

# sangha

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA CRUZ AND MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTERS

OCTOBER 2009

From our new Head Teacher:

## THE SELF IS A KIND OF ELABORATION

Recently, at Tassajara, I discovered an old translation of the Soto School Constitution. It was hand-typed, unpublished, and I picked it up because I have been thinking about the organizational structure of Zen centers. It's an outline of the governance of the Soto Zen School, covering the whole system of temples, priests, and lay supporters. The most interesting part to me was a mission statement at the beginning saying, "Abiding by the true Dharma of the Buddhas and Ancestors' single transmission, the Soto School doctrine is transmission of 'just sitting' (*shikantaza*) and 'this very mind is Buddha.'" These are both teachings of the Japanese founder of the Soto school, Dogen Zenji. The fundamental doctrine of just wholeheartedly sitting and this very mind being Buddha are the same thing said in two different ways. And it's a practice.

The basic tenets of the school are defined as the "one suchness of zen and precepts" or meditation and ethical conduct, and the "non-duality of practice and realization." These two tenets are pointing to the same thing as "just sitting" and "this mind is Buddha." These four aspects of practice summarize the whole style of this school of Zen; it was very moving to me to read about it in this institutional document. I thought, "Okay, I would like to give my life to clarifying, practicing ever more deeply, and teaching more thoroughly the practice of just sitting, this very mind is Buddha, the one suchness of Zen and precepts, and the non-duality of practice and realization."

Just sitting may be the simplest to talk about. A very subtle practice, perhaps almost impossible to do. It's just sitting. And some people would say anybody can practice it from the beginning. Just sit and that's it; there are no further elaborations. Just sitting is the lack of elaborating on just sitting. Anyone who sits down with the intention to not further elaborate on such an activity is just sitting.

But it is quite challenging to just sit and not add anything extra to a body sitting on a cushion. Another way to describe just sitting is to say this very mind is Buddha. Without any further elaboration, this very mind of the present moment just sitting is Buddha. A common elaboration, for example, would be the doubt that this very mind is Buddha. Like, "I'm almost not elaborating on the fact that I'm not elaborating."

Dogen Zenji's essay on "*This very mind is Buddha*" quotes an Indian teacher in Buddha's time who taught that there is a funda-

mental, unchanging essence of mind that isn't affected by anything. It is indestructible and is totally at peace all the time. Merging with this indestructible essence of mind is liberation. The Buddha did not agree with this teacher, nor did Dogen. Dogen talks about how flowers and trees and rocks and pebbles are mind. This very mind is Buddha so the flowers, trees, rocks, and pebbles are Buddha, which sounds quite different from this fundamental essence of unchanging consciousness.

Still, we might not find *that* the most helpful zazen instruction. Flowers and pebbles mind being Buddha? Or during zazen, we could say platform, cushion, wall, ceiling, incense mind is Buddha. There is no other essential fundamental underlying essence than all of that stuff arising and ceasing every moment, and we are absorbed in that arising and ceasing every moment. This is just sitting, sitting as this very mind is Buddha.

And then there are the two tenets of the school. "Zen (or just sitting) and the precepts are one suchness." Dogen talked about the precepts a little differently from how Buddha talked about them. For Buddha, the precepts are kind of a prerequisite for concentration. First we get our life in order, so relationships are in harmony. Concentration is a necessary condition for a deeper understanding of the way things are. For Dogen (in his usual non-dual way) precepts, concentration, and wisdom are one suchness, not two, and the practice (of precepts and concentration) and realization of enlightenment are also not two. Dogen says to focus our attention on zazen, and in zazen, he asks, what precept is not followed, what practice is not complete?

That sounds good, but I can't sit zazen 24 hours a day, right? However, when any activity is done in this way, just doing what we are doing, with no elaboration, things are taken care of quite well. Admittedly, things can get very tricky; we do have the capacity to fool ourselves, so it is helpful to delineate the precepts anyway. We could say that following the Bodhisattva precepts is the activity of Buddha's mind. And Buddha's mind is this very mind, taking care of each day in a selfless way because the self is a kind of elaboration, the fundamental elaboration.

"Practice and realization are non-dual" may be Dogen Zenji's most important trademark saying. *Sho* literally means verification or confirmation of enlightenment, sometimes translated as "realization." What is "practice" in this case? It is often interpreted as Soto Zen monastic practice, forms and ceremonies, and sitting in a particular

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*"Practice is anything that is done with the intention, or spirit, of letting go of self-concern."*

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posture, etc. That's what Dogen called "practice," because that was his life, that was his world in the Zen monastery, but that's not how I understand practice. That's one way to practice, but it's not that if you are not doing that kind of activity, it's not practice. So then, what is practice?

