

# sangha

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA CRUZ AND MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTERS

APRIL 2012

## RENUNCIATION, COMPASSION, AND DEVOTION

What is the path of Buddha-Dharma, and where does it go? If we're just starting out in the practice, we may have a few ideas of what this path is about, and if we've been practicing many years, we probably have more ideas about what it is. We might have set out with various ideas but now are just practicing, having forgotten why we came. That may be a good thing – just doing it – but practice may also have become a kind of unconscious habit; we're just going along with the routine because that's what we do. We're "Zen practitioners." So it may be helpful sometimes to stop and reflect: What is this path really all about? What is growth on the path, deepening of practice, spiritual evolution? Asking such questions could arouse thoughts of self-judgment or self-centered striving, or a stronger selfless aspiration to live in accord with truth for the benefit of all.

This path is designed to deepen various aspects of practice and realization of Buddha-Dharma, qualities of mind and heart, and we can check if these qualities are evolving to discern whether we are on the right track. If not, then our practice may be slightly off; we may have fallen into a rut or a complacent place, and we may be wasting our precious time. We may have found a kind of comfortable plateau where we feel like our practice has worked to some extent; it's worked enough that life goes more smoothly than before we started practice, and now we're kind of coasting along. It's very natural to have plateaus in practice, but when we have rested at a certain level for a while, then we might be ready to make a little more effort to deepen our practice and realization of Dharma.

Three qualities of mind, and three practices, deepen as practice deepens: renunciation, compassion, and devotion. Most spiritual traditions have many classic forms of renunciation, basically limiting or restricting the things we tend to habitually hold on to, such as comfort, food, sleep, sex, entertainment, possessions, choice, and control. Such renunciations are very similar in most traditions, and those classic forms can be really helpful at different phases in our practice, depending on what we're especially caught up in, which things pull us out of our present experience of contentment. Another less intimidating name for renunciation is simply "letting go." Letting go might take those traditional forms, or it might even take opposite forms.

As a young man in my twenties beginning Zen practice, I wholeheartedly took up such classical renunciation practices, sometimes

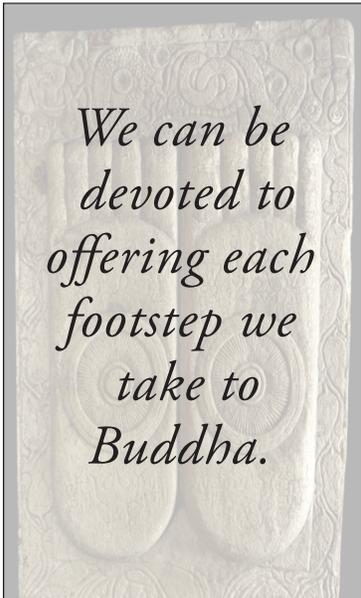
with wonderful results, but sometimes in a quite contrived way. It wasn't always really renunciation; it wasn't always really letting go. Some of these forms of practice are like that; we can do them in order to look like or feel like we're renouncing something, but actually we are building up a sense of self or identity. Though actually the whole purpose of renunciation practice is to let go of a strong sense of self and its supposed needs, if we are not paying attention, such practice can have the opposite effect. So for me, over time it became a kind of renunciation practice to let go of some of those classic renunciation practices. This is kind of a

tricky business because renunciation practice is never static. It's a constant balance. The middle way is very elusive – we let go of something and then we get attached to "letting go," so we let go of that way and we think we won't fall back into our old habits because we've already let them go. Unfortunately, it doesn't work quite that way! In fact it's very easy, after really having let go of something, to then get a little lazy. Suddenly we notice, there it is again; the habit has redeveloped itself.

