

# Mountain Wine

April – June 2026

## Faith As Body

*On February 18, 2026, at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, Nyoze Kwong-osbo delivered the following teisho, given during the Winter Ango sesshin.*

For those who have come to join us this afternoon, we are in the middle of a seven-day meditation intensive. The middle of sesshin can be difficult as we start looking forward to the end. But if we are worn down by the schedule or by the practice, there is the potential for a second wind, though it is not through our effort. The sitting practice is not through our effort.

I am going to start with some basic background about Sengcan. He is one of our ancestors, the third descending from Bodhidharma. Not much is known about him. He was a student of Huike, or in Japanese Taisō Ekai, and was transmitted by him. He was around forty and did not have a family name. He just suddenly arrived and made three prostrations, saying to Huike, “My body is infected with leprosy.” Huike answered, “You must live by the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Community (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha).” Sengcan replied, “Seeing you and meeting you, I realize you are my teacher, but I still do not know what the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Sangha are.” Huike replied, “Mind is Buddha, mind is the Teaching: The Dharma and the Buddha are not two, and the treasure or community is the same.” Sengcan said, “Today, for the first time, I know the nature of wrongdoing is neither inside, outside, nor in-between. Mind is the same, Buddha and Dharma are not separate.”

Huike was impressed with Sengcan’s capacity for Dharma. He gave him robes and shaved his head; Sengcan was called the Jewel of the Community. He

stayed with Huike for two years, and his illness disappeared. Huike said to Sengcan, “Great Master Bodhidharma came from India to China. He gave the robe and Dharma to me. I now entrust this to you.” He continued, “You have acquired the Dharma. You must go deep into the mountains and not teach publicly. There will be problems in the kingdom for Buddhists. This is what the master Bodhidharma said, and since the master knows beforehand, I pass this on to you.” Sengcan said, “Please instruct me.” Huike replied, “When Bodhidharma passed away, he said, the Dharma is good luck inside, but bad luck outside. At this time, there is a lot of persecution of Buddhists. Practitioners are being killed.” Sengcan had to hide in the mountains for ten years.

Some say he remained in the mountains and never came out. There is not much written. He traveled to other places so no one could capture him, and altered his appearance so he would not be persecuted. He had a small congregation of people to whom he gave the teachings, and his words are recorded in “Faith in Mind.”

I am going to read from a fascicle of Dogen called “Rai-hai-Tokuzui: or Prostrating to the Attainment of the Marrow.” This is from the *Shobogenzo*, the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye. Dogen is the founder of our Soto school of Zen Buddhism. There’s a picture of him hanging behind the altar in the zendo. He wrote ninety-five fascicles in the *Shobogenzo*, which express the many facets of *zazen*. *Sho* means right, but not right as opposed to wrong. It is a truth like gravity: when something is thrown up, it comes back down. This cannot be refuted; it is a universal truth. The Dharma is truth, yet we cannot say what it is. It exists before the

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world appears, before we can name it. *Shobo* or *bo* is Dharma, which is truth. *Zo* is treasury. The True Dharma Eye actually refers to the senses—eyes, ears, tongue, body, and mind—without the thinking mind. It can be seen directly, but not thought about or intellectualized. The *Shobogenzo* was written in 1240 in Kosho Horin-ji, before Dogen went into the mountains and founded Daibutsu-ji, now Eihei-ji

“*Raihai* is prostrating, or bowing. *Toku* means to get, and *zui* means marrow, so to Prostrate to the Attainment of the Marrow or to Prostrate to the Marrow of Attainment, to revere what has gotten the truth. Whether a child, a man, a woman, a devil, or an animal, if it has gotten the truth, we must revere it wholeheartedly. In this attitude, we find Dogen’s sincere reverence for truth and his view of animals, men, women, and truth in all things. In practicing the state of complete perfect awakening, Anutara Samyak Sambodhi, the most difficult point is to find a teacher.

Though beyond appearances, such as those of a man or a woman, the teacher should be someone ineffable. Having met a teacher, we should throw away the myriad involvements without wasting a moment; in the footnote it says an inch of shadow. The sun shines directly down upon us. The sun shines down wherever you are standing, and if there is the slightest gap, it means you are wasting your time. The time is now that we should strive to pursue the truth. We should train with consciousness; we should train with semi-consciousness; we should train without consciousness. Thus, we should learn walking on tiptoes to put out a fire on our head. When we behave like this, we are unharmed by abusive demons.”

There is a story about Shakyamuni Buddha where he raised his foot. One of the great teachers went traveling, and Shakyamuni Buddha lifted his foot to show his sincerity and kept it there out of reverence. Shakyamuni Buddha would rise on his feet to try and see if the teacher was coming back.

“This is sincerity: a mind that is honest and pure. But looking to see if the teacher is coming back is interesting. We should learn walking on tiptoe to put out a fire on our head. To extinguish a fire on your head, there is not the slightest bit of time to think about this or what we want to get out of this situation.

There is no example of sincerity on the outside, or of faith coming from the outside. There is no way for sincerity or faith to emerge from within. Sincerity arises from attaching weight to the Dharma and thinking lightly of your own body. It emphasizes what you think about. To think about the Dharma and not about yourself is sincerity.”

We have been speaking about Sengcan’s “Faith in Mind,” or Hsin Hsin Ming, clarity of mind, clarifying the mind, which is sincerity. Hsin means sincerity, or to hold up the highest or the most supreme. The second Hsin means faith or trust, our faith in the Dharma, which means being faithful to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Faithfulness does not come to us through a belief, like being told something



which we accept as truth. Faith does not come from the outside; it is not given to you. Sincerity of faith is not created by you through this conditioned way of being. It opens through the merging of inside and outside.

Where does this faith come from? We do not know. We think we do it, but we do not do it. When we let something be, in our zazen, zazen becomes zazen, and faith arises. If we operate with our individual greed, anger, and ignorance, our selfishness, our self-centeredness, we create them. As Sengcan says in “Faith in Mind,” our greed, anger, and ignorance are diseases of the mind. This sickness makes us feel off, like when Sengcan prostrates to Taisho Ekai, “Can you absolve me of my sickness?”