We could say that practice is anything that is done with the intention, or spirit, of letting go of self-concern. Whatever is done while letting go of self-concern will be wholesome, beneficial, harmless activity. Zazen could be described as just sitting releasing self-concern, but it could also be washing the dishes, driving a car, talking to somebody, or whatever. This practice of releasing self-concern is not separate from the verification of enlightenment. Enlightenment is a big word, so how about verification of peace, contentment, and freedom. In one moment of releasing self-concern, such a practice actually verifies peace. For just one moment, we can stop, release, take a deep breath, one selfless breath which verifies for one moment that this mind is Buddha. This is a practical, simple way to look at it, not so mystical or mysterious. We can verify enlightenment in any moment; all it takes is a moment of practice, the practice of releasing self-concern.

—edited from a talk by Kokyo Henkel

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## SANTA CRUZ ZEN CENTER

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### FROM THE MONASTERY TO THE CITY

Kokyo Henkel has left his role of Tanto at Tassajara after nearly two decades of monastic practice. He now joins us in Santa Cruz as the new Head Teacher. From October 2009 to January 2010 Katherine and Kokyo will share the teaching seat. In January Kokyo will take full responsibility for the teaching while Katherine will continue in her role as abbot.

Kokyo's lecture of last July is the main text in this newsletter. It is with great joy that we welcome Kokyo and his many gifts to Santa Cruz Zen Center. We look forward to his leadership.

—Gene Bush



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### FALL PRACTICE PERIOD

The Fall Practice Period begins with the Head Student Entering Ceremony at 7:20 p.m. Wednesday October 14. The new head student will be Rev. Dana Takagi, who was lay ordained in January 2002, and ordained as a priest in January 2009.

The entering ceremony is a traditional welcoming of the head student who will help lead the practice period, from the opening sesshin Oct. 16-18 to the closing five-day sesshin Dec. 4-9. She will help lead the practice for this period and will host the 5:30 pm discussion group/tea preceding zazen and the class, on Sundays, Oct. 25, Nov. 1, 8,

15, 22, 29. The closing head student ceremony will be at 6:45 pm Wednesday Dec. 9 in the zendo.

Practice period is a concentrated period of several weeks encouraging students to explore their deepest practice intentions by emphasizing zazen, dharma classes and community practice. Students are invited to create their own schedule of practice commitments for this period. Events scheduled for this upcoming period include:

- Zazen
- Sunday evening classes
- Weekly tea/discussion group
- An opening weekend sesshin and a closing five-day sesshin (minimum attendance requested is two consecutive days)
- Opportunity to meet with the head student in private practice conversations
- Practicing with a precept of your own choosing
- Entering and closing ceremonies for the head student

(Please see accompanying articles about sesshins, ceremonies, classes, and fees.)

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CLASSES OCT. 25-NOV. 29:

### WHOLEHEARTED PRACTICE OF THE WAY

Kokyo Henkel will offer a class on Dogen Zenji's first essay in his masterwork, the *Shobogenzo*, as part of the Fall Practice Period. Entitled *Bendowa, or Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way*, it is an inspired explanation of Dogen's unique understanding of zazen, which formed the basis of all his later writings, and it explicitly makes the practice accessible to lay people working in the world.

Translations can be found in *Moon in a Dewdrop* (Tanahashi), *Beyond Thinking* (Tanahashi), *The Wholehearted Way* (Leighton and Okumura, with commentary), and *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo* (Nishijima and Cross, vol. 1).

Classes will be on six Sunday evenings following evening service and will run from Oct 25 to Nov. 29, 6:35-8pm. Suggested donation for the series will be \$60 for sustaining members, \$78 for nonsustaining members. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

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### MEET OUR NEW HEAD STUDENT

Dana Takagi has been a student at SCZC since 1998, received the precepts in January 2002 receiving the name *Listening Eyes, Peace Profound* and was priest ordained in January 2009 with the name *Valley Sound, Wisdom Mirror*. She has done work practice at Tassajara in the past, and completed a practice period there in 2004. She has served on the board at SCZC and currently is co-work leader, a position shared with Chuck Overlay. She has a day job as a Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where she has taught for the past 23 years.



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SESSHINS OCT. 16-18 AND DEC. 4-9 IN S.C.

Our initial sesshin of the practice period will be Friday-Sunday, Oct. 16-18. We will begin at 6:30pm Fri. with oryoki instruction and conclude at 4pm Sun. Our regular sesshin schedule will apply, with orientation at 7:30 pm after oryoki instruction and sittings from 5am-9pm Saturday, 5am-4pm Sunday.

