

Mountain Wine

July – September 2024

The Nature Of Ritual

The following is excerpted from Kwong-roshi's latest book, Mind Sky, published by Wisdom Publications.

[Ritual] is not about memorizing, but about experiencing and realizing our pure presence.

It is stillness in motion; a flowing stream moving without thought.

Ritual is often defined as a solemn ceremony, a series of formal actions performed according to a prescribed order. The common idea of ritual is that it's just ceremonial religious stuff. But in Zen, it's not just ceremonial stuff. Zen rituals are forms that guide us toward realizing our Buddha nature.

Zen includes many rituals that take many different forms in practice. For example, kyudo, the martial art of archery, is a continuous ritual of preparing to release just one arrow, in slow motion. The first time I watched kyudo, I said to myself, just shoot the arrow! Just shoot it! But the archer is not interested in the actual shot. As she goes slowly from movement to movement, each movement is the shot. Concentration, posture, and movement are more important than actually hitting the target. When she is finally ready to shoot, she takes the archer's stance and places an arrow in the bow, slowly raising it with the feather fletching pointing to her gut. If the archer loses her balance, the arrow may pierce her gut. She is fully engaged; the attention does not wander. That arrow reminds her to be right here, right now. The arrow is guiding the archer as much as the archer guides the arrow.

Here's another sort of guide: In the parking lot at Genjo-ji there are railroad ties to guide drivers, indicating the boundaries of the parking area. If you had come up here before we had those ties in place, how would you have known where to park? Someone once drove his car all the way up to the steps of the zendo! Why? Because there was no guide.

Zen rituals are a different kind of guide: to be right here, fully present. That's the essence of ritual in Zen.

One example of ritual is our practice of offering bows during the morning service. Suzuki-roshi introduced us to the practice of nine bows—nine full prostrations. This is unusual. In Japanese monasteries and temples, it's generally three bows. But when Suzuki-roshi encountered his egocentric young American students, he took one look at us and decided we should bow nine times. At Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, we still maintain this ritual.

Americans are usually so intent on maintaining the self, the ego. So, in the ritual of bowing, we surrender ourselves. Even a simple gassho is a gesture of surrender. A gassho, pressing the palms together with the elbows raised, is a universal gesture that expresses basic human goodness. Accompanied by a bow, it's a symbol of respect, of honoring the other and of giving ourselves.

When one gives something to somebody, it mustn't be while inhaling; that signifies holding back. It is natural to exhale when giving something. Just so, when we bow, we bow on the exhalation; it's spontaneous. We are giving on the exhalation. As we put left and right palms together in gassho, we are putting subject and object together. We put

continues next page



Altar from sesshin in Eirð, Iceland

It took me a long time to fully appreciate the beauty of ritual in Soto Zen tradition. It is not about memorizing, but about experiencing and realizing our pure presence. It is stillness in motion; a flowing stream moving without thought.

all dualities together, bringing them together now in the bow. Delusion and enlightenment are one. As we bow in full prostration, we give, surrendering ego. We return to our true selves. There is no thinking at this point. Rising to stand, we inhale, renewing energy, and we return to the world in serenity.

There are six aspects of ritual in Zen Buddhist ceremonies, eliciting strong responses in the participants. These correspond to the five physical senses, plus mind.

The aspect of sight is simply the deep awareness of what is right in front of us, noticing everything vividly, just as it is.

Sound is manifested in the striking of the bonsho, the great temple bell. When it is struck properly, the bonsho vibrates, and the sound continues, reverberating deeply. When we experience this, when we really hear it, the vibrations of sound cut through our thinking. That's sound, the subtle force of sound.

Smell is incense. Suzuki-roshi used to say that offering incense is a message to Buddha. The incense we use in the zendo is from Tendo Nyojo's temple in China.

Taste takes physical form in the offerings of tea, sweet cakes, and perhaps fruit.

Touch in Soto Zen ritual is represented by water. In ancient times water was considered sacred. Now we just turn on a faucet, and unthinkingly let the water go down the drain. But water is sacred, as we are again realizing on this endangered earth.

