

Mountain Wine

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2020

PRACTICING DEEPEST WISDOM

This lecture was given by Kwong-roshi during SMZC's Community Zoom Gathering on Saturday, June 6, 2020.

I should say something about the current crisis that began in America and is all over the world now. Actually, its spreading is very much like a pandemic. It's not just about 410 years of enslavement of blacks in America—which began with the misunderstandings caused by our ignorance, greed and anger. It began long before. The three poisons have created these situations forever.

Now, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, people are staying at home, not working, and getting news immediately from the internet, TV, and social media. So people are immediately aware of the protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd, and joining them; this is growing into an important civil rights movement. I feel this demonstrates the basic goodness of human beings.

In our recitations and chants we say sentient beings. "Sentient beings"—what does that mean? Who are they? Humans. It's all humanity.

This whole movement happening right now all over the world is because of the basic goodness of humanity; it shows that human beings fundamentally know the difference between right and wrong. I mean if we didn't know that, we'd all be dead.

We'd all be dead if the basic goodness of human beings didn't exist.

Buddhism has always rooted for the underdog and the oppressed.

We have a study group which meets now on Zoom. The Dharma talks given on Saturday are generally about the Dharma, but I think our speakers' talks on Saturday should be based on whatever book the study group is currently reading. Zen students read all kinds of books about Dogen; why not read something together so we can discuss it and begin understanding it?

I'm aware that reading these books, especially this one, (*Deepest Practice, Deepest Wisdom*) may be very difficult to understand, but, as we study it together. ...

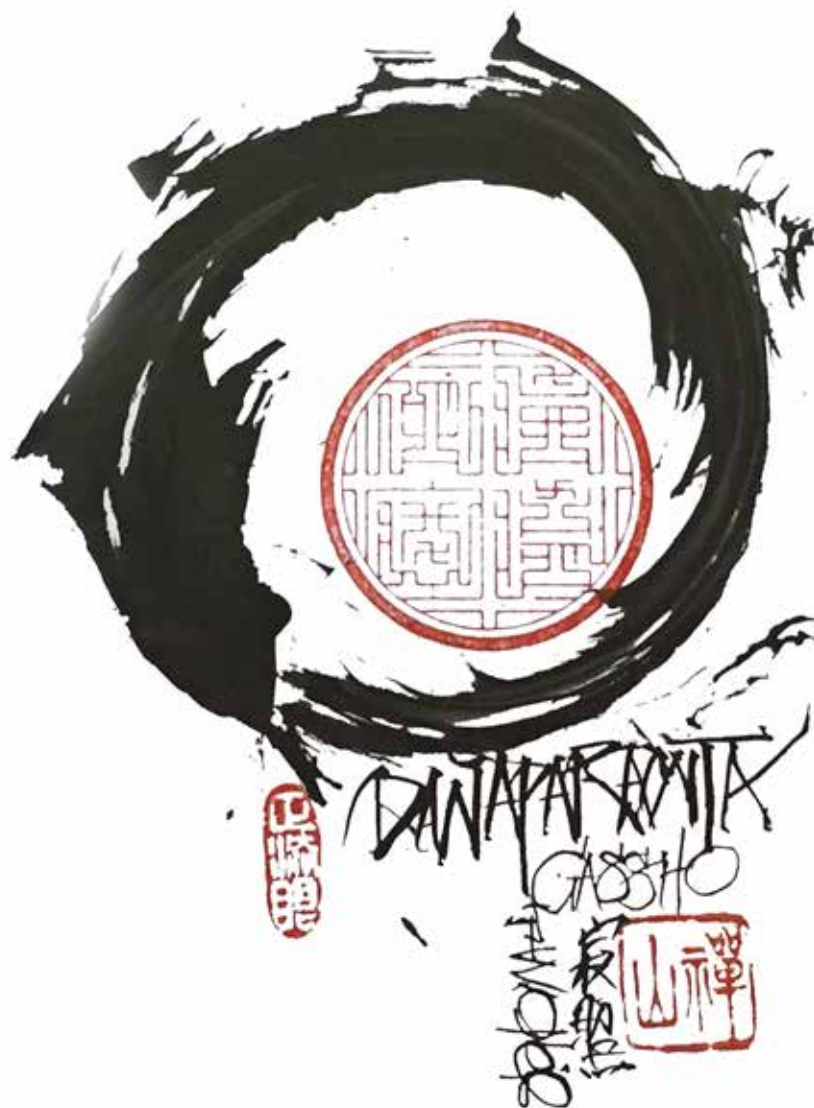
When you climb a mountain, there's a person who knows the mountain, who knows the path and they will guide you up to the top—and not just to the top but also back down, which is just as important as going to the top. In fact, maybe coming back down is the most important thing.

Here's the book which we're reading now in our study group.

[Roshi holds up *Deepest Practice, Deepest Wisdom* by Kosho Uchiyama and asks if viewers can see it.]

I'm going to read and comment on Dogen's fascicle *Maka Hannya Haramitsu (Practicing Deepest Wisdom)* and Uchiyama's commentary. It's about the Prajna Paramita Sutra. It's about the skandhas, which I've been talking about for a long time.

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Please accept my THREEFOLD ENSO - C 19,
GET YOUR KNEE OFF MY NECK and WHATEVER YOU WISH.....
with HUMANITY'S BLESSINGS of GOODNESS and KINDNESS.....
We do not oppose anyone; Only GREED, ANGER & IGNORANCE.....
ANCIENT PRINCIPLES for SOCIAL JUSTICE? Mmmmmmmmm.....

Jakusho Kwong-roshi

You know, the Heart Sutra is such an ancient thing. No one knows exactly when it first appeared. But 'sutra' means the universe. Sutras are Buddhist scriptures presenting the underlying principles of the universe.

The Buddha is considered to be a human being, but that refers to the historical Buddha. "Buddha" actually means "awakened one," and this awakening is very important. So, when we say Buddha in this way, we add the other name, "Tathagata," to Buddha's name. "Tathagata" means the Buddha thus gone, thus disappearing. "Tathaagata" means the Buddha thus cometh. "Tathata" means suchness, thusness, ultimate reality—emptiness. Suchness comes, suchness goes. This is the tension of the opposites. So, Buddha the awakened person is described as suchness. It's the suchness within each individual that comes and that goes.

