opening talk, when I stated, “With the Great Assembly’s help, I promise to fulfill this role with dignity and compassion.” I feel the Great Assembly definitely helped me through these times.

*Were there any surprises?*

On the second day of sesshin, after breakfast, I was walking down the path toward the cabins and was attacked by yellowjackets. They chased me down the hill and into my room. I ended up with quite a few bites and stings, and was pretty shook up by the whole thing. That was definitely surprising and unexpected! The weather also presented challenges. We had days as hot as almost 100 degrees and others as cold as the high 40s, each week it seemed. This passage from Roshi’s book speaks to how to deal with these situations: “Some monk said to a Zen master, ‘It is very hot. How is it possible to sit somewhere where there is no hot or no cold weather?’” This is just like our lives. How can we avoid difficulty? How can we always have a good day? This koan is more than a thousand years old, and yet it is so relevant and familiar. It is our everyday question: How can we avoid being too hot or too cold? “The master answered, ‘When it is hot you should be hot Buddha. When it is cold you should be cold Buddha.’”



I knew that filling the position of shuso would mean having to give talks, following a strict schedule with multiple daily sits, and leading by example. I had to change the way I was living in order to meet these expectations. I started sitting more online with the sangha, studying, and giving more attention to diet and exercise. Zazen is a physical practice, and it is important to take care of your body to be able to meet the demands of the schedule.

*You spoke about the experience of receiving the invitation to serve as shuso, and how it quickly inspired you to commit yourself to practice more deeply. Could you talk about that?*

When I received the invitation in February, my practice consisted of sitting once daily and not a whole lot of studying. I also was not in the best shape of my life. I knew that filling the position of shuso would mean having to give talks, following a strict schedule with multiple daily sits, and leading by example. I had to change the way I was living in order to meet these expectations. I started sitting more online with the sangha, studying, and giving more attention to diet and exercise. Zazen is a physical practice, and it is important to take care of your body to be able to meet the demands of the schedule. I was also practicing yoga five or six days a week to help open up my hips and other areas where I was tight. I lost about forty pounds in that six-month period. I was also asked to sit Tangaryo before the start of Ango. This was a really incredible and profound experience. It created a shift in my zazen. I started to practice more shikantaza (just sitting) as opposed to the breath-counting technique I was practicing before. It feels more natural and less forced to me. I was also able to adjust my posture and really settle in. When you sit long periods of zazen like that, 90 minutes, 2½, and four hours, it forces you to fix your posture. You simply cannot sit long periods of zazen with bad posture.

*I loved the theme you chose for this Ango, by the 11th-century Chinese poet Su Tung-po. Can you talk about the theme and how you decided on this particular writing?*

As part of my preparations for shuso, I decided that I would like to learn more about the Mountains and Waters Sutra by Dogen. I found it one of Dogen's most beautiful pieces of work, and understood that I knew very little about it. While studying it, I came across the poem by Su Tung-po, and learned that the poem was a point of inspiration for Dogen to write Mountains and Waters. I think what really spoke to me at first was the last line: "How can I relate to others what they say?" As I mentioned earlier, I find speaking about the Dharma to be challenging at times, and thought this would be a great poem to practice with. It ended up being really incredible to work with, as it led me down many different paths during Ango.

*How did your interaction with Kwong-roshi go during the month? Did he give you much instruction or direction regarding your role as shuso?*

My interactions with Roshi during Ango were really amazing. I met with him once a month for six months leading up to the opening ceremony, and once a week while I was there. Roshi really helped take the pressure off by having complete confidence in me the whole time. He would give me words of encouragement and make suggestions on what I should be doing more or less. I think what stuck with me the most was his response to my question about his expectations for me: "Do your best." That really helped me when I was faced with challenging situations.