In the end, letting go comes down to being present and aware of what we're holding onto, and releasing our grip in that moment. Zazen is like an all-encompassing renunciation practice. Since we emphasize a particular upright posture, if we sit still long enough we'll find some holding on; one has to let go of the wish to move or to do something more interesting. It's renunciation to just patiently let go of those urges to move or do something else. To do this

may seem like a small thing, especially for people who've been doing it for awhile, but it's actually profound to just sit still and let go, not only of moving physically, but also mentally. Zazen is letting go of moving, letting go of thoughts about past and future, and ultimately letting go of all conceptual elaboration, and this is an endless lifetime practice. Nobody finishes zazen practice, ever! In Zen we say "practice and realization are not two." We don't do practice over here, and then have realization over there. Renunciation is a moment-to-moment practice of letting go, and a moment-to-moment realization of the freedom of having let go, a process that we can check on to see how it's going. Do we have any deeply held habit patterns that for many years the practice hasn't seemed to reach? We probably do, and they present the place to practice, the very place to let go, whatever the habit is – whether its impatience or conceptual thinking.

Another practice and quality of mind to develop, closely related to renunciation, is compassion. Compassion is bringing in the



*We can be  
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offering each  
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Buddha.*

# SANTA CRUZ ZEN CENTER

*(continued from page one)*

element of other living beings, opening our hearts to others. In Buddha-Dharma, compassion is defined as the wish or desire that living beings be free from suffering and discontent, and the willingness to help however we can. Since we are living beings, we can have compassion for ourselves as well as others. And again, the practice and realization of compassion are not two. We can cultivate it and develop it, and the way we do that is quite related to renunciation. By just letting go of our own habitual holdings, letting go of our own self-concern as well as our resistance to experiencing our own discontent, our compassionate heart naturally starts opening to others more and more, is able to relate to others' pain more intimately, and naturally wants everyone to be free.

One important connection between renunciation and compassion is to see that letting go is freedom and ease. If we want others to be free from suffering, what do we really want for them? How are they going to be free from discontent? Though we can give them food if they're hungry or help in other ways, to be completely relieved *they* actually have to let go. So we could say that compassion is actually the wish for others to renounce. This is one way the two practices are very connected: If we want to have complete compassion for others, if we want them to be completely free from discontent, then we wish for them to be able to let go of whatever they are holding on to so that they can be free. If we want that realization for others, but then hold onto our own fixations, that's a little funny, isn't it? So in order to fully practice compassion, we have to continuously let go of our own self-cherishing, not only in order to be open to others, but also to verify our trust that letting go *is* freedom from discontent. The more we verify that for ourselves, the more sincerely we can wish for others also to be able to let go. In this way, renunciation and compassion are the same mind – renunciation arises from contemplating one's own discontent, and compassion arises from contemplating others' discontent.

A third practice and quality of mind to develop is devotion to Buddha. The Buddha is the historical teacher who set the wheel of Dharma in motion – who first taught the path to complete liberation – as well as all Buddhas throughout space and time who have fully developed renunciation, compassion, and devotion. Buddha is unhindered effortless complete practice and realization of awakening for the benefit of us all. We can think of Buddha as a particular person or people, or we can think of Buddha as Buddha Nature itself, which is inconceivably permeating all of us, all the time. Buddha is our true nature, which is already fully let go, fully compassionate, and fully devoted. We can be devoted to this inconceivable all-pervading spontaneously present Buddha Nature that we seem to be temporarily obscuring with our conceptual thinking, habitual self-cherishing, and doubts. Though we feel as if we're not quite in touch with Buddha, through hearing about Buddha Nature, contemplating it, and opening to it more and more, we begin to trust more and more that the sun behind the clouds is always shining, and that experiencing its light and warmth is just a matter of renouncing our fixation on the clouds. Part of letting go of grasping the clouds is opening the heart of compassion, and both of these are fueled by the practice and realization of devotion to Buddha. We can also be devoted to the practices of letting go and compassion. We can walk down the

street with the intention to be totally devoted to walking without thinking of doing something else, devoted to everybody that we pass on the street as expressions of Buddha Nature who also may seem to be not quite content, and devoted to offering each foot-step we take to Buddha.