On page 22, quoting Uchiyama-roshi:

"*The whole body*: the five aggregates are forms [that is, material form, matter; the rest of the four are psychological], sensation, perception, predilections [or preferences], and consciousness. This is the fivefold prajna. Clear seeing is itself prajna."

So, these skandhas are the fivefold prajna, and prajna is insight. Insight into what? To our being, our true nature. Prajna.

On one hand they say the skandhas make up our personal self. But, as I was explaining, when we are sitting zazen, these five skandhas are suspended by the mind's mechanics. This is the purpose of meditation.

When the skandhas interact, they create the fabricated self.

But once they're not interacting, you are not creating karma.

Actually, I just repeat the same thing in every talk, but it's [about] what makes karma: we call it the law—Dharma is the law—not the judiciary law, but the law of the universe, of dependent origination. This is how karma happens.

OK. The word *when*. There was a Rinzai roshi who explained the four-letter word *when*. He said that when the vertical—the absolute—line and the horizontal—the relative or conventional—lines are drawn (this is the dark world and this is the light world)—when they intersect that's *when*. It's sudden.

You could say when there is *this*—you, the personal you—there is *that*; this is karma. This is cause and effect. You are thinking you know who you are, but in the Buddhadharma you are not who you think you are. This is the saving grace.

So again, when *this*—the *I am*—appears, *that* appears, so we have the subject and the object—the duality which creates the world of suffering.

In meditation, *when* there is not *this*, there is not *that*. It means that nothing disappears, nothing is disappearing. But when I am not who I think I am, then those things, those objects outside of me, are not what they seem to be. We've become very attached and fixed on those objects, we've begun comparing, we've begun liking. We can like or dislike, but all this causes karma.

Finally, when there is no longer *this*—no Roshi, not even Bill [chuckles]—when there's no longer *this* there's no longer *that*. We see the same world but in a completely different way. We're free from that suffering.

OK. This is what he's saying [again quoting Uchiyama-roshi]:

"The five aggregates [which produce the false self] are form, sensation, perception, predilections/discrimination, and consciousness; This is fivefold prajna. Clear seeing is itself prajna." Prajna is wisdom itself.

Actually, even after years and years of study I didn't really talk or think much about the Heart Sutra. But maybe because I didn't, it became embedded in my body and my mind, and only now, after such a long time, I'm beginning to understand it. But understanding in the sense of not only experiencing it but of being able to explain it simply to other people.

There are three things: the five skandhas, which are the fivefold prajna; karma, which is created from the five aggregates of the five skandhas; and impermanence. These three are the great cause of human suffering. Buddha stated this 2,585 years ago and it is still true.

On page 24 of the book, Uchiyama tells us that the oldest Buddhist sutras are the Agama Sutras. "In the *Shorter Agama Sutras* there is one sutra, *The Sutra of Impermanence*, in which Shakyamuni Buddha's basic teaching about the five skandhas is recorded. The Tathagata said, 'You must see that form—material form—is impermanent. ... To see things this way is the right way of truly seeing.' He continues, 'A person who correctly sees forms arouses the mind of departure.'"

[Roshi chuckles] This is endless. It's another way of saying let go, do not be attached, do not grasp for the form, because when you do this causes your suffering. It's as simple as that.

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“Arouses the mind of departure ... A person who arouses the mind of departure from attachment to material objects extinguishes greed, violence, and ignorance. A person who extinguishes greed and pleasure [and violence and ignorance] liberates his or her mind.”

You’re free, you’re free from suffering.

“Thus, you should see that sensation—also perception, discrimination, and consciousness—are also impermanent. All things change. Their nature is impermanence.”

They are all impermanent. I think no one can argue with that, because everything is always changing, nothing is fixed. Nothing lasts in its same condition forever, because it was created by conditions.

“Observing things in this way is the right way of seeing. When we see things in this way we can be liberated. This is the basic teaching about the five skandhas in the Agama Sutras. However, in the Prajnaparamita Sutras... it is said that impermanence is also impermanent. This is called *emptiness*, ‘without fixed permanent nature.’”

This is interesting! But it is logical, isn’t it? The sutra states that impermanence is also impermanent. It finally comes down to this. It is called emptiness. There’s nothing there. It’s this and also it’s gone. I mean, isn’t it true? No one can refute the statement that everything is impermanent. This moment is gone: the present is no longer the present; it’s the past, and it’s proceeding to the future—to you and me!

Nagarjuna, the great Indian patriarch, said that impermanence is emptiness.

He founded the Madyamaka (Middle Way) School, the doctrine of emptiness, or dependent origination—that all things are empty of intrinsic existence and nature. He stated, “Since nothing has arisen without depending on something, there is nothing that is not empty.”

Emptiness means without fixed permanent nature.

Here is a good way, I think, to explain emptiness. [Quoting Uchiyama-roshi:]

“In the *Larger Prajna Sutra*, it is written, ‘If you want to practice the prajnaparamita, do not attach yourself to the view that form resides in impermanence. Do not be caught up in the view of any of these skandhas. Why? Because impermanence is empty.’

Since impermanence is empty, it cannot be called impermanence. There is no impermanence apart from emptiness. Impermanence is emptiness. Emptiness is impermanence.’ We should not take for granted that the five skandhas are impermanent. Impermanence is also impermanent. Since everything is impermanent, without exception, we cannot grasp anything at all. So we call it emptiness.”

Silent Demonstration & Transmission of Emptiness - roshi

So I’m still here, but the idea of myself is not here. But you can still see me, right? OK. A part that I like at the beginning of this reading, that page that I started off with, about the whole body—this is kind of how I see things, how I always have kind of seen things.



Roshi at Summer Ango Closing Ceremony 2013

The whole body means that there’s no separation between this body and your body [subject and object], and when we see things in that way there’s no separation. And then I am I and you are you. There’s no discrimination, no separation, “Since we see each of us is life-as-all-beings, there is no separation between the seer and things seen, the seer is also seen.” There’s no separation between the seer and the seen.