In *Fukanzazengi*, one of Dogen’s first writings after returning from China, he brought back the way to sit zazen. In *Fukanzazengi*, it is stated, “The way is originally perfect and all-pervading. How could it be contingent on practice and realization? The Dharma vehicle is free and untrammelled. What need is there for our concentrated effort? Indeed, the whole body is beyond the world’s dust. Who could believe in a means to brush it clean? It is never apart from this very place. What use is there for going off from here to there to practice?”

This is faith. You could call this a faith-like body, a direct experience of faith, like when someone digs into the ground for water. They are looking for an underground spring, and

the further down they dig, the more water rises up. It is an understanding of the teachings that have begun to become real for you as you actualize toward Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. When we sit—and it has to be over and over again—you experience your mind, which is crazy. The mind can be everywhere, covering all things. It can fly, and it can make up stuff, like AI, but when the mind drops off, zazen becomes zazen. That is when the totality of things, the wholeness, becomes in actuality, everything. In the footnote it says the whole body of reality, all parts of zazen, like your arms, how you hold your mudra, how you hold your head, your feet. These are just parts of your body. Just like a runner, how they tie their shoes. They work out, arms and legs active in working out, in practice. But then you hear the gun shoot in the air. Sometimes I watch the Olympics, especially the track runners. It's beautiful: Running becomes the running itself, no runner. The totality of parts—the hand becomes the foot, the foot becomes the eye, the eye becomes the track, and the track becomes the whole universe. Everything interconnected, one body.

So, faith-like body reflects the whole body of reality, and refers to the totality of things in their suchness. This is mind, having faith in mind. This is actually realizing faith. Faith and realizing are the same. Then it is the totality of suchness and the totality of all things, the totality of all things and their suchness. “The Buddha nature and the world's dust giving rise to delusions that defile the original purity of the Buddha Nature.” As we read further into the *Fukanzazengi*, it goes into the Hsin Hsin Ming. “And yet if there is the slightest discrepancy, the way is as distant as heaven from earth.” This is when the body has become all parts. There is thinking, this is the hand, here is the pain in the shoulder. Then faith arises, and the totality arises. Quite beautiful. But it is all the same thing, this shift that happens, and it is felt as all the same thing. “If the least like or dislike arises, the mind is lost in confusion. Suppose you have pride of understanding: Now I have gotten it.” Now I know what it's all about, I'm sitting on top of the world, dancing. I can leave the Zen Center now. Inflate your own achievement—yet it is only a glimpse.

“Glimpse the wisdom that runs through all things. You have a glimpse of it. Attain the way and clarify the mind, raising the aspiration to escalate the very sky. You are only making an initial partial excursion through the frontiers of the Dharma. But you are still deficient in the vital way of total emancipation. This is the same thing. If we attach even slightly more weight to self-regard of the body, than to the Dharma, then Dharma is not transmitted to us.” Dharma, with a capital D, refers to the truth because the thinking mind starts to fabricate and distort direct experience. The direct experience of seeing, smelling, hearing, and touching stops being direct experience. It is altered and creates a self. Then there is a separation which creates greed, anger, and ignorance. There is faith in understanding, a faith in having a



Faith-like body reflects the whole body of reality, and refers to the totality of things in their suchness. This is mind, having faith in mind. This is actually realizing faith. Faith and realizing are the same. Then it is the totality of suchness and the totality of all things, the totality of all things and their suchness.



When we sit, we are holding it all apart, and all the things that come up, we see equally. We do not give any weight to what is good or bad, what is right or wrong. To have a teacher, we bow. When you bow, you bow to the altar, but you look at Buddha. Then, inside you bow, you visualize the Buddha as part of yourself when you bow.

teacher. Relying on something that is not outside yourself, a teacher you revere. Faith is that you have trust to do this practice. Practice which is quite difficult. In the *Fukanzazengi*, Dogen talks about the Buddha and Bodhidharma. The Buddha sat for six years; Bodhidharma sat for nine years. This is what our ancestors did thousands of years ago. People did this. When you have a teacher, you are able to make the leap to start to practice. In sincere practice, you need trust. All the teachers I have met did it in this way. They did it a certain way, and you follow. We are following our ancestors.

In zazen, even if you do not understand, they say to keep going. You wonder, why should I keep going when I do not understand? And you sit ten years, they say twenty years, they say thirty years, and I am just starting to understand. Just starting, like a fragment of it, because life is so quick. It goes like that (snaps fingers). And then we die — and we are already dying—to understand the scenery of zazen, the scenery of your own life, is extremely important.

To respect the teachers is to be an example of sincerity, of the Buddha standing on tiptoe, or to hold up your foot. Sincerity has to be through your entire body, which is what we are doing in zazen. To sit is the reconditioning of karmic conditions—what we are born with or learn. When you sit, the ancients say, do not move. You scratch your head—that is a karmic condition. Or I hear a sound—that is Nyoze's karmic condition. Or I see something and make a distinction, which is the mind that distorts. That is making karma.

When we sit, we are holding it all apart, and all the things that come up, we see equally. We do not give any weight to what is good or bad, what is right or wrong. To have a teacher, we bow. When you bow, you bow to the altar, but you look at Buddha. Then, inside you bow, you visualize the Buddha as part of yourself when you bow. This is being faithful to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and to your awakened mind. When you bow, both hands come together as opposites. You feel your palms as opposites coming together. Then you bow. You and the altar are merging within the activity of bowing. But you need to do it over and over to understand the scenery. What happens to the mind when you bow, whether it goes this way or that, when the bowing becomes just bowing, this is the same as zazen. It is the totality of the faith-like body. It is not me bowing, nor an instance of me bowing. When things merge, is when it's the totality of all things, when we have freedom from our greed, anger, and ignorance. "It is said that whoever attaches weight to the Dharma will make the body into a seat on the floor." This is zazen, coming back to the ground, which will serve countless kalpas. "Whatever is maintaining and relying on the great Dharma, whoever has my marrow or has gone to the source, whether it is an outdoor pillar, a stone lantern, a Buddha, a dog, a demon, a god, a man, a woman, or an animal.