The sacred water I use in ceremonies here at the Zen Center comes from Mount Kailash in Tibet. One of my senior students, Chuck Tensan Ramey, was trekking in Tibet and made the arduous pilgrimage to Mount Kailash. En route he stopped at the sacred Lake Manasarovar. He drew water from the lake and brought it back to Genjo-ji in an unbreakable Nalgene bottle sealed with duct tape. This is the water I use to this day in formal ceremonies such as Jukai.

The last aspect in ritual is mind—purification of the mind, for which I chant a mantra before most ceremonies. This mantra purifies the mind, the water, and the whole environment as well, producing good karma. It is mind protection.

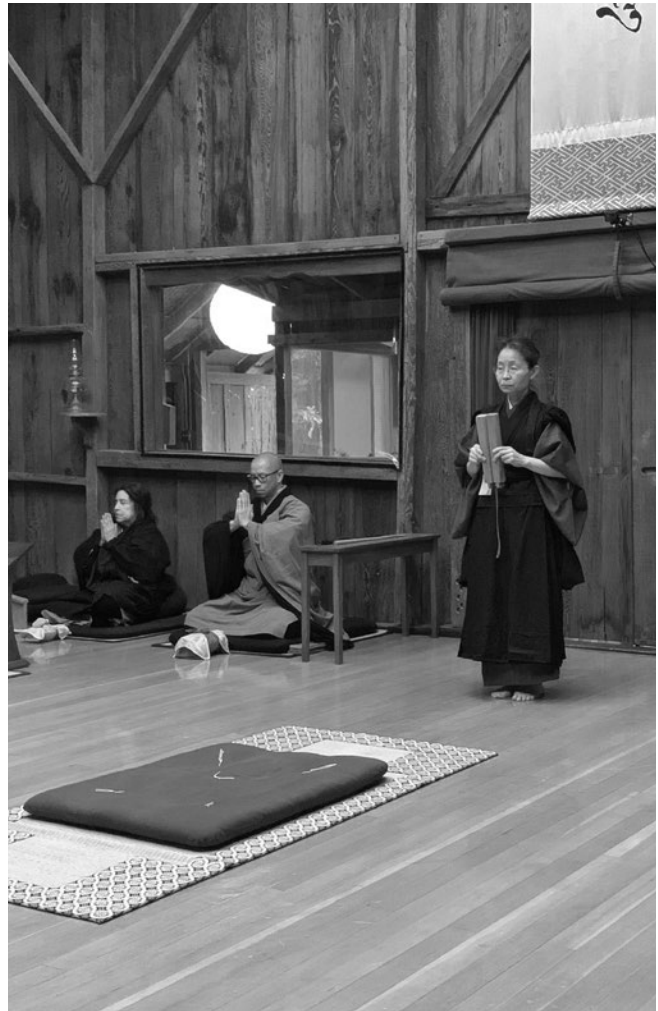
A mantra is not an incantation like a magic spell. It is pure primordial sound: Hummm. The mantra goes all the way down the whole body. A mantra doesn't really make sense in words. It is universal sound, before language. It's the sound of the universe. Thoughts do not appear when one chants a mantra.

Every day you unconsciously perform little rituals, whether you are religious or not. Every day you get up in the morning and brush your teeth. Even that is a ritual. How do you brush your teeth? Do you brush just to be done quickly, so you can eat breakfast? Do you brush so your teeth are thoroughly clean and bright? Look at each

activity. Pay attention. And enjoy brushing your teeth! Look at this small ritual as part of caring for yourself, instead of a dull routine.

Another example of simple ritual is tying or untying your shoelaces. Whenever you're struggling, it's a sign that you're not paying attention. You're hurried and tense; you're trying to get the task done quickly so you can go somewhere else, instead of being right here. Slow down. Be mindful. The knot in the shoelace will loosen. This is what practice is all about.

It took me a long time to fully appreciate the beauty of ritual in Soto Zen tradition. It is not about memorizing, but about experiencing and realizing our pure presence. It is stillness in motion - a flowing stream moving without thought. ❖



*top: Head cook Kashin Kwong opens formal
oryoki meal during Winter Ango
bottom: Binji Mukherjee serves Sheryl Gyonyo
Hamilton oryoki meal, Winter Ango*

Buddha's Birthday



*This page and next:
Images from Buddha's Birthday Celebration held
at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, May 2024.*

Buddha's Birthday



Dharma News From Iceland

by Zenki Traustason

As I reflect on events from the last year, the Shinsanshiki ceremony in September stands out as particularly strong and meaningful. This powerful moment marked a significant milestone in the history of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, and it was a privilege to be able to participate in a spotless Soto Zen ceremony.