So, I as I am looking out at things and Dharmas and objects, those things are looking at me. I’ve always thought that way. [Laughs] It sounds a little crazy, but it’s true, because my life is not separated from those objects. Those objects are very much part of my life. In fact, those objects exist within my being—because if they did not, how would I be able to recognize them? How could I recognize beauty? How could I recognize sound? They are all here, intimately close, in fact closer than you think.

Uchiyama-roshi gives an example:

“When we talk about the sun, we see everything as if we are the sun itself.”

[Roshi gestures to his heart.] The sun is here. The sun recognizes the sun.

“We emit the light, and so see all beings. This is what I mean when I say that the sun sees us. Although we imagine that the sun is vast, it is not something vast in comparison to ourselves. As the reality of life, the sun is just an aspect of ourselves. Because we illuminate the sun with our own light as life-as-all-beings, it is possible for us to see the sun as the sun.”

I’ve read this before. It’s called the *Thirty Verses on Conscious Life* (*Trimsika-vijnapti*): of seeing things as it is and it’s by our renowned ancestor, Vasubandhu. In fact, you can even Google this.

OK. We go down to near the end to non-natures...

“There are three non-natures of each thing in the universe. First it is a non-nature because it is a thing. The non-nature means the emptiness of that very thing; the suchness—tatha—the suchness, of that thing. The ultimate reality of that thing is emptiness.”

“The second is the non-nature because it does not exist by itself.”

Now this is really important. This emptiness, or this non-nature, is related to all things. Your personal self is not related to all things, it’s separate; it’s independent of all things. But this non-nature is the characteristic of all things.

“The third is the absence of its own nature. It is the emptiness of emptiness.”

I mean, that’s thorough! What do you have left? Nothing! [chuckles]—Which is a very positive thing, which is the ultimate positive thing.

This whole presentation of non-natures is directed towards ending dualistic grasping. We want to end dualistic grasping, because dualistic grasping or attachment makes us suffer, makes humanity suffer.

“When mind no longer grasps an objective object, it will stop at mind only.

Consciousness is mind. It will stop at consciousness only.”

Without any object to grasp, we’re no longer grasping—trying to get or push away. We’re no longer grasping; there is no longer *that*. And this mind, this non-grasping mind—called *mind only* or *conscious only*—stops right there because there’s nothing. We are free, we are liberated from our grasping and pushing away.

It took me a long time to begin to understand this. I had to climb the mountain many, many times. It all depends on your resolve—if you want to understand, if you want to be free from suffering, and to free the minds of others who suffer.

When you’re free from the grasping, free from attachment, this mind—not this mind, but your mind, my mind, the mind of humanity—is without discrimination. There’s no black. There’s no white, even. It’s without discrimination. It’s also without attainment: we’re not trying to get enlightenment.

“But the wisdom operates when the double incapacity is abandoned. When this happens the transformation at the base is realized.” That’s your realization, that’s your freedom.

“This is what we call the realm of non setback. Inconceivable, beneficial, stable bliss. The body of liberation is called the Dharma Body of the great sage Tathagata Shakyamuni Buddha.”

In our kitchen we have a very large calligraphy. I had never really tried to see what it said. It was written very quickly and given to me by Kobun Otagawa-roshi, who was one of my mentors. I realized that it said “Dharma Body.” That’s one of the Trikayas: Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya. These are three bodies of the Buddha Tathagata. The first one, Dharmakaya — the Dharma body — *hoshin* — means emptiness.

So, everyone understands? OK.

I think the talks should go along with our study group. Don’t you think it makes them more cohesive? And more people may even join our study group. There are so many books to read. Why not read one together? One path to go up the mountain [together].

Okay, it’s 11:33. Do we have time for questions?

[At this point Roshi greets and talks to participants on Zoom. The following are two questions from the Q&A period.]



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Susan Geshin: Dogen said that his teacher taught ‘dropping off body and mind’ and it occurred to me that body was like form and what might be meant by mind would be the mental aspects of the five skandhas. Maybe that’s what Dogen meant when he said ‘dropping off body and mind?’”

Roshi: I struggled with that. ‘Dropping off body and mind’—what could that mean? You know, when I first heard that phrase it was very mysterious; it had a mystical aura about it, but it kept appearing as I kept on reading. What he means about dropping off body and mind means the idea of the self; that’s what he means: dropping off the idea of yourself, or releasing yourself from thinking of the idea, the limited idea of self which includes your mind and your body.

Susan Geshin: So you can keep going and not get stuck...?

Roshi: So you can live a free life, yeah. That’s the whole purpose: to be free of suffering and to share this freedom or liberation with everyone; not just for yourself, but for everyone.

Boy, we’ve got nearly a hundred people here, and no one else wants to ask a question?

Student: Is there a force beyond karma—a force or energy—that creates that moment of *when*?

Roshi: It’s hard to say. It depends on the person and the person’s experience in life; what they are doing and what their intention is. What is the meaning of our life? What direction are we going? We have to know what our destination is.

[Seeing all Zoom participants] I can see everyone, yeah!

Thank you.

Gassho ❖



FROM TOKYO & L.A. WITH LOVE

by Lon Kurashige

Coming to Genjoji was the final stop on our unintended Shunryu Suzuki tour. You might call it a pilgrimage rather than tour since I was hosting two Buddhist nuns from Japan for whom everything they do is practice—even if they came to the US mainly to sightsee. I had met Yuko Yamada and her abess Senshu Yamada (aka Anjusama) while working in Tokyo last year. Yuko was one of my instructors at a foreigners sesshin held at the historic Eiheiji temple, Dogen Zenji’s monastery in the mountains off the East (Japan) Sea. After returning to Tokyo, Yuko and I organized monthly zazen sessions held in English at her and Anjusama’s temple.