Bodies and minds are easily received. They are as common

in the world as rice, flax, bamboo, and reeds.” This is all about our practice: Working in the kitchen, how we manage the knife when we cut the food, how we hold the oryoki bowl. These are all forms that, when done in a specific way, there is freedom within. Within this specific form, doing it over and over again, not my way, but a prescribed way.

It is a kata in martial arts, a way you step over and over again, in a certain way. It is not your way, but a step that is in harmony with the moon, stars, and the sun. So it is you as an individual, but you are with all things, the same and yet not. So this faith-like body is basically being where you are, attuned to things as they are, open to how this is pointing you forward. Not choosing through your intellect or intelligence, but sensitive to reality, pointing you in a certain direction. This is faith, a faith-like body. When we sit zazen, we feel this totality, then we cannot help but start aiming at reconditioning ourselves. We start to anchor ourselves more deeply in the Dharma. We live our life firmly anchored in that direction, which gives a greater perspective for how we live our lives and the principles we strive for. “It is sincerity, which means giving weight to the Dharma and making light of one’s own body. It is to get free from the secular world, and to make one’s home the state of truth.”

This is hard for us, as we live in society and in the world. Some people do not have a car and say, “I need a ride to the Zen Center because I don’t have a car.” I wonder, why can’t you get a ride? They answer, “Because people say they do not want to waste gas.” Well, you seem all right wasting someone else’s gas. Or people do not want to step on or kill living beings. Well, you have shoes, clothes, you kill plants—these are all things we are a part of, this great network. There is no escape. The escape is more about treating an illness. When we do something wholeheartedly or with utmost sincerity, we are holding things up above our conditioned mind.

It’s embodied in all the forms we do here at the Zen Center. This is like a little lab where work is done to get to know the self, your greed, hatred, and delusion. To follow how we do things here and notice what comes up. Then we acknowledge what we do, and learn to do it another way. We are all working not to react or act on our greed, hatred, and delusion. It is an experiment to recondition the self to a different way of being. Then we bow to the camera, and the camera bows to us. We are one body; these glasses are one body. The body is moving, these glasses are moving, everything is moving. Right now, the mind is moving, the bell is moving, the wood is living and dying; this is the impermanence of all things.

We did a ceremony on Saturday for the Chinese Historical Society in Petaluma. There is a small park close to a main street in Petaluma, where there is a plaque honoring the Chinese ancestors who were displaced and what they founded in Petaluma. We scattered flowers, did prostrations, and acknowledged our ancestors, ancestry, and the ancestors



of all things. It could be flowers, it could be wood, but this ceremony had to do with the Chinese ancestors.

“Serve the ancestors by presenting heavenly food, serve them by scattering heavenly flowers, and do prostrations three times every day. When we never let anxiety or annoyance rise in the mind, when we behave like this, we express the state of the Bodhi mind. Since I established the mind, I have been practicing like this. So today I have been able to attain perfect awakening, Anutara Samyak Sambodhi. This being so, we should hope even trees and stones might preach to us. We should question outdoor pillars and investigate even fences, pebbles, tiles, and walls. These are all things of daily life. An ancient master, God Indra, prostrated himself to a wild dog as his master and asked him about the Dharma. His fame as a great Bodhisattva has been transmitted throughout space and time.” ❖

# Shuso Interview With Fugan Chris Johnson

by Katsuzen King

*If you wish to move in the One Way  
Do not dislike even the worlds of senses and ideas.  
Indeed, to embrace them fully  
is identical with True Enlightenment.*

— from “Shinjinmei (Trust in Mind)” by 3rd Zen Ancestor  
Kanchi Sosan

*Sonoma Mountain Zen Center offers two extended practice  
periods each year, in winter and summer, known as Ango. Being  
Shuso is an honor given to one of the students of Kwong-roshi and  
Hojo-san to serve as the head student of Ango.*

*For those who may not be familiar with Ango practice,  
how would you describe the atmosphere and rhythm of daily  
life during the retreat?*

Ango means “peaceful dwelling.” It’s a wonderful gift we receive and maintain from our ancient tradition. It’s the opportunity to dwell peacefully in an extended practice period of one month. I’d say the atmosphere and rhythm of daily life during Ango is designed to illuminate what is already true—that the whole of our life is a place of awakening, and so a place of peaceful dwelling. But we don’t always see that in our daily life. So the design of Ango helps to infuse all activities, each moment, with strong practice energy, realization energy, so we can see it—and really see ourselves, honestly and more fully. Then it becomes realization in the sense of “making real”; the way of Dharma and the way of peaceful dwelling become real for us, and is made real in how we live this life. Then we can truly help this world.

The “peaceful dwelling” of Ango isn’t an escape from life. I said the whole of our life is a place of awakening, yet there’s another side that the design of Ango also helps illuminate, that the whole of our life is a place of delusion. We have the opportunity to see our self-clinging and its results, to see our own greed, anger, and ignorance that arise from this self-clinging delusion. Really seeing that stuff, being willing to see it, isn’t always pretty, and doesn’t necessarily feel like “peaceful dwelling!” It can be turbulent. But going through that turbulence is precisely the route to the true dwelling place of peace. In the rhythm of daily life, we start to feel the beat of encountering both delusion and liberation, awakening and enlightenment. Giving ourselves to this rhythm, we can experience how enlightenment appears before delusion has departed. They’re both there in the very same beat! And moving with this rhythm starts to feel like true peaceful dwelling to me.

*If someone were considering participating in Ango for the  
first time, what encouragement or advice would you offer,  
from your own experience?*

Simple—just do it. Say yes. Let go of having to feel ready or prepared. Just step into it. Show up and see what happens. Then keep showing up and seeing what happens.