What made it more unusual was the participation of eight Sangha members from Iceland, many of them visiting Genjoji for the first time. It was a life-changing experience for all of us.

On the same day as the Shinsanshiki, member Brynjar Shoshin received ordination from Roshi in a Leaving Home Ceremony, which was also powerful, inspiring, and humbling. Shoshin's ordination is an important milestone for our small Sangha here in Iceland, marking a deepened commitment within our community. The ceremony not only highlighted the dedication of Brynjar Shoshin on his spiritual journey, but reinforced the collective aspirations and spiritual bonds that unite our Sangha.

We had a routine winter at the Icelandic Sangha, with regular zazen practice, reading circles, and talks. Our workshops have been particularly well attended, with new students joining us and planning to take Jukai next fall.

It was a great honor to have a visit from Hojo-san (new abbot Nyoze Kwong) in the spring. He stayed 14 days for sesshin and left a lasting impact on everyone, strengthening our bonds and reinforcing our commitment to the path of practice.

This time we didn't have our annual sesshin in Skalholt, as we have for the past 20 years, but in a new place called Eirð. This turned out to be a very luxurious setting, with individual rooms, each with a bathroom and shower!

The Icelandic landscape was emerging from its long, cold, dark winter slumber. Trees were beginning to bloom, their buds slowly unfurling to reveal fresh green leaves. Bird mating songs filled the air, celebrating their return to Iceland after a long migration from somewhere



Close of winter sesshin Eirð, Iceland



south of the North Atlantic. The awakening of nature made for a breathtaking scene as strong winds stirring the lake's surface created whitecaps, reminding me of Suzuki-roshi, who was often said to appear as the wind. It was as if our deluded thinking was being blown away, grounding us in the present and revealing the moment as it is.

This was a profoundly touching and intimate sesshin, where every element of nature seemed to rejoice in our practice in seamless harmony.

To my Dharma brothers and sisters, I wish you all many blessings and hope to see you again very soon. ❖

Report From The Kannon Sangha

by *Kaiin Chybicki*

Despite the challenging economic situation in Poland and the ongoing war in Ukraine, our sangha continues to thrive and grow, providing a vital space for zazen. The war has had significant impacts on our country, adding to the financial constraints and emotional burdens we face. Yet our commitment to the dharma and to each other keeps us moving forward.

I am personally committed to maintaining our practice in the Tricity area, ensuring that our community remains strong and connected in Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot.

The zendo on Wilcza Street in Warsaw hosts regular practice sessions several times a week, providing consistent opportunities for members to deepen their meditation practice. Four times a year we have short sittings in public places, open to everybody who practices meditation, to express our concern about the climate crisis.

Once a month the sangha organizes a day-long retreat where teachers and senior students give dharma talks and guidance to the participants. These retreats are highly valued for the intensive practice and the wisdom shared by experienced practitioners. Kuun Dmuchowski offers an introduction to meditation session once a month to help newcomers understand the basics needed to start their practice.

Our zendo space is also shared with other sanghas, such as the Korean Kwan Um School of Zen. Cooperation fosters a sense of community and allows for a diverse range of teachings and practices within the same space. Currently we are preparing for a Jukai ceremony and ordinations for Agnieszka Dabek, Krzysztof Zamoscinski, and Jacek Gowdziaak. Around fifteen students will receive the precepts in Jukai. Our nuns, Małgosia Myoju and Ania Eko, have organized an eight-month online meditation introduction to meditation course to be offered across Poland. This course is aimed at beginners and provides comprehensive instruction on meditation practices. We also continue to hold meditation sessions with Christian groups, to explore



interfaith dialogue and find common ground. Most of our events are simultaneously streamed on Zoom so members who cannot attend in person stay connected with the community.

In the Tricity area (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot), we maintain regular meditation sessions and Kaiin gives dharma talks once a month. We also continue reading and studying texts together, such as Kwong-roshi's Mind Sky, which we are doing currently.