*- edited from a talk by Kokyo Henkel*

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## 5-DAY BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY SESSHIN

April 4-8, 5am-9pm (ends 4pm Sunday)

Each day will include morning teachings with Kokyo and formal Oryoki meals. Sesshin ends with a ceremony to celebrate Buddha's Birthday at 4pm, to which all are welcome. Please plan to participate in at least two full days of sesshin. Suggested donation: \$35/day for sustaining members and \$40 for all others. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

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## HEAD STUDENT DHARMA INQUIRY CEREMONY

Wednesday April 11, 6:30-7:30pm

Everyone attending the ceremony will have an opportunity to ask a brief practice question to shuso Chuck Overley, to celebrate the completion of his term as head student for winter practice period.

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## JUKAI: CEREMONY OF RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS, BODHISATTVA INITIATION

Saturday April 14, 2-3pm, followed by reception

Jeffrey Sherman, Jean-Marie Peterson, Kris Garvin, Rane Hoogner, Laurie McCann, Deniz Bombar, and Brian Bielefeld will receive the Bodhisattva Precepts, along with a rakusu (Buddha's robe) they have sewn, and a Dharma name. All are welcome.

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## SPRING INK: CALLIGRAPHY CLASS

With Gerow Reece, Saturday April 21, 9:30am-4:00pm (lunch provided)

This class will focus on the process of creating Chinese characters in the morning, then applying this "way of the brush" to Roman lettering in the afternoon; no prior experience needed. See website for list of materials to bring.

Gerow studied calligraphy with Morita Shiryu in Kyoto before becoming a resident of Jikoji Zen Center where he practices and teaches East Asian calligraphy and often hosts ceremonial tea. Early registration by April 13: \$54 for sustaining members, \$63 for all others. Late registration after April 13: \$60 for sustaining members, \$70 for all others.

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## ONE-DAY SITTING

With Abbot Katherine Thanas, Saturday May 12, 8:30am-5pm

The day includes a lecture by Katherine in the morning. Please bring a bag lunch. Suggested donation: \$12/day for sustaining members and \$15 for all others. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

# MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTER

## FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE MBZC BOARD

The most pressing topic for Monterey Bay Zen Board of Directors is always how we offer Soto Zen teaching in our community. A part of this includes how best to structure MBZC, our teachers and leadership toward this goal. MBZC's leadership currently consists of a head teacher, a board of directors (which designs and oversees events, fundraising, hiring of teachers, whatever is needed to maintain and build our sangha and practice), and the Practice Committee (headed by the Ino and responsible to assist the head teacher and support the teaching).

As our center grows and changes, it will require MBZC's leadership structure to adapt and change as well. As we look to the future, we are beginning discussions on this issue. For example, should the board identify and hire another head teacher to lead the center on a daily basis and employ a traditional teacher-led structure and practice? Should the Practice Committee schedule and direct teaching activities, with a rotating "head teacher" or tanto position overseeing day to day activities? Should a new body be created to oversee and carry out teaching activities? Or should we utilize the tripartite approach like the Santa Cruz Zen Center?

Another question is what teaching is most vitally needed in our community? Is there value to maintaining formal venues of practice? Is it appropriate to spread the teaching in more informal approaches, teaching meditation without the formal zazen posture? Do we need to focus on building a single center and physical presence in the community, or continue to grow as many of our activities are now – based on individual sangha members' willingness to lead activities with a variety of locations throughout the Monterey Peninsula?

A Sangha event is being planned where we can gather to discuss our present concerns and our ideas for the future. In the meantime, I would welcome any comments or suggestions from sangha members reading this newsletter telling me what drew you to the practice of Zen and what you feel would be most helpful now and in the future. Please e-mail me your ideas, comments, and concerns to [mbzc.pres@prodigy.net](mailto:mbzc.pres@prodigy.net). I look forward to hearing from you.

Jana Clark, President

## MBZC SANGHA EMAIL LIST

We have expanded and improved our website at [monterey-bayzencenter.org](http://monterey-bayzencenter.org). Check it out and sign up for our periodic announcements of classes, lectures events and other Dharma related news and center offerings. Click the MAIL LIST icon on the home page and enter your email address in the little white box.

## BROWN BAG ZEN

Informal Zen meditation group meets every Friday (except the Friday before Easter, April 6). We meet from 12:15-1:15pm at St James Episcopal church, corner of High and Hellam Streets in Monterey. Call Kathy (831) 375-7826 for more information.