Yes, we sometimes say it’s an intensive practice period



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peaceful dwelling.

because of the rigorous schedule. But adding “intensive” is maybe an unnecessary extra that we could just get worked up about. Approach it as immersive. Give yourself to the schedule and immerse yourself in it. Just thoroughly give yourself to the schedule. Now, just this. OK, now just this. And within that immersion, then give of yourself. Offer yourself in what you’re doing, in what’s happening. Offer yourself to the community of beings in practice.

But if you really want a pre-Ango homework assignment, here it is: Sit zazen. Come to the mountain and sit in person as often as you can. And let that ignite your resolve to immerse yourself in the way of peaceful dwelling.

*Can you tell us what your responsibilities were as the Shuso during this Winter Ango?*

I’m just going to share the number one most important responsibility as Shuso: Doing everything I was just now encouraging for others in those first two questions. Actually doing it. Letting that be true of me, honestly and sincerely. And from that comes responsibility as responsiveness, the ability to respond to what’s needed and what’s necessary as it arises.

Shuso is head student. That means head learner, head trainee. So I put myself in the position of being fully devoted to learning and training in the Way, really opening myself to it, receiving it, and then offering back. Maybe that does help set the tone, or contribute to a quality or texture in the practice period for everyone.

*Could you comment on the support and guidance you received from Hojo-san?*

Having also served as Shuso for half of Summer Ango in 2025, this time around, the support and guidance I received from Hojo-san came mostly without words. It was support, encouragement, and guidance just through our proximity in practice. Through his own presence, devotion, actions, and straightforward practice. Through our close sitting in all the zazen periods and oryoki meals. Through so many bows to one another and with one another, very subtle and fine-grained, but an intimate sharing. Fewer words are necessary, but communication is happening. And I’m grateful for it.

*Could you discuss the theme you chose for this Winter Ango? Or share an insight you had during the retreat regarding the theme you chose?*

Throughout this Ango, we worked with the *Shinjinmei* (Trust in Mind) by the 3rd Zen Ancestor Kanchi Sosan. I chose to emphasize one of the main themes of that text: nonseparation. Loosening the discriminating mind’s grip on the idea of a separate existing self, we open to a surrendering trust in the mind that is the Mind, not separate from all of life. It’s in the ongoing seeing and letting go of my self-clinging to “my” mind that trust is discovered.

Living from this source of trust emerges as we realize this nonseparateness.

The theme is not caged in the text. It’s in the reality of each moment, in each encounter with every being, with every thing. All of it one encounters with endless scenery, yet nonseparate. We can trust it. And as I trust it, I think I’m then actually more trustworthy in life and for others.

*Was there a particular moment during Ango—a talk, an encounter, or a small daily event—that became especially meaningful or memorable for you?*

Seamless, continuous moments! I’ve been a big “meaning and purpose” kind of person throughout my life. That’s been good, yet there can be a kind of trap built into it if I get attached to meaning and purpose, if I get greedy for meaning and purpose. During this Ango, I saw some of that subtly functioning, and could kind of just set it down and let it be. Not attaching to “meaningfulness,” not demanding that everything be meaningful or fit some big purpose. Interestingly, that’s exactly when the true meaning and purpose of each thing emerges, just as it is. Each thing, equal in meaning and purpose, equal in no meaning and no purpose. Sounds crazy? I’ll be continuing to explore that.

*In the midst of the schedule, responsibilities, and encounters of Ango, what did “just sitting” come to mean for you?*

Well, this connects with what I was saying—seamless continuous moments of each thing emerging, just as it is, equally functioning as life doing life, transition after transition after transition. And really fully participating in each transition, moment into moment, it becomes more realizable as a seamless continuous moment—singular—just sitting in and with and as that seamless continuous moment. Zazen is happening. Life itself is doing zazen. That’s what the universal life energy does, how it functions. And I’m participating in it—sometimes. Or really, more like sometimes (more and more) remembering that life’s continuous zazen also includes me. And in that remembrance,



everything's fresh and new and alive. Just sitting in and with and as that. Sounds crazy again! However crazy, it's part of the vow that's in me.

*During the Mondo, one or two participants described Ango as having been a "wild ride." Can you tell us what they may have been referring to?*

Well, I like a good wild ride! In part, I think they were referring to some of these things I'll mention in brief. We had many ceremonies to prepare for, more than usual. In addition to the traditional Ango ceremonies, we had the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the construction of the Sanmon Mountain Gate that was about to begin and is now underway. And we conducted a Lunar New Year Incense Offering at Petaluma Historic Chinatown Park. And throughout Ango, we had many roles and responsibilities that needed to be fulfilled with few people. Plus, one participant had a medical emergency requiring a hospital stay. Then, during sesshin week, we had cold temperatures, and the zendo furnace went out. During this time, almost all of us caught colds.

But a wild ride is a good ride for practice. A hard situation is a good situation for practice. Turbulent conditions are conditions of practice. So just sitting with continuous practice, even in a wild ride.

*How was the Shuso party on the final evening of Ango, when the Shuso is celebrated and congratulated?*

At first, it was the hardest part! Just to receive being celebrated and congratulated. And to receive such meaningful cards and gifts. But then I began to see it as really also celebrating the relationships, celebrating the time of Ango itself, and congratulating everyone for making that practice commitment and maintaining it throughout Ango. So, of course, it was for everyone. It's good for us to know how to party (laughs). We do it well here. ❖



## THEME FOR WINTER ANGO 2026



Shuso – Hokan (Dharma Barrier)  
Alex 'Hokan' Perrotti  
January 31– February 14

When you try to stop activity to achieve quietude,  
your very effort fills you with activity.

As long as you remain attached to one extreme or another,  
you will never know Oneness.

Those who do not live in the single Way  
cannot be free in either activity or quietude, in assertion or denial.