Synchronized with the zendo in Warsaw, we hold daylong retreats in the Tricity area. We also hold weekly sittings in cities such as Torun, Poznan, and Jasien.

Every year we have Ango in Kaciki, broadcast over Zoom, which has allowed many people to participate.

Multi-day sesshins every quarter attract up to a dozen participants.

Abbot Uji Markiewicz lectures and teaches throughout Poland. He actively participates in the life of Polish Mahasangha. Recently he was invited to take part in a 50th anniversary retreat celebrating Buddhism in Poland. He also attended a relocation ceremony for the Benedictine Order at Lubin monastery, established in the eleventh century.

A significant achievement for our community is approaching completion on a Buddhist columbarium. In Poland, urns can only be stored in Catholic cemeteries. Now, we will have a columbarium at a Tibetan Buddhist center where the remains of Buddhists can be interred. This is an important milestone in the growth of Buddhism in our country. ❖



*Photos from Ango in Kaciki, Poland.
Head student Jacek Joshi Gowdziaak.*

July 27 **Meditation Instruction**
(Includes Saturday Community)
On-site + Online (Zoom)
 9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

Perfect for beginners wishing to learn meditation form. Meditation is a way to calm the mind and find balance in your daily life. Join us for our regular Saturday Community program (included in the fee) immediately following instruction. Please arrive at 8:50 am at the Sangha House to check in.

Saturday Community
(Talk by Koten David Price)
On-site + Online

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Talk will be given by Koten David Price, following 10:30–11:00 am zazen.

Aug 3 **Meditation Instruction**
(Includes Saturday Community)
On-site + Online (Zoom)
 9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, July 27.

Summer Ango Opening Ceremony
On-site + Online

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Join us for Summer Ango Opening Ceremony with Shuso Tokan Craig Stepanek. 10:30am–11:00am Zazen 11:00am–11:45am Opening Ceremony.

Aug 10 **Meditation Instruction**
(Includes Saturday Community)
On-site + Online (Zoom)
 9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, July 27.

Summer Ango Shuso Talk
On-site + Online

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Join us for Summer Ango Shuso Talk with Tokan Craig Stepanek. 10:30am–11:00am Zazen 11:00am–11:45am Shuso Talk.

Aug 14 **Special Guest Teacher Dharma Talk:**
Rev. Yuko Yamada-roshi
Online (Zoom)

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT, Online Event

Yuko Wakayama Yamada-roshi will be giving her lecture on The Denkoroku - The Record of Transmitting the Light by Keizan Zenji. The Denkoroku documents the great enlightenment of Shakyamuni Buddha and its transmission by 52 patriarchs in India, China and Japan.

Aug 16 **August Fusatsu Ceremony**
On-site + Online
 7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

Be present for & experience the Fusatsu At-one-ment Ceremony of release, purification, and presence with the full moon. 7:30pm–8:00pm Zazen, 8:00pm–9:00pm Service.

Aug 17 **Meditation Instruction**
(Includes Saturday Community)
On-site + Online (Zoom)

9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, July 27.

Summer Ango Shuso Talk
On-site + Online

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Join us for Summer Ango Shuso Talk with Tokan Craig Stepanek. 10:30am–11:00am Zazen 11:00am–11:45am Shuso Talk.

Aug 18–25 **“Actualizing the Self”**
7-Day Sesshin (1 to 7 Overnights)
On-site + Online (Zoom)

Aug 18, 7:00 PM PDT–Aug 25, 4:45 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 call or email to confirm accommodation details and complete your registration offline. \$85/night & up. 10-20% discount for members.

Aug 20 **Sesshin Talk by Tokan Craig Stepanek**
On-site + Online (Zoom)

Aug 20, 3:00 PM–4:30 PM PDT

Sesshin talk will be given by Tokan Craig Stepanek, following one period of zazen. 3:00pm–3:30pm Zazen, 3:30pm–4:30pm Sesshin Talk.

Aug 21 **Sesshin Talk by Nyoze Kwong**
On-site + Online (Zoom)

Aug 21, 3:00 PM–4:30 PM PDT

Sesshin talk will be given by Nyoze Kwong, abbot of SMZC, following one period of zazen. 3:00pm–3:30pm Zazen, 3:30pm–4:30pm Sesshin Talk.