I was their unofficial tour guide for their California trip. I showed them around Los Angeles, where I live, and parts of San Francisco and its environs. The first stop on the Suzuki course was Sokoji temple, the Soto Zen mission where he lived and worked during his initial years in the US. Although housed in a different building from the one Suzuki-roshi called home, Sokoji retains its mission to care for the religious needs of Japanese immigrants, and now mostly latter American-born generations. It was at Sokoji under Suzuki’s guidance where a young Kwong-roshi and his wife Shinko forged a life-long relationship with the Dharma.

Our next stop on the tour wasn’t a stop at all but merely driving by Green Gulch farm on our way back from Muir Woods. Yuko had been there before and heard how after founding San Francisco Zen Center, Suzuki-roshi planted seeds for its latter expansion, adding Tassajara monastery and then Green Gulch. The next day we literally tasted Green Gulch’s organic wonders when we ate at Greens Restaurant—another of Suzuki-roshi’s seeds flowering after his death.

I also count myself as one of his seeds. While I never met Suzuki-roshi or visited any of the non-restaurant institutions connected to SFZC, I have made a near-daily practice of listening to the audiobook of his *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*. I meditated to a random chapter or two while commuting on Tokyo’s trains and subways. I call this PDZ—public display of zazen. When editing an article Yuko was writing about her religious path, Suzuki-roshi’s book came to mind. I didn’t know how much to change Yuko’s English to make it sound natural to American ears. I recalled watching a video of Suzuki-roshi giving a talk and wondered how much his voice was edited in *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*. Upon obtaining a hard copy of the book, I learned that Trudy Dixon, its main editor, had labored for months by herself and with Suzuki-roshi to retain the meaning of his talks while making them understandable in English. Editing a Japanese Zen monk’s talks, it turns out, is much more than correcting grammar and infelicitous expressions. With this realization in mind, I worked with Yuko on numerous drafts of “*One Nun, Two Faiths*” before

it appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of *Tricycle Magazine* at <https://tricycle.org/magazine/catholic-zen-nun/>.

Briefly, the article tells Yuko's story from joining a cloistered Catholic abbey to leaving it to discover zazen—after which she became a Soto Zen nun. The middle part of the article is a kind of Homeric road narrative in which Yuko is sent to a Zen center in US. Soon after arriving, she is ready to return to Japan only to face a series of obstacles prolonging her stay abroad. Before returning home she is required not just to remain in the US for a couple years, but then to move to a Zen center in Germany and thereafter to various other centers throughout Europe. In the last section of the article, Yuko reflects on a question many people pose to her: "In your experience, what is the difference between Catholicism and Buddhism?" What is remarkable is the respect and affection she maintains for her Catholic sisters, even though she has severed all ties to them. There is not a trace in Yuko of the disillusionment about the Church expressed by many "recovering" Catholics.

At Genjoji, Yuko gave a talk and slideshow focusing on the history and current activity of three temples to which she is currently affiliated. One is Eihei-ji, founded by Dogen Zenji in 1244. Yuko is Eihei-ji's first female teacher in its 776-year history. The second temple is Aichi Senmon Nisodo women's monastery in Nagoya, where Yuko trained under Shundo Aoyama-roshi, the most famous Soto Zen nun in Japan. Yuko returns to Nisodo once per month to teach its resident nuns. The final temple is Shogakuji, Yuko's and Anjusama's home temple in Tokyo, which since the late 19th century has the rare distinction of being run entirely by women. Even the temple dog is female!

The climax of our Shunryu Suzuki pilgrimage was paying respect to the master himself at the stupa honoring him. Standing in the forest on the outskirts of Genjoji's property surrounded by large rocks relocated from Tassajara, we were led in chanting and incense offering by Kwong-roshi, Nyoze, and Kashin.

Yuko was deeply impressed with Genjoji's "lively practice and further development of Suzuki-roshi's teachings." She also comments on its uniquely American Buddhist environment. "Since Kwong-roshi and Shinko raised four sons at the Zen Center, and now Nyoze and Kashin are raising their son there, Genjoji projects a family atmosphere. At the same time, it maintains traditional practices like zazen, chanting, and various rituals that also give it the feeling of traditional Japanese monastery. The family and traditional elements mix in perfect harmony."



*Yuko Wakayama Yamada, Vice Abbess of Shogakuji,
a Soto Zen monastery in Tokyo, Japan,
and the first nun to teach at Eihei-ji temple
—at Shunryu Suzuki-roshi's stupa*

Yuko, Anjusama, and I are immensely grateful for the warm hospitality shown to us by everyone at Genjoji, including the rooster that crowed during morning zazen and the resilient trees returning after the great fire a few years back. And, not least, the breathtaking night sky—a sheet of glittering stars. Yuko expresses the sentiments of all three of us in thanking "Kwong-roshi, Shinko-san, Nyoze-san, Kashin-san, and all of Genjoji's sangha members. Let us keep practicing together in the Dharma."



Lon Kurashige is professor of history at the University of Southern California. He is writing a memoir of his year in Tokyo tentatively titled, "The Stupid Professor Abroad in Japan."

ENGAGED PRACTICE AT GENJOJI

by *Koten Price, Workleader*

As this crisis continues to evolve and we more deeply understand the far-reaching effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, here on the mountain we are beginning to look cautiously at what reconvening for intimate practice might be like. It has been wonderful to see all of you coming together in our Zoom Zendo. Although it will probably be a long time before we are able to practice together as closely as we used to, there has been a great effort by Zen Center staff working with Michael Zenmen McCulloch to create a detailed/comprehensive plan to allow members to visit Sonoma Mountain and return to practice safely.

Genjoji will be welcoming outdoor work volunteers as our first move toward reopening the Zen Center. This is a great opportunity for members to get involved and directly support the dharma here on Sonoma Mountain, engaging in this vital activity of our lives. Volunteers will work outside and alone or spaced apart if in a group. Safety of both volunteers and SMZC staff is the highest priority. Mainly we will have members working by themselves to promote social distancing. There are several areas that need attention as we have been quite a small group for the length of the shutdown. Projects of concern include gardening/weeding, cabin demolition, light construction/maintenance, weed whacking, cleaning, mowing/landscaping, and more.