*in "Shinjinmei (Trust in Mind)" by 3rd Zen Ancestor Kanchi Sosan*

Shuso – Fugan (Universal Vow)  
Chris 'Fugan' Johnson  
February 15–28

If you wish to move in the One Way

Do not dislike even the worlds of senses and ideas.

Indeed, to embrace them fully

is identical with True Enlightenment.

*in "Shinjinmei (Trust in Mind)" by 3rd Zen Ancestor Kanchi Sosan*

## Father Max

We were honored to welcome back our longtime friend, Father Max of Lubin Monastery in Poland, who joined us for a short visit during Winter Ango and offered a reassuring and heart-felt talk after oryoki lunch. He described the growing integration of meditation



within the Benedictine tradition, now including 28 practicing groups. Asked about prayer, he pointed to presence as the essence of being with God. "Just be present and listen," he said, "God is right here."



馬 FIRE HORSE YEAR

I AM THE ESSENCE OF A MIND.  
I AM PART LIGHT, COLOR AND CONSTANT MOTION.  
I AM MOVED BY ELECTRIC STIMULI:  
CONSTANT ONLY IN MY INCONSTANCY.  
I AM UNBOUND BY HABIT ENERGIES,  
UNCHECKED BY BINDING GOALS.  
I RUN SWIFLY THROUGH VIRGIN FIELDS  
MY SPIRIT UNCONQUERED - EVER 80...

I AM THE HORSE!  
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**May 8**      **May 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.

**May 9**      **Meditation Instruction**  
**(Includes Saturday Community)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
 9:00AM–12:00PM 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.

**Saturday Community**  
**(Talk by Nyoze Kwong-roshi)**  
**On-site + Online**  
 10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Talk will be given by Nyoze Kwong-oshō, abbot of SMZC, following 10:30–11:00am zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Talk.

**May 12**      **5-Week Rakusu**  
**Sewing Workshop (Week 1)**  
**On-site (In Godo)**  
 6:30PM–8:30PM PDT

Join us on site for this unique and rare opportunity to create your own rakusu! This weekly rakusu sewing workshop is open to members only. 10-20% member discount.

**May 16**      **Meditation Instruction**  
**(Includes Saturday Community)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
 9:00AM–1:30PM PST

See description in previous event, May 8.

**Saturday Community**  
**(Talk by Katsuzen King)**  
**On-site + Online**  
 10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Talk will be given by Katsuzen King, Founding Teacher of Windsor Zen Sitting Group in Windsor, California following 10:30–11:00am zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Talk.

**May 19**      **5-Week Rakusu**  
**Sewing Workshop (Week 2)**  
**On-site (In Godo)**  
 6:30PM–8:30PM PDT

See description in previous event, May 12.

**May 22-23**      **Kids Community Overnight**  
**Kids Campout Under The Stars!!!**  
**On-site**

May 22, 4:30PM – May 23, 10:00AM PDT

Come pitch a tent and enjoy the spring's evening sky. A great way to introduce families to SMZC. Both kids and parents are

invited to participate in morning and evening light meditation periods. Outdoor marshmallow roast and S'mores. Join us for some down home mountain fun!

**May 23**      **Meditation Instruction**  
**(Includes Saturday Community)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
 9:00AM–1:30PM PST

See description in previous event, May 8.

**Saturday Community**  
**(Talk by Binji Shotoku Mukherjee)**  
**On-site + Online**  
 10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Talk will be given by Binji Shotoku Mukherjee, a student of Nyoze Kwong-oshō, following 10:30–11:00am zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Talk.

**May 26**      **5-Week Rakusu**  
**Sewing Workshop (Week 3)**  
**On-site (In Godo)**  
 6:30PM–8:30PM PDT

See description in previous event, May 12.

**May 30**      **Spring Sangha Gathering & Potluck**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
 10:30 AM–1:30 PM PDT

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.

**June 2**      **5-Week Rakusu**  
**Sewing Workshop (Week 4)**  
**On-site (In Godo)**  
 6:30PM–8:30PM PDT

See description in previous event, May 12.

**June 5**      **June Fusatsu Ceremony**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
 7:30–9:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, May 8.

**May 23**      **Meditation Instruction**  
**(Includes Saturday Community)**  
**On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
 9:00AM–1:30PM PST

See description in previous event, May 8.

**Saturday Community**  
**(Talk by Tokan Craig Stepanek)**  
**On-site + Online**  
 10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Talk will be given by Tokan Craig Stepanek, a senior student of Kwong-roshi and SMZC resident, following 10:30–11:00am zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Talk.

**June 9**      **5-Week Rakusu  
Sewing Workshop (Week 5)  
On-site (In Godo)**  
6:30PM–8:30PM PDT

See description in previous event, May 12.

**June 11–14**    **“Returning to the Ground of Being”  
3-Day Sesshin (1 to 3 Overnights)  
On-site or Online**  
June 11, 6:00 PM PDT – June 14, 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.)

**June 15–16**    **SMZC Closed**

**June 20**      **Meditation Instruction  
(Includes Saturday Community)  
On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
9:00AM–1:30PM PST

See description in previous event, May 8.

**Kids & Youth Community Quarterly  
On-site**  
10:00 AM–1:30 PM PDT

Join us for a morning of mindfulness and discovery at the Zen Center, designed for ages 1–7 and 8–18 yrs. While parents participate in meditation and Dharma talk, children and teens will engage in fun, age-appropriate activities, led by sangha members. \$15 admission/person (child or parent)

**Saturday Community  
(Talk by Carol Seizen Adams)  
On-site + Online**  
10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Talk will be given by Carol Seizen Adams, a student of Jakusho Kwong-roshi and Nyoze Kwong-oshō, following 10:30–11:00am zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Talk.

**June 27**      **Meditation Instruction  
(Includes Saturday Community)  
On-site + Online (Zoom)**  
9:00AM–1:30PM PST

See description in previous event, May 8.

**Saturday Community  
(Talk by Tensan Chuck Ramey)  
On-site + Online**  
10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Talk will be given by Tensan Chuck Ramey, following 10:30–11:00am zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Talk.

