

Practice Period

January 25 - February 22, 2025

“Therefore, that is why Shakyamuni’s Winter training period in one place is the same as Manjusri’s practice in three places. If there is no training period, there are no Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. All descendants of the Buddhas and Ancestors must practice in a Winter training period.

If we participate in a Winter training period, we are the descendants of the Buddhas and Ancestors. To practice in a Winter training period is to possess the body and mind of the Buddhas and Ancestors. It is their enlightened vision and the root of their life. If we do not practice in a Winter training period, we are not the Dharma heirs of the Buddhas and Ancestors and cannot become Buddhas and Ancestors. All the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas made with clay, wood, gold, or the seven precious jewels are present in the Winter training period. During this training period we live within the Three Treasures of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha; it is our justification and method of teaching.

All who wish to be true disciples of the Buddhas and Ancestors surely practice the Winter training period.”

VI.13.1245 AD

From Dogen Zenji SHOBOGENZO
The Eye and Treasury of the True Law

I want to share with you the tradition and spirit of the coming practice period beginning Saturday, January 25 at 10:30 am. In Dogen’s time, the practice period was held in a monastery for thousands of monks for 3 months. Here at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, we have maintained the spirit of this sustained practice for lay people for a shorter period of time. Through the years, we have developed various ways to accommodate working people so that they can be included. Zen mind is an awakened, open mind in the midst of our very ordinary lives. We emphasize that no matter where we are, or whatever we are doing, we are all practicing the Way together as one body and as one mind. So please be wholehearted in your practice and try to be present moment after moment, day after day. Try to extend yourself a little more in practice, but be realistic in your commitment.

To deepen our wholehearted practice, there will be the “Actualizing the Way” 7-day sesshin from Sunday, February 9, 7:30 pm to Sunday, February 16, 4:00 pm.

Please be sure to fill out the practice participation form, which clarifies how you intend to participate at the Zen Center, and also how you will be practicing at home and at work during this month. Carefully review the form and mark exactly what you will do each day at home, state what days you will be at the Zen Center and send a copy to office@smzc.org. You may participate in a variety of ways—a few days or a week, day practice on any day of the week, dropping in for part of the day, or just coming for scheduled periods of zazen meditation throughout the month. If you have any questions about the ways you may participate, please feel free to email.

Please come on the first morning, Saturday, January 25 at 10:30 am to practice with Michael Zenmen McCulloch (Reality Front Face), who will be the Shuso (head student) for the month. We will also end the practice period together on Saturday, February 22 at 10:30 am with the Revealing the Self closing ceremony, where the Shuso will be challenged with dharma questions from each of us. It is at these ceremonies where we will experience the wisdom and teachings of our ancestors. Through ritual, our ordinary minds have the opportunity to transform at once into universal Buddha Mind. Through the days of practicing together, near or far, we will surely settle into a deeper Self, which is intimate, stable, and complete.

It is my hope that we will come away with a clearer sense of how to make this practice vital and authentic in every moment of our lives. I look forward to your sincere effort to participate as much as possible.

Clarifying life, clarifying death is the great matter for all human beings!

In Gassho,
Danaparamita



Jakusho Kwong

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