Aug 22 **Sesshin Talk by Tokan Craig Stepanek**
On-site + Online (Zoom)

Aug 22, 3:00 PM–4:30 PM PDT

Sesshin talk will be given by Tokan Craig Stepanek, following one period of zazen. 3:00pm–3:30pm Zazen, 3:30pm–4:30pm Sesshin Talk.

Aug 23 **Sesshin Talk by Nyoze Kwong**
On-site + Online (Zoom)

Aug 23, 3:00 PM–4:30 PM PDT

Sesshin talk will be given by Nyoze Kwong, abbot of SMZC, following one period of zazen. 3:00pm–3:30pm Zazen, 3:30pm–4:30pm Sesshin Talk.

Aug 24 **Sesshin Talk by Tokan Craig Stepanek**
On-site + Online (Zoom)

Aug 24, 3:00 PM–4:30 PM PDT

Sesshin talk will be given by Tokan Craig Stepanek, following one period of zazen. 3:00pm–3:30pm Zazen, 3:30pm–4:30pm Sesshin Talk.

Aug 31 Summer Ango Closing Ceremony & Mondo
On-site + Online (Zoom)

Aug 31, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM PDT

Join us for Summer Ango 'Revealing the Dharma' Closing Ceremony & Mondo with Shuso Tokan Craig Stepanek. 10:30am–11:00am Zazen 11:00am–11:45am Closing Ceremony & Mondo.

Sept 2–4 SMZC Closed

Sept 7 Meditation Instruction (Includes Saturday Community)
On-site + Online (Zoom)

9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, July 27.

Saturday Community (Dharma Talk by Nyoze Kwong)
On-site + Online

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

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

Sept 9–13 5-Day Rakusu Sewing Workshop
On-site

Sep 09, 9:00 AM – Sep 13, 2024, 12:00 PM

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

Sept 13 September Fusatsu Ceremony
On-site + Online

7:30 PM–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.

Sept 14 Meditation Instruction (Includes Saturday Community)
On-site + Online (Zoom)

9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, July 27.

Saturday Community (Talk by Michael Zenmen McCulloch)

On-site + Online

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Talk will be given by Michael Zenmen McCulloch, a student of Kwong-roshi, following 10:30–11:00 am zazen.

Sept 15 Fall Workfest
On-site

8:30 AM–12:30 PM PDT

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

Sept 21 Summer/Fall Sangha Gathering & Potluck
On-site

10:30 AM–2:30 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.



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>.

What does the statue near the entrance to the Zendo represent?

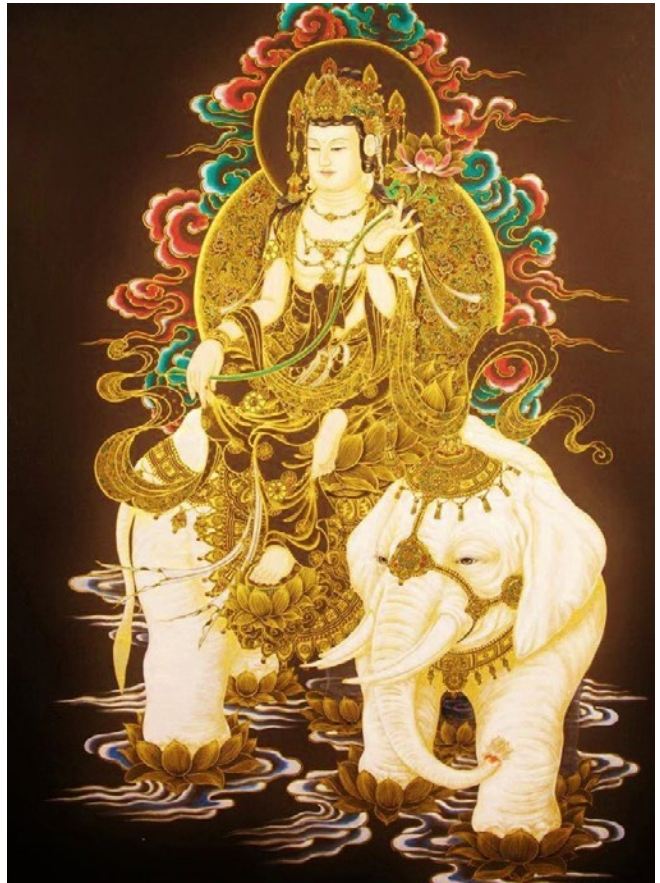
The figure in the entryway is Samantabhadra Bodhisattva who represents steadfast practice and meditation. Her name translates as “Universal Worthy” or “All Good,” and in Mahayana Buddhism she is frequently depicted as part of a triad, with Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva on one side and Shakyamuni Buddha in the center.

Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is the patron of the Lotus Sutra, and is known to have made the ten great vows that are the basis of the bodhisattva. In Chinese Buddhism, Samantabhadra (or Puxián) is associated with action, whereas Mañjuśrī is associated with prajna (transcendent or intuitive wisdom). In Japan she is called Fugen, and is widely venerated especially in Tendai and Shingon Buddhism.

She is typically shown riding a white elephant, sometimes with six tusks, symbolizing purity, wisdom, and the power to overcome obstacles on the path to enlightenment. The six tusks are said to represent overcoming the six senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and mind), which can be sources of distraction and delusion.

Samantabhadra is a key figure in the Avatamsaka Sutra, particularly the last chapter, the Gauavyūha-sūtra. Here the student Sudhana meets Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, who confirms his awakening. Sudhana then merges into Samantabhadra, who recites a set of popular verses known as the Bhadracaripranidhāna (Vows of Good Conduct) or the Royal Vow to follow the Noble Course of Conduct of Samantabhadra. This text, which concludes the Avatamsaka, was revered in India, East Asia, and in Himalayan Buddhism, and is cited in numerous sources. It was considered a dharani, recited alone as a chant that generates merit.

The SMZC statue of Samantabhadra was donated by a student of Kwong-roshi’s at Sonoma State University in the early 1980s. Roshi says she was placed near the abbot’s room and Zendo entrance to remind us as we enter of the importance of uninterrupted training in the practice of “just sitting.” ❖



New To The Sangha

Christopher Weddle, Freestone, Calif.

I was born in Texas and live in Freestone, California, where I help a family take care of their property in exchange for lodging. Most of my life I have worked professionally as a carpenter, from the basics building houses and remodeling, but mostly building scenery for various theaters around the country. I also trained as an actor and appeared in several short films and a television show. I enjoy walking in nature and writing.

I was raised as a Christian, and by early adulthood had become close to agnostic, with a deep resentment of organized religion. When I was about 26, I felt a shift inside of me, a peace and oneness with all things that I had never felt. In searching how to find it again, I sat in sweat lodges, studied Pleiadean Light Work, and completed a Twelve Step Program, among other things. A Course in Miracles has been my biggest educator, and my thinking is my biggest problem. In 2022 I attended a meditation retreat with Dr. Joe Dispenza, and continue to be involved with Love In The Bay, a group made up of Dr. Joe students who do guided sitting and walking meditation together.

I have known about Sonoma Mountain Zen Center since 2008, when I attended a private retreat and camped here for ten days. Last year I started visiting friends in Sonoma, and felt a quiet, steady pull to Sonoma Mountain. I did the meditation instruction, listened to a couple of dharma talks, and started practicing zazen at home.

Alexandra Thomas, Walnut Creek, Calif.

I am originally from Sonoma County and now live in Walnut Creek. I'm new to Zen, but have experienced a positive impact on my mental well-being since practicing meditation. During my undergraduate work at Sonoma State University, I came to the SMZC Sangha to learn about the practice. Since that time, I have advanced quickly in the field of education and am now in a place where I can focus on healing, learning, and prioritizing my mental well-being, and feel that meditation can be a path to support this.

I work as a program manager for a county Office of Education, which means I support school districts in a couple of different content areas. I am really passionate about supporting all students in engaging in their best version of education.

I have two children, Adrienne, 9, and Pierce, 7, and enjoy competitive swimming with the local Masters team, sewing, and AutoXing. ❖



“Zazen practice is mixing the various ways we have of understanding and letting it all work together. A kerosene lamp will not work merely because it is filled with kerosene. It also needs air for combustion, and even with air, it needs matches. By the aid of matches, air, and kerosene, the lamp will work. This is our zazen practice.