## MINDFUL COMMUNICATION

Saturday May 1, 9:30-4pm. 3 follow up classes to be scheduled

This workshop on making peace with conflict using Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is led by Jean Morrison, MA, certified trainer with the Center for Nonviolent Communication in Santa Cruz since 1989. With NVC we can find a conscious shift and specific ways of expressing ourselves and listening to others, which strengthens our ability to communicate compassionately. We will incorporate life examples, fun and laughter to balance the deep insightful work.

St. James Church, corner of High and Hellam Streets in Monterey. Donation for workshop and classes: \$160-130. CEU credits are available. Registration: Patricia Wolff (831) 659-3042.

## LOOKING CAREFULLY: THE SHEPHERD'S PURSE BENEATH THE HEDGE

Breakfast with Poetry Benefit at Earthbound Farms

Saturday, July 7, 9:00to 11:00am

Earthbound Farms is sponsoring a benefit for the Monterey Bay Zen Center at their beautiful Farm stand. This fundraiser begins with a delicious organic breakfast. After breakfast, local poets George Lober, Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts and Patrice Vecchione will read poetry based upon the theme of "Looking Carefully: The Shepherd's Purse Beneath the Hedge." The title references a poem by Basho:

*Taking a close look –  
In tiny white clusters,  
Flowers of shepherd's purse  
At the foot of the hedge*

Earthbound Farms Stand, 7250 Carmel Valley Road, CA (3.5 miles east of Highway 1) Donation: \$25.00 for each adult and \$10.00 for each child, kids under 6 are free. Please RSVP to Mark Orrisch at (831) 659-7138 for advance tickets or [mbzc.pres@prodigy.net](mailto:mbzc.pres@prodigy.net).

## AN INTRODUCTION TO CEREMONIAL TEA

Saturday, May 12, 10:30am-3pm

Gerow Reece, who lived in Kyoto and later studied tea with Urasenke teachers in California, will share his appreciation of tea—in particular the roles of guest and host. He now lives at Jikoji Zen Center in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

After a short period of zazen, we will prepare the tea space. Gerow will discuss the tea elements/items and indicate their function and how they are handled—passing around what can be passed. The guests' approach to tea—their interaction with the setting and the host—will be shown. After lunch, as informed guests, we will enjoy a ceremonial tea without a sense of haste or distraction.

Cherry Center, 4th and Guadalupe, Carmel. Donation \$20-25, includes lunch. Limited to 15 people Reservations: Sara Hunsaker: (831) 659-1552.

# MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTER

## STEP BY STEP

Saturday April 14, 10-11:15am

**M**indful walking in the Spring morning, turning senses inward. Take a slow and easy walk with yourself. Just walking, going nowhere. We meet at the Park visitors center. Please bring a hat and water.

Garland Park, Carmel Valley. Information: Susan (831) 601-7590

## HALF DAY SITTINGS

Saturdays April 21, June 9, 8:30 to noon, St James Church, Monterey

**M**orning silent meditation, talk, tea, practice discussions. For information: Kathy (831) 375-7826.

## INTRODUCTION TO ZEN BUDDHISM

Saturday, April 21, 10:30-noon, Cherry Center

**M**ind body meditation. Zazen posture and basic teachings of Soto Zen. For information: Susan (831) 601-7590.

## A MORNING OF SUTRA COPYING AND SITTING

June 23, Saturday, 9 to 12 at Carmel Valley Zendo

**S**utra copying or shakyo, is a ancient Buddhist practice done to develop meditative concentration, to calm the mind and bring a state of inner peace. Sutras and materials will be provided and you may bring your own. Donation \$10. Reservations: Sara, (831) 659-1552 or sarahun@comcast.net.

## PRECEPT CLASSES CONTINUING

With Robert Reese

**S**aturdays, April 14, May 19, 10:15-noon, Cherry Center. Information: Robert (831) 920-8303.

MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTER

PO Box 3173, Monterey, CA 93942

831-375-7826

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

We meet Tuesday evenings, Monday and Thursday mornings at the Cherry Center, 4th and Guadalupe in Carmel.