**June 28**      **Summer Workfest  
On-site**  
8:30AM–1:30PM PST

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.

**June 29**      **SMZC Closed**

**July 3–4**      **SMZC Closed**



**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>.

# Ango Reflection

by Russel Genkai Bradley

The Ango tradition of intensive practice dates back to Shakyamuni's rainy season retreats, as winter in California reminds us. Within Zen, it has grown into a twice-yearly period of intensive practice, study, and work.

The Winter Ango period was split between two Shusos: Alex Hokan Perotti and Chris Fugan Johnson. The theme for Winter Ango 2026 was rooted in the Shinjinmei (Hsin-Hsin Ming) by the 3rd Ancestor Kanchi Sosan. This resonated particularly with me. I discovered the tiny book in the Zen Dust store while at SMZC in November for my Jukai ceremony, and have read it several times since. Over the course of the Ango, I realized that learning to trust the faith-mind, the heart-mind, is an essential part of practice. It speaks to what I see as my Achilles heel. Focusing on Kanchi Sosan's teaching for a month was just what the doctor ordered.

There were events the first couple of weekends before the sesshin. On Saturday, Feb. 7, the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Sanmon Mountain Gate was held after the Shuso's talk. It was followed by a potluck lunch in the Sangha House. Excitement was in the air as this phase of the Mandala Project was about to unfold. The following Saturday, a Lunar New Year Incense Offering Ceremony was held in Historic Chinatown Park in Petaluma, sponsored by the Petaluma Historic Chinatown Park and Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Held mid-afternoon in bustling downtown

Petaluma, it grew into a special moment. Silence seemed to descend on the area as people chanted the Heart Sutra and lined up to offer incense.

The weather was mild for the first couple of weeks of Ango, then the temperature dropped, and the rains started the week of Sesshin. On Chinese New Year, Feb. 17, there was sleet on the mountain, and the heater in the Zendo failed. People bundled up for zazen, and the Zendo had space heaters strategically placed throughout.

In spite of the cold weather and the cold Zendo, people came for the final weekend of Sesshin as their first intensive zazen experience. Their enthusiasm for what they had just gone through was infectious, giving me a good dose of beginner's mind.

Starting midweek of Sesshin, a cold virus began to ripple through the Sangha, taking people out for a day here, three days there. Hojo-san was constantly juggling temple assignments and roles based on who was coming down sick and who was getting better.

The Ango ended on Feb. 28 with a closing ceremony and the Shuso Celebration Dinner later that evening. Unfortunately, the numbers were somewhat diminished by participants who had come down with the cold. Despite that, the Closing Ceremony enjoyed a lively Mondo, and those who were left standing joyfully collaborated in preparing, serving, and cleaning up for the Shuso Celebration Dinner.

For whatever reason, I came out of Winter Ango 2026 with a deeper resonance with the Heart Sutra. Starting with the





daily services, then the Groundbreaking Ceremony, then the Lunar New Year Incense Offering Ceremony in Petaluma, then the Winter Ango Closing Ceremony, then back in Virginia with Del Ray Zen, every time I chant it, the resonance grows deeper and continues to do so. ❖

*Opposite page: Left- Chanting service during the Sanmon Mountain Gate Groundbreaking Ceremony*

*Upper- Hojo-san offers incense during the Sanmon Groundbreaking Ceremony*

*Bottom- Winter Ango Closing Ceremony, SMZC, Saturday, Feb.28, 2026*

*Above left: Shinko Kwong offers incense at the Chinese Ancestors Lunar Year Incense Ceremony, Petaluma's Chinatown Park – Feb.14, 2026*

*Above right: Chris Fugan, Koten Price and Rick Kogen make offering at the Chinese Ancestor Incense Ceremony*

*Bottom left: Winter Ango work circle*

*Bottom right: Closing Ceremony, Winter Ango Sesshin, SMZC*



# New To The Sangha

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

**Demsin Bet Adam**, Santa Rosa, CA

My name is Demsin. I'm Assyrian, a member of a people who have lived without a country for nearly two thousand years and are now spread across the Middle East, Europe, and the U.S. I live in Santa Rosa and work in Petaluma for a biotech company. For several years, I practiced alone, sitting and keeping the precepts, but eventually I felt my practice wasn't moving forward. Then I encountered the Buddha's teaching to Ānanda about good friendship being the whole of the spiritual life. That teaching opened my eyes, and it's what brought me to join the Sangha. I'm grateful to be practicing with all of you.

**Peter Thomas**, Benicia, CA

Hi, I'm Peter. I live in Benicia and spend much of my time in Vallejo with my partner and kids. I work in Fairfield as a Senior Systems Administrator for FIS Global, helping keep banking systems steady and secure. When I'm not working, I'm usually on my road bike, training for endurance and century rides and seeing how far I can push myself. I'm also a hobbyist mechanic and a DIY around-the-house type, always taking something apart or figuring out how to make it work. At home, one of my greatest joys is cooking for my family.

Over the past couple of years, my spiritual life has been reawakened. Zazen has been especially helpful in quieting my overthinking mind and giving me a clearer sense of reality and being here now. This practice is helping me become a better person, partner, and father. I'm grateful and excited to join the Sangha at SMZC.

**Nick Rupiper**, Kenwood, CA

Hi, I'm Nick Rupiper. I run a small farm in Sonoma called Seven Moons Farm, where we sell to restaurants and a couple of farmers' markets. I enjoy carpentry, making pottery, playing music, and a lot more. I live in Kenwood with my wife and farming partner, Rebecca, and our daughter, Beatrix.

I've studied both Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, but my daily practice has a way of slipping away. I'm looking forward to reviving my sitting practice at SMZC and getting to know the Sangha. ❖

## *Three Poems by Hosho Peter Coyote*

### **ISSa in Mind**

Pre-dawn zendo chill. One chipping chickadee defying the silence.  
Spitting weak candle warming the Buddha, tang of incense,  
pat and tap of condensed fog dripping off the shingled eaves. Fifty-odd years thumb-to-thumb sitting and yet,  
not a word on my first book of poems sent months ago to my friend, the master.