*Did serving as shuso impact your perspective on relating to*

*the sangha, or to SMZC?*

Absolutely. This position gave me a great platform to reach out and connect with members that I normally may not have, both in person and online. I was able to reconnect with old friends and establish new relationships as well. This to me was one of the highlights of Ango. I typically would not be so outgoing, as I am often more of an introvert, but this was a great opportunity to be more social. The support from everyone was incredible, and I value each conversation we had. It really helped to keep me going each day. We have an incredible sangha and I'm grateful for everyone.

*What books or teachers were you reading throughout the month? How did you choose what you shared with the group?*

I was primarily reading original transcripts from Suzuki-roshi and Katagiri-roshi online. I wanted to choose something fresh, that people may not have been exposed to, and I felt that going through original transcripts would be fun. I spent a lot of time in the six months leading up to Ango listening to and reading talks by both. There are endless resources available online now. As I was listening or reading, I would catch sections that really stuck out to me and that I found helpful, and I'd jot them down. So I came into the month with quite a few prepared, knowing that I would have readings every morning. Each night I

would look over what I had and choose one that best fit each day. I finished the month with some readings from Shundo Aoyama-roshi's book *Zen Seeds*. She is a really incredible teacher as well, with some really beautiful teachings that were great to end with.

*The "Dharma Encounter" question-and-answer ceremony on the final day of Ango seems like the most intimidating part of the shuso experience. Can you give us a sense of how you experienced it?*

It was very intimidating, and there was a lot of anxiety leading up to it. I finally just gave up trying to prepare and anticipate questions, and just went with my gut responses. There really is no way to prepare for something like this. My biggest fear was getting asked a question and getting stuck on a response. Which did happen! I definitely had a few come at me that left me speechless and took a few minutes to answer. It ended up being really fun, though, and even the moments when I was stuck ended up being OK in the end. It's all part of the process. I did my best.

A memorable part of that ceremony was your answer to a question about balancing family and practice, to which you said, "Practice is family, family is practice." I understand that family responsibility required you to leave the sesshin briefly toward the end. Transitioning from sesshin directly to regular life can be challenging even under normal circumstances, let alone during an

*Kashin Kwong faces the shuso during the Ango 'Dharma Encounter'*







emergency. Can you talk a little about that experience?

After dinner on day six of sesshin, I got back to my room with a voicemail from my father. I typically wouldn't think much of it, but my father doesn't really call unless there is an emergency. We typically communicate by text. The voicemail was him sounding really bad and telling me he wasn't feeling good, was in an ambulance going to the hospital in Napa and needed my help. His partner Linda was back in North Carolina, and he was alone. I immediately let Nyoze know the situation, that I needed to help him, and that I would keep him updated. As I was driving to the hospital, I thought I was going to be facing the death of my father. It was a very jarring experience. When I got to the emergency room, they wouldn't let me see him due to covid protocols, so I had to speak to him by phone in the parking lot. He told me that he needed me to go to his house and take care of his dog Bella until Linda returned the next night. So I did exactly that. I went to his house and made sure Bella was taken care of, and I was able to finish the rest of sesshin online. I went to bed and got up at the same time, ate oryoki meals with what I had available, and did work practice around his house. I cleaned his bathrooms and toilets. It was a very moving experience, which brought a lot of tears. He was in the hospital for three days with diverticulitis, a torn esophagus, and a hernia. I was able to visit him at his

house the Sunday after Ango ended, and he is doing much better.

*Is there anything you would like to add about your experience as shuso?*

I am just very grateful for the opportunity to fulfill this role. I'm grateful to my wife Kate, my son Kevin and my son's mother Charity for being so supportive. I'm also very grateful to our entire sangha for all of their support and encouragement along the way. Thank you Roshi for having the confidence in me to fulfill this role, and thank you to the entire Kwong family for all the sacrifices you make to keep Genjo-ji up and running. ❖

# NEWS FROM KANNON SANGHA, POLAND

by Myoju Małgosia Sieradzka-Imhof



After sixteen months of almost exclusively online practice due to the pandemic, we were finally able to meet in person in June for summer Ango at our practice center in Kąciki. The honorable position of shuso was given to Agnieszka Myoshin Dąbek, a longtime student who practices in Poznań. There were also a few people sitting Ango online who couldn't join in person. The joy of meeting in a real practice space was enormous!