Tuesday evening schedule:

Zazen 6:30

Kinhin (walking) 7:10

Service 7:20

Lecture/discussion 7:30-8:30

Monday, Thursday mornings:

Zazen 7am

(followed by service and soji)

Zazen instruction first Tuesday of each month at 5:30pm.

Ordinary Recovery  
Saturdays 9-10am

Brown Bag Zen  
Fridays 12:15-1:15  
St. James Church,  
High and Hellam Sts, Monterey

Carmel Valley Sitting Group  
Second and fourth Wednesday  
7-8:30pm - Patricia 659-3042

Information: (831) 375-7826  
www.montereybayzencenter.org

K. Thanas Class

Brown Bag Zen

Meditation with the Body

Precept Class

Step-by-Step Walk

Intro to Zen Buddhism

Half Day Sitting

Meditation with the Body

Intro to Ceremonial Tea

Precept Class

Half-Day sitting

Non Violent Communic.

Sutra copying and Sitting

Earthbound Farm Benefit

Sun. April 1

10-noon, 98 Via Campana  
(last class of series)

Fri., April 6

NO MEETING  
(will resume following Fri.)

Sat. April 7

10:30-12:30pm,  
Cherry Center  
(3rd class of series of 4)

Sat., April 14

10:15-noon, Cherry Center  
(ongoing classes)

Sat. April 14

10-11:15am Garland Park, CV

Sat. April 21

10:30-noon, Cherry Center

Sat. April 21

8:30-noon, St James, Monterey

Sat. April 28

10:30-12:30pm, Cherry Center  
(last class)

Sat. May 12

10:30-3pm Cherry Center

Sat. May 19

10:15-noon, Cherry Center

Sat. June 9

8:30 to noon, St. James, Mty

Sat. June 16

9:30-4. St James, Monterey

Sat. June 23

9-noon, Carmel Valley

Sat. July 7

9-11, Carmel Valley



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## AWAKENING BODHICITTA: COLLAGE FOR THE WAY-SEEKING MIND

With Cathy Toldi, Sundays May 20 & 27, 9:30am-noon

This class is designed to help us explore and express our bodhicitta: the mind and heart that want to awaken. We will use collage as a medium to articulate and celebrate this “way-seeking mind”. We will gather images and create personal cards that depict aspects of our spiritual journeys, in order to encourage and support our practice. For example, you might look for images that express qualities you wish to cultivate, or figures that could serve as helpful guides. Don’t worry if you think, “but I’m not an artist!” Models, instruction and material will be provided. However, you are also encouraged to bring in your own images—magazine pictures, personal photographs, artwork—that speak to your practice aspirations. We also welcome donation of any old magazines that you no longer need for others to use in the class. Though Session Two will build on the material presented in Session One, it is also okay to attend only one of the sessions with advance notice. Costs include both days:

Early registration by April 13: \$54 for sustaining members, \$63 for all others.

Late registration after April 13: \$60 for sustaining members, \$70 for all others

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## 4-DAY GENZO-E SESSHIN ON “ONLY A BUDDHA AND A BUDDHA”

At Jikoji Zen Center, co-led by Kokyo Henkel and Michael Newhall, May 30 (6pm)-June 3 (noon)

This sesshin will be held at Jikoji in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Each day will include zazen, oryoki meals, morning and afternoon teachings and discussion on Dogen Zenji’s Shobogenzo Yuibutsu Yobutsu, “Only a Buddha and a Buddha.”

\$40/day, which includes overnight lodging. No one will be turned

away for lack of funds. Call Jikoji to register: (408) 741-9562

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## JAPANESE CULTURAL FAIR AND SEJIKI CEREMONY (OFFERINGS FOR HUNGRY GHOSTS AND DEPARTED ANCESTORS)

Saturday June 16, 11am-5pm

All are invited to a sejiki (a.k.a. segaki) ceremony in the spirit of Obon, the summer holiday in Japan to remember departed family ancestors and friends. In this ceremony we call forth the restless, unsatisfied yearnings of our own life, inviting them to be known and released, as well as remembering departed ancestors and friends. The Japanese Cultural Fair will also include a tea ceremony, demonstration of Ikebana flower arranging, and more, in the Zen Center garden. Zazen instruction will be offered throughout the day. Other events will be held at Mission Plaza park.