### **Wild Nature**

Decades ago, I came to him, friend and mentor, concentration dispersed, suspecting my mediocrity. Well, there are two models. The guy with one sheep will always, at first, appear remarkable—polished hooves, fleece combed free of thorns and brambles, elegant collar and brass bell. The guy with twenty must fend off bankruptcy every day—just keeping them in sight would be a victory. But twenty years on, both will guide well-tended charges through the open gate. Fifty years since that talk, the gate now large and close. I can stand among the shepherds in my crushed brown hat. But Teacher, it's hard to admit how little today I care for the docile sheep, stump-free pastures, hauling feed for anything. It was always the wild-eyed dogs I loved, panting in the trees, eyeballing all that pretty meat—whimpering, making it all up every day—

### **The Heart's Ghost**

Morning zazen.  
The altar candle's, smokeless flame—  
and over Snyder's photo,  
reflected in the glass—  
this luminous, insistent pulse.

### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

*These poems are from Hosho Coyote's forthcoming book, Thumb to Thumb, due out in September by Four Way Books, New York.*

# Sonoma Mountain Mandala Donors — Thank You

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## SPECIAL THANKS TO SONOMA MOUNTAIN MANDALA DONORS

DEC 20, 2025 – MAR 19, 2026

May each of us bring the Sonoma Mountain Mandala to life with wisdom, compassion, and collective focus for the good of humanity for generations to come. May the spirit of the Mandala continue to unfold within each of us, reminding us that every act, every moment, is an offering for the good of all things. In gratitude, we bow deeply to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and to this precious life, ever turning, within the great Mandala of awakening.

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Kathleen Batson	Michael Zenmen McCulloch <i>In honor of Zensan Kwong Roshi and Hojosan Nyoze Roshi. In deep gratitude, action in the Fire Horse Year!</i>
Ed Cadman	
Thomas Coombes	Anna Mills
Bill Cooper <i>In honor of Chris and Liz Johnson</i>	Mouri-sensei Tea-group
Kathleen Dennison	Zohreh Nobari
Carolyn Ferris <i>With a deep bow of gratitude for the peace you bring to Sonoma Mountain and beyond</i>	Andrew Penners
Milla Gems <i>In honor of Hojo San Nyoze &amp; Jonathan. Thank You Hojo San Nyoze for Dokusan</i>	Rose Rubinger <i>In honor of Winter Ango Sesshin Talks</i>
Yaeko Hirotsuka <i>In honor of Emily Hamamoto</i>	Kevin Souza (Shindo) <i>In memory of Joseph Philip Souza</i>
David Hirsch	Alfred Tse
Thomas Huffman	Diana Viloz
Jessa Hurley <i>Thank you for the talk and delicious lunch</i>	Cynthia Wemyss <i>In honor of Emily Louise Hamamoto</i>
Chris Johnson <i>In memory of Petaluma's early Chinese residents—With gratitude, we honor their resilience, labor, and lasting contributions. Honored to participate in the Lunar New Year Incense Offering Ceremony at Petaluma Historic Chinatown Park.</i>	ANONYMOUS <i>In memory of Emily Hamamoto. Auntie Emily will always be in our hearts.</i>
Liz Johnson <i>In memory of Katherine Gratke In honor of Aunt Annie Milne</i>	ANONYMOUS <i>In honor of Tensan Chuck Ramey</i>
	ANONYMOUS <i>Thanks to everyone who helps however possible. This wonderful place is existing and can grow by support of each one, by deepening the mind, by hard work, and by donation. Nine bows.</i>

and all other anonymous donors

**\$51,414 is the new current total raised from October 25, 2025 to April 19, 2026**

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# Letter From The President

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*Above: Ron Berger repairs the steps by the dokusan room. The Zen Center offers a deep bow of appreciation for all of the work projects Ron has completed at Genjo-ji.*

*Below: Hojo-san shows the donation of the truck seat-cover from Shindo Sousa received on February 13*

Serving the Sangha as the new president of the Board of Trustees for Sonoma Mountain Zen Center is an opportunity for which I'm deeply grateful. I will work to help the Board support the practice of zazen and make the Dharma accessible to all who wish to join in practice.

The Board functions as a steward of the Zen Center's resources, ensuring responsible fiscal management, maintaining the physical space where practice occurs, and supporting our teachers, staff, and residents. Our work is collaborative and grounded in transparency, accountability, and mutual respect.

In the spirit of Sōtō Zen, we approach governance as a form of service. Giving (dāna) is a core Buddhist practice. When we see ourselves and others as interconnected, we naturally wish to support others' well-being, knowing it is also our own. Understanding this, generosity arises without discrimination, and its merit is immeasurable.

Offering does not necessarily require money; a smile, attentive presence, time, or service can all help ease suffering. We are richer than we realize in what we can give. Even sincere intention to help—listening, understanding, and caring—begins to reduce suffering for ourselves and others. This is the spirit of kindness we seek to share, and your support helps us in this endeavor.

The Board seeks to listen carefully to the needs of the Sangha and to act in ways that help sustain the practice, now and for future generations, through Right View (perspective of the absolute: ceremony, ritual, teachings), and Right Practice (perspective of the relative: samu, or every-day life activity).

I am grateful to the many volunteers whose efforts sustain this community. Together we continue the tradition of practice and transmission that has been handed down through the Sōtō lineage. I've been deeply moved studying the writings of Dōgen, the founder of our lineage in Japan. I've also been deeply inspired by practicing with the Sangha at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, and so I take my Board service personally.

For anyone who would like to be in touch, I can be reached at [zenmen@smzc.org](mailto:zenmen@smzc.org).