Every bit of help is appreciated whether it's one samu period, a day, or a weekly commitment to volunteer at Genjoji. We have work practice (samu) on the weekdays from 9 a.m.–12 noon and from 1:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m., but we can work around your schedule if needed and you may work when you are able. Anyone interested in volunteering and assisting the Zen Center with her upkeep and maintenance please contact the office at **office@smzc.org** or **workleader@smzc.org** to receive the packet of guidelines for those who plan to visit and work at the temple. Thank you for your consideration and continued wholehearted support. I look forward to working with you.

Engage wholeheartedly in your practice! ❖



Work Sutra/Service 作務 Volunteers

Miles Atchison

Assisting in demolition and tractor instructions

Janet Myoho Buckendhal

Zen Dust Store upkeep weekly

**Ed Genzen Cadman, Chris Katsuzen King,
Peter Kanzenchi Pocock, Nancy Seiko Reder &
Sally Myogetsu Scoville**

Working on Kwong-roshi's book

Annie Seiken Hammang & Nancy Seiko Reder

Editing assistant for Black Lives Matter statement

Tom Jakuryu Huffman

Clearing brush and land steward

Michael Zenmen McCulloch

Epidemiologist advising on SMZC
COVID-19 safety prevention measures

Jeff Moore

Weed whacking overgrown grass every Thursday

Jason Shinmei Nichols

Pickup and delivery of SMZC's newest land steward
"Daiki" the Kubota Tractor
(driving 6 hours to Covolo, CA with his diesel truck)

Mark Peterson

Wood carving Gegyo 樹魚
(hanging fish gable pendants for disaster prevention)





Tractor "Daiki" Ceremony (See Resident Report on page 13.)



CALENDAR

July 4 **"Moment to Moment"
1/2-Day Sitting Online**
This retreat is an introduction to Zen training and an opportunity for beginners and experienced sitters to plunge into the heart of Zen practice. Retreatants will experience a moderate schedule of zazen (five periods of sitting meditation), samu (work practice around your own home), and sutra chanting.

July 4 **Saturday Community Student Talk
Ed 'Genzen' Cadman**
11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen

July 10 **Temple Stay: Rest in a Restorative
Environment and Experience Soto Zen
Buddhism (POSTPONED)**
Temple stay is an opportunity to experience the rituals and spiritual practice of authentic Soto Zen Buddhism. Take the backward step and illuminate the jewel within yourself. Friday July 10 - Saturday July 11. Non-member: \$90

July 11 **Saturday Community Student Talk
Erik 'Zenjin' Shearer**
11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30am Online Zazen

July 18 **Saturday Community Student Talk
John 'Kaian' Jennings**
11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:20 a.m. Online Zazen

July 25 **Saturday Community Student Talk
Gosia 'Myoju' Sieradzka, Shuso
(Head Student) for Online Summer Ango**
11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30am Online Zazen
She is a student of Kwong-roshi and a sangha member of Kannon Zen Center, SMZC's affiliate in Poland.

July 27 – August 22 Summer Ango Practice Period Online
SMZC's Summer Practice Period begins. Gosia "Myoju" Sieradzka will take the position as Shuso (head student). Opening ceremony begins Monday evening at 7:30 p.m. online. (More schedule details to follow...)

August 1 **Practice Period Shuso Talk
Gosia 'Myoju' Sieradzka**
11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Gosia is a student of Kwong-roshi. Ango July 27 – August 22 (Detailed schedule to follow...)

August 8 **Practice Period Shuso Talk
Gosia 'Myoju' Sieradzka**
11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Gosia is a student of Kwong-roshi. Ango July 27 – August 22 (Detailed schedule to follow...)

August 9 – 16 **"Actualizing the Way" Seven-Day Sesshin
Online**
A multi-day retreat for experienced sitters. Manifest Zazen mind in an intensive schedule that includes prostrations, seven daily periods of meditation, chanting, mindful work practice, Dharma talks, and private interviews with Kwong-roshi. Days begin at 6:00 a.m. and end at 9:00 p.m. Begins with Sunday 7:30 p.m. online.

August 22 **Ango Closing Ceremony –
Revealing the Self**
10:30 a.m. Online Zazen; 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Ceremony
Participants will ask Shuso Gosia "Myoju" Sieradzka (head student) dharma questions to reveal the truth of practice. We encourage all members to close the practice period with us. Open to the public.

August 29 **Kids Community Online**
11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. This program is an opportunity for Sangha members and friends to introduce their children to the Zen Center in a fun and creative way. Please join us in the online zendo for the beginning of the student talk with Mike. At approximately 11:15 a.m., the kids program participants will move over to another online zoom link to continue activities with Jesse.

Parents are welcome to join in the fun along with their children or continue participating with student talk (on another device). You are invited to have a small rock or smooth stone handy during the program.

August 29 **Saturday Community Student Talk
Mike 'Genrei' Persinger**
11:00 a.m. Online Zendo following 10:30 a.m. Online Zazen
Online Student Talk given by Mike Persinger, following zazen.

September 5 **Late Summer Workfest**
8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. On this Saturday we will come together to work, fund and manifest the Dharma. At this Workfest we will be taking down four resident buildings and attend to general groundskeeping. All skillsets will be helpful.

**September 10 – 13 Friends of Zen – Hollow Bones
Three-Day Retreat**
Friends of Zen – Hollow Bones will hold their annual retreat lead by the female teachers of their order.

September 12 **Saturday Community Dharma Talk
Jakusho Kwong-roshi**
11:00 a.m. in Zendo following 10:30 a.m. zazen

September 19 **SMZC's Temple Benefit**
11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Benefit for Sonoma Mountain Zen Center
Celebrate and support our new Sonoma Mandala with an elegant, intimate afternoon of Zen on the tranquil mountainside. Don't miss this event! Bring family, friends, kids, and neighbors! Mark your calendars and spread the word!

September 26 **Saturday Community Talk
Katsuzen King**
11:00 a.m. in Zendo following 10:30 a.m. zazen

September 26 **Kids Community**
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. This program is an opportunity for Sangha members and friends to introduce their children to the Zen Center in a fun and creative way. Supervised, age-appropriate activities introduce children to the Zen Center as a fun, safe, and nurturing environment. Children can join their parents for an informal vegetarian lunch following activities. Parents are welcome to join in the fun along with their children or participate in Saturday community practice.