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## 5-DAY SUMMER SOLSTICE SESSHIN

June 21-25, 5am-9pm (ends 4pm Monday)

Each day will include morning teachings with Kokyo and formal Oryoki meals. Please plan to participate in at least two full days of sesshin. Suggested donation: \$35/day for sustaining members and \$40 for all others. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

*SCZC relies on fees and donations to continue its mission. If you can pay more, please consider doing so. If you cannot pay the suggested donation listed, please pay what you can.*

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## INTRODUCTION TO ZEN

Saturday, April 28, May 26, June 30, 10am-noon.

A monthly introduction to the body and mind of Zen meditation and the forms of practice at SCZC. The morning includes sitting and walking meditation, followed by discussion. Everyone is welcome, free of charge.

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## SANGHA DAY

Saturday May 19 (9:15am-4pm) & June 9 (morning only, 9:15am-1pm)

Sangha Day is a time to come together and help take care of the temple and grounds: cleaning the zendo, making candles, gardening, etc. Please bring something for a potluck lunch.

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## ORDINARY RECOVERY GROUP

Friday evenings, 6:45pm-7:45pm, in the zendo

A weekly meeting discussing Buddhist practice with addictions, emotions, and relationships. A short meditation, a Dharma reading, compassionate discussion and support.

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## SAVE THE DATE: 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF SCZC

Saturday, September 29; Please check [sczc.org](http://sczc.org) as the schedule of events unfolds.

**DAILY SCHEDULE**



**Monday-Friday:**

5:45am Zazen  
 6:25am Service (chanting)  
 12:00pm Zazen  
 5:45pm Zazen

**Wednesday Evening:**

6:35pm Lecture/discussion  
 7:30pm Informal tea

**Saturday Morning:**

8:30am Zazen

**Sunday Evening:**

5:45pm Zazen  
 6:25pm Service

**LIBRARY OPEN**

During tea after Wed. Lecture

**ORDINARY RECOVERY**

Friday evenings at 6:45 pm

Buddha's B-day Sesshin  
 Buddha's Birthday  
 Precepts Renewal  
 Shuso Dharma Inquiry  
 Jukai Ceremony  
 Spring Ink Calligraphy  
 Introduction to Zen  
 Precepts Renewal  
 Suzuki Roshi Memorial  
 One-day Sitting w/KT  
 Sangha Day  
 Awakening Bodhicitta  
 Chino Roshi Memorial  
 Introduction to Zen  
 Jikoji Genzo-e Sesshin  
 Precepts Renewal  
 Sangha Day morning  
 Japanese Fair and Sejiki  
 Summer Solstice Sesshin  
 Introduction to Zen

April 4-8  
 Sun. April 8 5am-9pm  
 Mon. April 9 4-5pm  
 Wed. April 11 5:45-6:30pm  
 Sat. April 14 6:30-8pm  
 Sat. April 14 2-3:30pm  
 Sat. April 21 9:30am-4pm  
 Sat. April 28 10-noon  
 Thurs. May 3 5:45-6:30pm  
 Fri. May 4 6:25-7am  
 Sat. May 12 8:30am-5pm  
 Sat. May 19 9:15am-4pm  
 Sat. May 20, 27 9:30am-noon  
 Fri. May 25 6:25-7am  
 Sat. May 26 10-noon  
 May 30-June 3 5:30am-9pm  
 Mon. June 4 5:45-6:30pm  
 Sat. June 9 9:15am-1pm  
 Sat. June 16 11am-5pm  
 June 21-25 5am-9pm  
 Sat. June 30 10-noon

MBZC AND SCZC ARE ON  
 FACEBOOK: you can "like" the  
 two Zen Centers Facebook pages  
 for current information on what's  
 happening there, photos of events,  
 and more.



If you would like to be removed  
 from our mailing list, please call  
 831-457-0206 and leave your  
 name and address. This will  
 help reduce our operating  
 costs. Thank you!

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