In the same way, even though you say, “I have Buddha nature,” that alone is not enough to make it work. If you do not have a friend or a Sangha, it won't work. When we practice with the aid of the Sangha, helped by Buddha we can practice zazen in its true sense. We will have bright light here in the Tassajara zendo or in our daily life.”

Shunryu Suzuki-roshi
Wherever You Are, Enlightenment is There

Sanmon Mountain Gate Report

By Mitchell Hoden Katzel

The Mountain Gate permitting process is moving forward as we head into summer. In March, Permit Sonoma requested an updated geotechnical engineering report for the project. Our structural engineer Mark Level, together with geotechnical engineering firm PJC, worked to resolve concerns regarding plans for the Mountain Gate foundation, which must provide a stable base within the high-shrink/swell soils of Sonoma Mountain. (The volcanic-origin soils expand and contract greatly with moisture, much like lungs breathing.)

A new foundation plan and updated engineering report were completed and submitted to Permit Sonoma the second week of June allowing the county to continue its permit review. Although there are no set timelines for completing this process, we are hopeful that a permit will be issued in late July, absent any additional comments or concerns to address.

We are also getting ready to order the 7,550 board-feet of cedar wood for the Mountain Gate from East Fork Lumber in Oregon. The wood will then be milled to specific dimensions, kiln-dried, and shipped to designer-builder Lucas Benjamin at his workshop in the East Bay. This process will take about eight weeks, so ordering the wood is an important benchmark we are all looking forward to! ❖

Report From Your Board Of Trustees

This year Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, led by our new abbot Nyoze Kwong (Hojo-san) has seen renewed life in our membership and practice programs (meditation instruction, Saturday Community, sesshins, Ango, children's program, and study sessions), which are all seeing strong attendance and restored energy.

We are pleased to report that the Zen Center's financial health is also strong and stable. We are seeing gradual growth in the Mandala Fund (for future construction) as we continue to develop a new fundraising outreach effort.

Board meetings are open to all sangha members, and you are invited to attend in the Sangha House quarterly, after the Saturday Community program and lunch. Our next meetings are scheduled for July 13 and Oct. 26.

We are proud to serve our Sangha and wish to express our gratitude to all members for your friendship and ongoing support. Wishing you a safe and happy summer. ❖

Tensan Chuck Ramey
President

Lizbeth Myoko Hamlin
Secretary



Sanmon replica—photo by Shannon Rossiter

Summer Work Projects

by Tokan Craig Stepanek

Spring has come and gone, but the generally good weather allowed us to finally get work going outdoors after a long, wet winter. Tom Hoffman and Koten were finally able to get started on the annual weed-whacking and mowing of open fields around the Zen Center property. It's a huge task that Tom has executed diligently year after year. Volunteers are always welcome to assist as we start receiving more guests through the summer, and need pathways edged and trimmed more frequently.

Ron Berger has been applying his carpentry skills to upgrading and securing the Zendo hallway closet doors. They have needed this work since we purchased new chairs last year for the Shinsanshiki ceremony. We always need help with carpentry to keep all the buildings in good working order. We are grateful for Ron's various contributions to care of the Zen Center since he relocated to Sonoma County from Los Angeles earlier this year.

With the onset of spring, it was time at long last to get our flower and vegetable garden going. We have been without a resident gardener for more than two years, but our residents, using vegetable starts from Alex Perotti's Coyote Family Farm, were able to get a modest number of garden beds prepped and planted by mid-May. We have been enjoying the garden bounty throughout June, with volunteer help with harvesting.

Sonoma Shambhala came out in mid-June to spruce up Trungpa Rinpoche's stupa. Their work included refinishing all of the woodwork and hanging new prayer flags.

Lori Zaar continues her meticulous care of both Suzuki-roshi's and Trungpa Rinpoche's stupas. She is looking for consistent volunteer help to keep the pathways and stupa sites in good order. Please contact Lori or Tokan for more information.