Thanks to the efforts of our teachers and Michał Total Czernuszczyk, we established the Kannon Foundation to provide us with more opportunities to earn and raise money. One of its first activities was applying to Warsaw authorities for a space for the zendo. Securing property from the city will give us more stability and possibly a long-term lease. The foundation's next project will be reissuing Suzuki-roshi's classic *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* in Polish. The book is still very popular in Poland, but very hard to find. The last Polish edition was published in 2010.

During Summer Ango it was announced that Hoshi Jarek Kaiin Chybicki may move to Kąciki to maintain practice space there together with Wojtek Bankyo Jankowski, who lives there as guardian, for half the year. Kaiin offered to donate his own money to expand the center and improve its infrastructure. Kąciki is a lovely

space in the middle of the forest. The land was donated to Kannon Sangha by Dorota and Tomek Majcherowicz in 2009. Bankyo has lived there since 2011. We are excited about the new energy occurring around Kąciki.

Apart from our everyday regular practice on Zoom, we take part in other events in our virtual practice space. A small group meets on Mondays to discuss the Genjo Koan. Our teacher Jurek Kuun has been giving zazen instruction online, the next one planned for October. Every other Monday, upon the initiative of our abbot, we sit online for thirty minutes with the Christian community practicing under the guidance of Kwong-roshi's long-time student Father Max, who lives in the Benedictine Monastery in Lublin. As a side activity, Małgosia Myoju Sieradzka-Imhoff has been coordinating monthly meetings of The Hidden Lamp study group, which draws mostly women from different sangha who meet to share their understanding of the stories presented. ❖



# UPDATE FROM NATTHAGI

by Zenki Traustason

Around the world, as we all know, people are experiencing extremely difficult times because of the global pandemic. Here in Iceland it has been the same, although because of the nation's small population, the whole thing might be a little more manageable than in many other places.

Because of social restrictions, the Icelandic sangha has been practicing a lot on Zoom, which is surprisingly effective but is of course far from replacing regular practice at our place in Reykjavik. We have had reading groups and Dharma talks live on Facebook, which has actually made it accessible for a larger group of people who might not have come to our place in person. We notice that more people are interested in attending our course on Zen meditation for the fall.

Despite the pandemic, we are able to practice in person now and have a normal schedule for the most part. As usual, we begin each semester with a four-week course in Zen meditation, as well as a four-day urban sesshin. Talks and reading groups have their usual place on Saturdays, which are pretty packed during the winter.

This winter we will be reading Roshi's book *No Beginning No End*. Brynjar Shoshin, one of Roshi's senior students, has finished his translation of the book into Icelandic. Shoshin has done a fantastic job and we are all very excited to read it together.

Last winter I was searching for calligraphy to put on the wall in our place in Reykjavik. We had made a place for tokonoma on the wall facing the main door. I contacted Docho-roshi, the abbot of Toshoji in Japan, where I trained. He contacted Hoitsu-roshi and asked him to do calligraphy for the Icelandic sangha, which he was happy to do. Hoitsu-roshi made a beautiful piece. Docho-roshi then sent it to a traditional scroll maker, and the result is a beautiful tokonoma. The calligraphy reads "One bright pearl," the title of Dogen's fascicle from *Shobogenzo*. It is very strong and beautiful, pointing to our true inherent nature.