October 3 **Saturday Community Dharma Talk
Jakusho Kwong-roshi**
11:00 a.m. in Zendo following 10:30 a.m. zazen



October 3 Spirit of Tea – Purifying the Mind

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Soei Mouri-Sensei and Kashin Julie Kwong will be leading this workshop on the study of tea in the Omote Senke tradition.

October 6 Fall Study Group

Tuesdays 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Explore the fundamental teachings of Soto Zen and Buddhism as a foundation and inspiration for daily practice in a six-week study course with questions, answers, and dialogue.

October 9 – 10 Temple Stay: Rest in a Restorative Environment & Experience Soto Zen

Temple stay is an opportunity to experience the rituals and spiritual practice of authentic Soto Zen Buddhism. Take the backward step and illuminate the jewel within yourself. Non-member: \$90

**October 10 Saturday Community Student Talk
'Tensan' Chuck Ramey, Board President**

11:00 a.m. in Zendo following 10:30 a.m. zazen

October 15 – 18 Bodhidharma Three-Day Sesshin

Sesshin, literally “to touch the Mind,” is a period of intensive meditation retreat to let go of the conditioned self and resume our original nature. This special time of practice will allow us to dive into the core of Zen training. Non-Member: \$90/night, General: \$80/night, Practicing: \$75/night

October 17 Kaiseki Ceremony Benefit

Kaiseki (懐石) or kaiseki-ryori (懐石料理) is a traditional multi-course Japanese dinner. This dinner will be held as a fundraising dinner for The Sonoma Mandala Project. To purchase these limited availability tickets contact the office at office@smzc.org.

October 21 – 24 Taste of Zen Workshop: Meditation and Temple Cooking (Shojin Ryori)

The Heart of Zen is in everyday action. It permeates our waking life in simple acts. The title of Tenzo (head temple cook) is one of the most venerated in the Soto Zen practice. It is through the conscious practice of adhering to the forms of Shojin Ryori (temple cooking), that we can practice being fully awake in our practice. This workshop will explore the practice of “just sitting” and how that informs the basic act of cooking. The instructions on this subtle form of cooking will demonstrate how to offer a meal with the “six flavors and the three qualities” with a harmony that serves community.

**October 24 Saturday Community Dharma Talk
Nyoze Kwong**

11:00 a.m. in Zendo following 10:30 a.m. zazen

**October 31 Saturday Community Student Talk
Margaret 'Saiten' Tighe**

11:00 a.m. in Zendo following 10:30 a.m. zazen

**November 7 Saturday Community Dharma Talk
Jakusho Kwong-roshi**

11:00 a.m. in Zendo following 10:30 a.m. zazen

November 7 Introduction to Zen Workshop: Returning to Forms and Rituals of Everyday Life

An introduction to the basics of Zen with instruction. This workshop will be taught by Zen student 'Koten' David Price.

November 14 “Peacefully Settling Down” One-Day Sitting

This retreat is an introduction to Zen training and an opportunity for beginners and experienced sitters to plunge into the heart of Zen practice. Retreatants will experience a moderate schedule of zazen (eight periods of sitting meditation), samu (work practice), oryoki (formal meals) and sutra chanting.

**November 21 Saturday Community Student Talk
Susan 'Geshin' Frey**

11:00 a.m. in Zendo following 10:30 a.m. zazen

**November 28 Saturday Community Talk
Shinko Kwong**

11:00 a.m. in Zendo following 10:30 a.m. zazen

November 28 Jukai Ceremony: Receiving the Precepts

2:00 p.m. Reception 2:45 p.m. Jukai literally means “to receive the precepts.” Jakusho Kwong-roshi will offer the precepts to this year’s students. Jukai is the ceremony of formally becoming a Buddhist and of taking the 16 Bodhisattva precepts as guidelines for life.

November 30 – December 5 Rohastu Five-Day Sesshin

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 a.m. and includes 10 periods of meditation, chanting, mindful work, Dharma talks, and private interviews, and ends at 9 p.m. The retreat begins at 7:30 p.m. Monday and ends at 8 a.m. Saturday. Special arrangements can be made for those unable to come for 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 a.m. to 4 a.m.

December 4 Tetsuya – Founder’s Ceremony All-Night Sitting

In the spirit of Buddha’s enlightenment, Friday night we will be in Tetsuya, which means we will “sit through the whole night” from 12 a.m. to 4 a.m.

**December 12 Saturday Community Dharma Talk
Jakusho Kwong-roshi**

11:00 a.m. in Zendo following 10:30 a.m. zazen

December 12 Kids Community

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. This program is an opportunity for Sangha members and friends to introduce their children to the Zen Center in a fun and creative way. Supervised, age-appropriate activities introduce children to the Zen Center as a fun, safe, nurturing environment.

Children can join their parents for an informal vegetarian lunch following activities. Parents are welcome to join in the fun along with their children or participate in Saturday community practice.

SANGHA NEWS & MEMBERSHIP

by Erik Zenjin Shearer

SMZC's "Zoom Zazen" continues to bring our Sangha together in practice while we adapt to the new circumstances facing our world in light of the pandemic. Online practice is well-attended and has provided a unique opportunity for us to sit with members of Wisteria Wind from all over the world. As a reminder, the Online Zendo at SMZC meets for morning zazen Monday through Saturday from 6:30-7:00 a.m. PST. Evening zazen begins at 7:30 and concludes at 8:00 p.m. PST with the Four Vows. All members, friends, and guests are invited to join us in practice. Information about logging in, online forms, and guidelines, can be found on the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center Website at <https://www.smzc.org/online-zendo>. In addition to the new morning and evening practice schedule, everyone is invited to join for regular Saturday community practice, with zazen starting at 10:30 a.m. and a dharma talk at 11:00 a.m.