With respect and appreciation,  
Michael Zenmen McCulloh ❖

# Mountain Gate Update — March 2026

by Mitchell Hoden Katzel

Exciting news: The Kawara roof tile has arrived from Japan! After leaving the port of Kobe on Feb. 20, the tile shipment arrived in Los Angeles and was then trucked to a warehouse in Oakland. It was to arrive at the Zen Center on March 18, to be stored until the Sanmon (Mountain Gate) is constructed. The roof tile will be installed by Tatsuma Shoji-san, third-generation owner of the tile company Daibutsu Ltd., along with his crew, in the final part of construction.

Meanwhile, the first steps in pouring the concrete foundation were completed on March 13. Additional concrete work will take place later to form a drainage channel around the perimeter to capture roof runoff. We are anticipating that the steps leading from the parking area will be poured around the same time. After the foundation and steps are complete, our builder, Lucas Benjamin, will deliver the wood, which has been fabricated to exact dimensions, at his workshop in Richmond. The process of erecting the Sanmon will take place over the next several months.

You can get a glimpse of the foundation from the lower parking area, but please do not walk on or around the foundation, as it is an active construction area. ❖



*Top: Kawara roof tiles from Japan arrive at SMZC  
Above left: Sanmon Mountain Gate foundation excavation  
Above right: Concrete foundation for the Sanmon Gate  
Below left: Shunryu Kwong and Robert Berger, of Berger Concrete,  
work on the Sanmon Gate plans.*

*Below right: Hojo-san and Eric Scudder of River Town Electric  
in Petaluma. Eric has donated his electrical work for the Kanzeon  
House and the Sanmon Mountain Gate*



# Zen Dust News

by Carol Seizen Adams

In keeping with the energy of the Fire Horse year, it seems the rejuvenating, gentle warmth of spring is quickly morphing into more persistent summer-like heat. Much to the delight of our resident deer, the grasses are responding by growing tall and lush, and our expansive garden is eager for Sangha members' hearts and hands to help plant those little expectant seeds of goodness.

Here in the Zen Dust store, I have been aspiring to fill many back orders for zafus and zabutons, which are very popular items these days. In spite of great effort, the back-order log continues to grow. To help fill orders in a more timely and consistent way, Zen Dust is seeking an experienced and dedicated local volunteer who is willing and capable of sewing zafu and zabuton covers independently, on an ongoing basis. Training will be provided. Please call the Office at the number below if this offering is for you.

In that light, please join me in welcoming new Sangha member Garry Gillooly to the Zen Dust sewing team. Garry, who lives in Florida, has recently become deeply interested in sewing and is learning how to master the art of Japanese-style sewing to make robes, samu-e wear, oryoki cloths, etc. Garry is also keen on learning the techniques, form, and art of sashiko, the Japanese functional embroidery used for mending, reinforcing, or decorating fabric. To help facilitate Garry's interest in supporting SMZC sewing, we will be shipping ready-to-sew items such as support cushions and zabuton covers to Garry to sew. We are deeply looking forward to this collaboration.

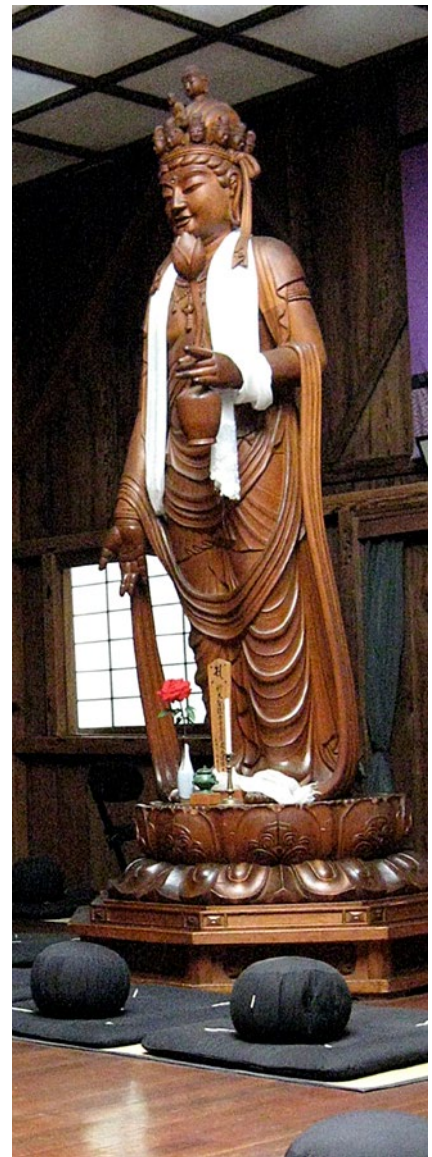
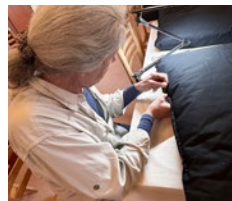
A big thank-you to our Zen Dust sewing team: Lori Zarr, Pat Preston, Laury Rappaport, and Myorin Morscheck, who gathered in the Sangha House during our recent Workfest to help complete a batch of zabutons and also finish hand-stitching the seams of many oryoki wiping cloths. As the saying goes, many hands make light work. Deep gratitude to all for your hard work and great effort!

I would also like to acknowledge Lori Zarr for her ongoing efforts in keeping our Zen Dust store stocked with oryoki utensil holders. Lori has been instrumental in helping fine-tune the pattern for these intricate items to facilitate greater ease in the construction process and consistency in the final product. Thank you Lori for your efforts!

The Zen Dust team looks forward to supplying you with all your meditation needs: Zen-made zabutons, zafus, jubons, support cushions, and more. Please visit Zen Dust after Saturday Community practice, 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:

Carol Seizen Adams (admin and sewing)  
Lin Naylor (store steward)  
Lori Zarr (sewing)  
Alex Thomas (sewing)  
Pat Preston (sewing)  
Garry Gillooly (sewing)



All Contributions  
Help Maintain  
the Buddhadharma!

## DONATE ONLINE 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

# 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).

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



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## Newsletter Subscriptions

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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.



### SONOMA MOUNTAIN ZEN CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

“For the Beneficial Protection  
and Awakening of All Beings”



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