We hope you are all doing well. Warm wishes from Natthagi. ❖

*In Gassho, Zenki*



# ZEN DUST NEWS

by Janet Myoho Buckendahl

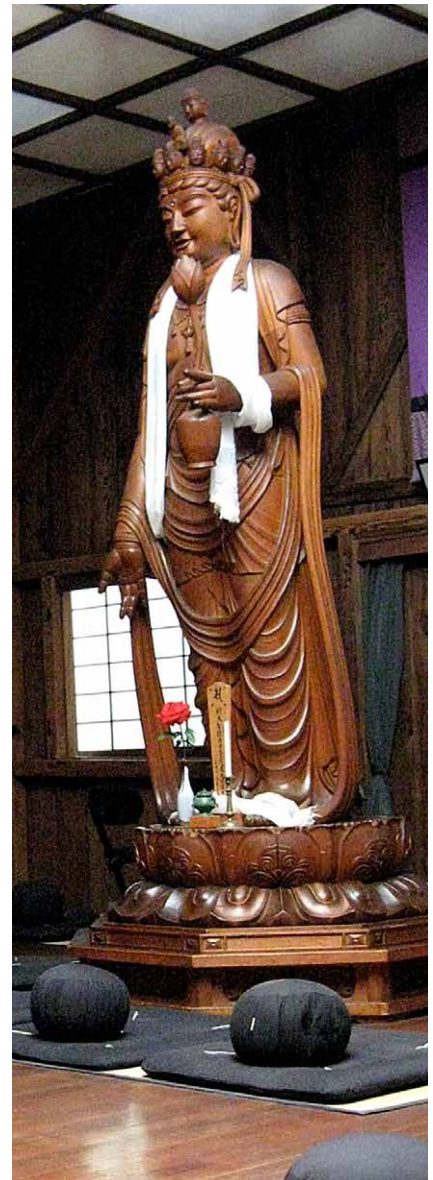
Reopening Zen Dust for in-person shopping has been delayed on account of this pesky virus. However, I have been busy with online orders and seeing that the store is well stocked. We just received copies of Hakuin's *Wild Ivy*, which Roshi has used in recent talks. The price is \$24.95. Copies of Suzuki-roshi's *Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness* are in stock and the discounted price for Study Group is \$25.

If you wish to purchase anything from Zen Dust and live locally, we can arrange for you to pick it up at SMZC or at my house in Petaluma. You may email me at [janet@smzc.org](mailto:janet@smzc.org) with any requests.

Stay healthy, everyone, and we look forward to greeting you in the store soon.. ❖

The poem begins *Chikudo daisen no shin*, which means “the mind of the great sage of India.” That is Buddha’s big mind that includes everything. The mind we have when we practice zazen is the great mind: We don’t try to see anything else; we stop conceptual thinking; we stop emotional activity; we just sit. Whatever happens to us, we are not bothered. We just sit. It is like something happening in the great sky. Whatever kind of bird flies through it, the sky doesn’t care. That is the mind transmitted from Buddha to us.

—SUZUKI-ROSHI FROM  
*BRANCHING STREAMS FLOW IN THE  
DARKNESS*



All Contributions  
Help Maintain  
the Buddhadharma!

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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



# MEMBERSHIP

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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)**.

"The best" of Roshi's talks are available free through two websites—Podbean and iTunes. Access via **iTUNES**—Open iTunes on your computer; click "iTunes Store" in the left navigation column; click "Podcasts" on the top row; in the small box at the very upper right side shown with a "Q", enter "smzc"; hit the enter key on your computer; in the middle of the page with Roshi's picture, click on "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" under the heading "Podcast"; and Roshi's talks then appear.

Access via Podbean—Go to **[www.podbean.com](http://www.podbean.com)**; in the box at top right of page, enter "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" (not case sensitive); click "SEARCH"; click on "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" next to Roshi's picture or on the picture itself. **OPTION 1:** click on the "Listen" button beside any talk or **OPTION 2** (recommended): click on **[smzc.podbean.com](http://smzc.podbean.com)** beside Roshi's picture; once in the site click on any "Listen" button. ❖



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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.



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and Awakening of All Beings”



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