On Saturday, May 16, Sonoma Mountain Zen Center gathered together online for a historic meeting of our entire Wisteria Wind Sangha, including members from Natthagi Zen Center in Iceland, Kannon Zen Center in Poland, and from affiliate sitting groups at the Windsor Zen Group in Sonoma County, Del Ray Zen Community in Alexandria Virginia, and South Sound Zen in Tacoma, Washington. This gathering marked only the second time that all of our centers and affiliate groups have gathered simultaneously and the first time online! Each Center and affiliate group provided a bit about their center and how they have managed the shift to online practice. It was deeply moving to see how Kwong-roshi's teachings and energy have resonated around the world and drawn all of us together as a Sangha. Thank you to everyone who attended and presented!

SMZC will continue to offer online programming for the foreseeable future while we adjust to a world that continues to reinforce the lessons of impermanence and change. Recordings of our Saturday dharma talks are available on our YouTube and Facebook pages. Additionally, Nyoze and Kashin have been posting regular videos discussing issues of practicing in our current environment. These talks are more conversational and provide another way for us to ground our Zen practice in the everyday. Please find us on YouTube by searching for "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" and subscribe to our channel. You can also find us on Facebook where we post all of the videos that are uploaded on YouTube.

The summer practice period is coming up and will be offered online. Please see [smzc.org](https://www.smzc.org) for details on days, times, and expanded opportunities for practice during Ango. Roshi continues to encourage all students to sign up for dokusan, which is available via Zoom. Please contact the office for up-to-date information on registering for a meeting with Roshi or with Nyoze.

VOLUNTEERING

While we are continuing our practice online, we still have need of volunteers to work on projects at Sonoma Mountain and from home. Volunteer work on the property is governed by strict pandemic protocols and does not involve working inside or with other members. Volunteer opportunities at home include helping the office with projects and possible phone trees as we work to stay connected with all of our members. Please contact Greta at office@smzc.org or Koten at workleader@smzc.org if you are interested and have the time to help out.

MEMBERSHIP

We would like to welcome several new members this month. Bart Bloomberg joins us from Santa Rosa. Joan Scott joins us from Canada. Wae Lippard joins us from Del Ray Zen in Alexandria, Virginia. All have been active in our online sittings. We are grateful that our online Zendo has provided this opportunity for each of you to join us in practice. Welcome! ❖



Kids Community Event (pre-COVID-19)



Sonoma Mountain Zen Center

Black Lives Matter

With the tragic death of George Floyd, and the worldwide response in protest of police violence against people of color everywhere, as students of the Buddha Way, we cannot remain silent.

Racism in all its forms is the most virulent and dangerous form of delusion that fails to grasp the interdependent nature of being. It manifests in subtle and overt forms of individual and institutional violence and oppression that promotes great suffering in the world. Based in the ideas that human beings are separate from one another, and fear of the other, it is rooted in and arises from our inherent ego driven greed, anger and ignorance.

Kwong-roshi has said, "...humanity's blessings of goodness and kindness are the terms of ancient justice." The Bodhisattva Vow to save all sentient beings embodies our commitment to compassion and loving kindness, and hearing the great suffering expressed in this worldwide movement. It speaks to the need for all of us to acknowledge the deep roots of racism in all its' forms.

Forty-five years ago, Jakusho Kwong-roshi founded Sonoma Mountain Zen Center in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki-roshi, who once wrote:

*We practice our way with things as they naturally occur, going
with people, suffering with them, helping to relieve their suffering,
and encouraging them to go on and on.*

It is in this spirit, that we call on all people everywhere as well as our social, political, religious and cultural institutions to hear the suffering expressed in this movement and respond with action to relieve the suffering of all sentient beings.

Chuck Tensan Ramey

President, Sonoma Mountain Zen Center

Board of Trustees

RESIDENT REPORT

by Susan Gesshin Frey

THE NEW NORMAL AT SMZC

Almost everything in our daily lives as SMZC residents has changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We miss seeing everyone and sitting together in the zendo, but we are grateful that “Zoom Zazen” brings us together every morning and evening. Zoom Study Group is now ongoing every Tuesday night and is open to all. Thanks to the creative thinking of Greta Canton, Kashin, and Nyoze Kwong, we are able to host online versions of all of our programs and implement new ones. Surprisingly, there is an even greater feeling of connection with the sangha.

In our daily life we are following a very comprehensive safety program that meets or exceeds the county and state guidelines. So far everyone remains healthy and in positive spirits. Kashin and Nyoze are able to spend more time with son Ejo (who is home-schooling) while mainly working from their home but still attending to the office and kitchen work part time. Greta Canton has returned to work in the Zen Center office part time 2 days a week. Roshi and Shinko work 100% from their home. All dokusan appointments are now via Zoom. Roshi reports he is happy to be able to keep in touch with more students than ever before.

Those of us who work mainly outside (Koten, Susan, and Angus) continue in their jobs as before while filling in for some of the other duties as needed such as cooking, administrative work, and food/supplies runs. Responsibilities for taking care of the Zen Center involve a little more teamwork and flexibility as the pandemic situation changes our usual routines. Being flexible in the moment is part of our practice!

WORK VOLUNTEERS HELP SMZC

Some member-volunteers are coming in weekly or as needed, working outdoors. Tom Huffman comes every Friday to work on fire mitigation and maintaining the Inryu grounds. Miles Atchison is helping to tear down the former resident cabins. Jesse Brunette helps with weed-whacking, and Jeff Moore comes every Thursday to work on whatever needs doing. The center is open to more volunteers who would like to help. See Workleader Koten’s article on page 8.

KRISTIN AND JASON NICHOLS’ NEW BABY

Former resident Kristin Nichols and husband Jason Nichols had a baby girl this last spring! She is named Eva Sorano Nichols and is keeping both parents quite busy. She was born at 2:16 p.m. on March 6th, right on her due date. Since we were ordered to “shelter-in-place” right after her birth, we haven’t had the chance to see Eva, yet we are looking forward to meeting her! Congratulations Kristin and Jason!