Koten and Kashin have been away for an extended period, attending to family matters. The remaining residents are thus struggling to keep the Zen Center running smoothly, and could use any and all help. Volunteer work is complementary to zazen practice and actualizing the bodhisattva path. Please contact the office for more information on volunteer opportunities. ❖



top: Tokan Stepanek in Genjo-ji garden
middle: Genjo-ji garden at start of planting

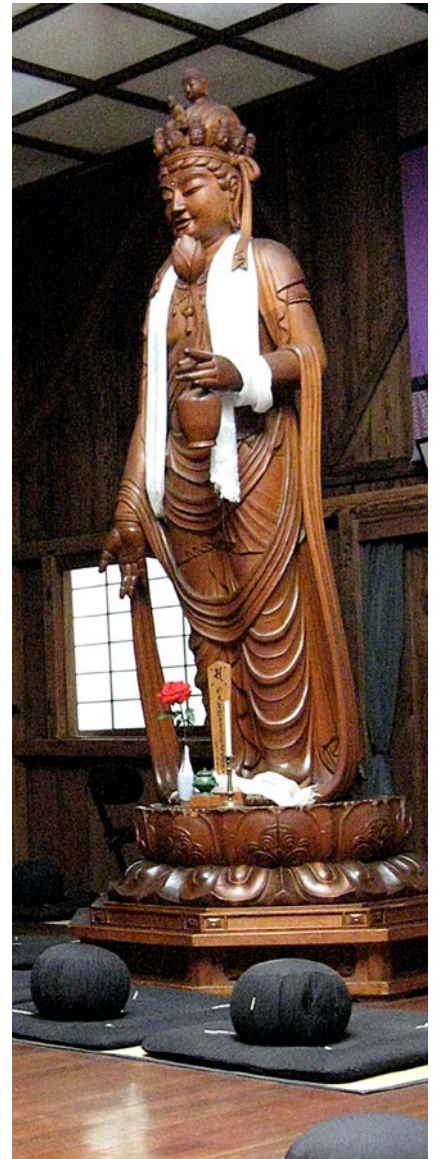
Zen Dust News

by Carol Adams

With the warm summer sun embracing the mountain like a cozy blanket, we have delighted in watching myriad baby animals frolicking about: flocks of wild turkey, great horned deer, and busy squirrels, as well as the fox family that has returned to the mountain sanctuary again to raise their kits. It's been a real treat to see the shy babies cautiously peeking around building corners like tiny shadows inviting us to a game of "Where's Waldo." They come and go in a flash, driven by innate curiosity and playfulness, offering only an occasional lucky glimpse. If you haven't been up to Genjoji for a while, the garden is blooming bountifully, with a vast cornucopia of veggies and flowers as far as the eye can see, a testament to the many hearts and hands that come together to tend the land on this great mountain.

During the months of July, August, and September, Zen Dust store will host a used book sale. We have an intriguing and extensive collection to choose from for \$5 each, so please come check them out.

Zen Dust is still seeking volunteers to help create the many hand-sewn items sold in the store. Please let us know if you feel called to help. The store continues to stock all your meditation and training needs, including Zen-made zabutons, zafus, jubons, support cushions, oryoki cloths, and more. Please visit during Saturday Community practice, from noon to 1:15. For orders or questions, email zendust@smzc.org, or call (707) 545-8105. ❖



All Contributions
Help Maintain
the Buddhadharma!

We would like to thank our volunteer
Eric Scudder for his electrical repair and
maintenance services over the years:

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

Membership



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 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.

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



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MOUNTAIN WIND STAFF

Editor-in-Chief: Katsuzen King

Copy Editor: Keiko Ohnuma

Layout: Kurt Morella

Lecture Transcription: Kaian Jennings

Mailing & Postage: Jo Morohashi

Contributing Writers:
Carol Adams, Kaiin Chybicki, Mitchell Hoden
Katzel, Shindo Souza, Tokan Stepanek, Zenki
Traustason

Contributing Photographers:
Carol Adams, Coco Mellinger, Shannon
Rossiter; Iceland Photos by Thomas
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CONTACT US

Sonoma Mountain Zen Center
6367 Sonoma Mountain Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95404
(707) 545-8105
Fax (707) 545-9508
Email: office@smzc.org
Website: www.smzc.org

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“For the Beneficial Protection
and Awakening of All Beings”



Sonoma Mountain Zen Center
Genjo-ji
6367 Sonoma Mountain Road
Santa Rosa, California 95404