TRACTOR “DAIKI” CEREMONY

Jason Nichols and his pick-up truck helped us bring back a gifted tractor from the donor’s home 200 miles north of SMZC in Covelo, California. We now have a Kubota L3200 with a bush hog (mower), front bucket and even a rototiller attachment. We will put it to use right away to mow the long grass—no longer will we need to rent a mower every summer. Myriad other uses include moving brush and trees for land clearing and firewood. It is truly Buddha’s helping hand. We held a small ceremony to welcome this big orange beauty which we decided to call “Daiki,” meaning “Great Energy.” Thank you, Carol Borden for your generous donation.

RESIDENT UPDATE

Michael Lopatecki, who had been staying here to help complete the sangha cabin remodel, moved back to his home in Chico for the duration of the pandemic. Jundo Farrand, who left the resident training program this spring to work outside, moved to Petaluma to be near his job. He’s doing well, but we miss him. Only 3 residents (Susan, Angus, and Koten) remain at SMZC. Guy Eckett was to have joined us last April as a resident-in-training, but the outbreak of Covid-19 made it impossible for him to come back to the United States. We’re looking forward to his return just as soon as possible.

We celebrated Shinko’s 82nd birthday (was on June 29) with a special dinner. It was the first time we have spent time with Shinko and Roshi informally in the last 3 months. We had a delicious barbecue meal, eating outside at separate picnic tables (face masks on of course when not eating!)

In breaking with our usual routines, we freshly meet what is in front of us. Looking forward to this Summer’s Ango which will be without limits. ❖





Parking to Genjo Building Pathway

SONOMA MANDALA IN THIS TIME OF CHANGE

by Cam Shunryu Kwong

The current health crisis has thrown a financial and scheduling wrench into the various Sonoma Mandala projects. Sonoma Mandala fundraising has been put on hold temporarily as the Zen Center develops its financial plan to weather the virus. Closure and project completion dates have been pushed months out due to social distancing, safety requirements, and contractor availability.

After a few months delay, De Lopez Landscaping will be back on site in July to prepare the water system for County inspections and make the final connections to the existing water system. The civil engineer is working on the final State water permit application section for submittal in August. All site grading work has been completed, and we received final grading and drainage permit approval last month. With the completion of the construction work and approval of the water application submittal, the new water system should be in operation in September.

In February, the County granted “temporary” occupancy of the Ando Quarters and Genjo Building. Zen Center residents have moved from their cabins into the Ando Quarters. Permanent occupancy of the buildings will come in August with the approval of the new pathway to the Genjo Building and the correction of plumbing seismic and safety inspection items.

Because of the shelter in place order and closure, the Zen Center has not allowed volunteers. The lack of volunteers and the cancellation of the Workfest program has created a backlog of projects. One important project the County is requiring is demolition of the Sila, Monk’s, Kanzeon, Dana Tower and Genjo cabins by the end of the year when their building permits expire. Koten has single handedly begun the demolition of the Sila Cabin, but finishing the demolition of the rest of them will be tall order for one person. If you would like to volunteer, please email Koten at workleader@smzc.org about the safety guidelines, procedures, and scheduling.

Angus completed the installation of the Sangha Cabin siding and deck. The beautiful white cedar siding and deck material came from a small lumber mill in Oregon. Insulation, sheetrock, and trim work will begin in July with completion of the building in August.

Despite the setbacks caused by the virus, the Sonoma Mandala Phase 1 projects are being completed. Since 2016, 27 building permits for construction have been received by the Zen Center and by the end of this year, 25 permits will be finalized/completed.

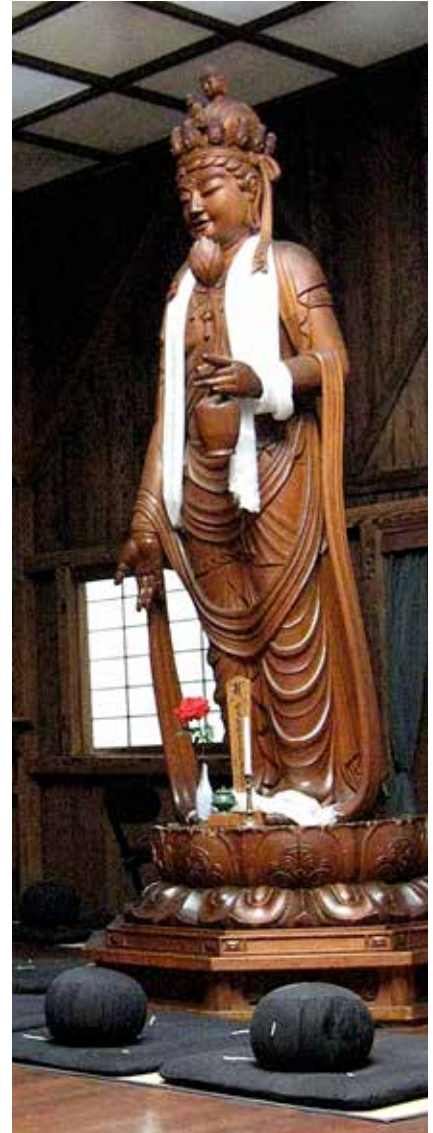
The Zen Center is looking forward to the time when everyone can come practice and use the new construction. ❖



Genjo Building Multi Purpose Room



Sangha Cabin



ZEN DUST NEWS

by Janet Myoho Buckendahl

I hope everyone is safe and well and managing all the challenges and changes going on around us. Zen Dust, of course, is still closed, but I am looking forward to opening the doors once again when it is safe. In the meantime, I am glad to be able to connect with everyone through Zoom for Zazen and Community mornings and offer my heartfelt thanks to all those involved in setting up this very worthwhile program.

Hoping to see you soon. ❖

All Contributions Help
Maintain
The Buddhadharma!

Donate Now!
smzc.org

MEMBERSHIP



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

SMZC's website conveys the essence of our practice to others and invites their participation at the Zen Center. It is found at **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 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 in 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"; Roshi's talks then appear.

Access via **Podbean** — Go to www.podbean.com; in 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; **OPTION 2** (recommended) — click on smzc.podbean.com beside Roshi's picture; once in the site click on any "Listen" button. ❖



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and Awakening of All Beings”

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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.net 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.