Our five-day sesshin will be Dec. 4-9, Friday 6:30pm to 4pm Wednesday, and will be followed by the traditional Head Student closing ceremony at 6:45 pm Wednesday. Our sesshin schedule will be 5am-9pm Saturday through Tuesday. Students will be expected to sit a minimum of two or more consecutive days unless there is a young child at home, in which case they may sit one day only.

Fees for the weekend sesshin will be: \$65 and \$85 for sustaining and nonsustaining members. For members with young children sitting one day only, our fee is \$35 and \$40 per day.

Fees for the five-day sesshin are \$175 and \$200 for sustaining and nonsustaining members.

*Zen Center relies on fees and donations to continue its mission. If you can pay more, please consider doing so. If you cannot pay the fee listed, please pay what you can. Talk with the ino or treasurer if you have questions about fees. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.*

For practice period information and application, call 457-0206 or see Rev. Patrick Teverbaugh or Michael Bashista.

## NOON ZAZEN

Beginning Monday, October 19 we will be open for noon zazen, Monday through Friday.

## DAY SIT SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7

We will have a day sitting Nov. 7 in the Zendo, from 8:30am to noon and 1-5pm. There will be a lecture in the morning and study period in the afternoon. Students should bring a bag lunch. Fees will be \$12 and \$15 for sustaining, nonsustaining.

## TRANSITIONS

We all look forward to the arrival of **Kokyo Henkel** mid-October. There will be an entering ceremony Wednesday evening, October 21 followed by his lecture. He will co-lead the Fall Practice Period with the Abbot. **Rev. Hannah Meara** has helped him find a studio apartment in the neighborhood.

**Brian Corser** has stepped down from the position of Work Leader. We thank him for leading the maintenance projects at Sangha Days for the last year-and-a-half where he has helped steward our property and foster Sangha relationships. **Rev. Dana Takagi** and **Chuck Overley** will now share the position.

**Diana Nieves** is now able to spend more time back in Santa Cruz. She is balancing her life here learning the role of jisha at Zen Center with family responsibilities in Puerto Rico. **Nathaniel Rice** has moved back after completing graduate studies at UC Berkeley. **Barbara Davis**' work schedule has changed which now allows her to sit regularly with us in the mornings. **Christine Schneider** returns to SCZC and says, "Zen is always my home, but it's so much better to



actually be with the Sangha." We welcome back old friends!

Former Board Member **Pamela Perry** has moved with her son Angel to the East Bay. "We're beginning a new chapter in our lives." We thank her for her caring participation at Zen Center.

**Sue Walter** is turning over the role of office manager after many years. She defined the job broadly to include bookkeeping, supplies, and organizing communications. She has been invaluable in helping the Wednesday evening program and sesshin preparation. For years she has sewn and maintained our oryoki sets. She took a leading role in various sewing projects, including sewing the Abbot's robe for the Mountain Seat Ceremony. We extend our deepest thanks and best wishes to her in her current pursuits.

## CALLIGRAPHY WITH YOSHI SHIBATA WILL RESUME NOV. 1 - 22

Classes with master teacher Yoshi Shibata will resume Sun., Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22 from 9:30am-noon. Fee is \$20 per class. No experience is necessary, but pre-enrollment is required. Materials list is posted on [www.sczc.org](http://www.sczc.org). Shibata Sensei has been practicing calligraphy since age 5 and has been honored with many awards in national competitions in Japan. He teaches brush art as a practice which joins body, mind, breath and voice.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT: ALL SANGHA MEETING

The entire community is invited to attend the Annual All-Sangha meeting on Saturday, November 14, from 3-5pm. This is an opportunity for everyone to hear first-hand about what is happening, our financial health, and plans for the terms, and to give input to the Board about how things are going and things they would like to see at Zen Center. Please come.

—Beata Chapman, President

## FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

I continue to be touched and inspired by the many labors offered to keep SCZC beautiful and safe. If I were to put a price tag on them, without exaggeration, in the past two months alone more than \$3,500 worth of time and materials have been donated for

# SANGHA EVENTS AND NEWS



maintenance of the buildings and the garden. Even greater than the financial value, is the treasure of fellowship -- working together with common purpose. Simple and direct dharma conversations occur with ease while working side by side; often the material world itself offers the most profound teachings. The intimacy of work practice is as deep as that of sitting and breathing together.

If you see a need on our campus, please advise me of it. If you have a talent to offer, please let me know. If you would like to learn a new skill in service of the community, I will link you up with someone who can guide you. Every contribution -- great or small -- is a precious jewel. The needs of our physical plant are endless; the pool of talent in the Sangha is endless—a perfect match.

—Gene Bush

## HUNGRY GHOST CEREMONY WEDNESDAY NOV. 4

In this annual autumn ceremony, we call forth the restless, unsatisfied energies of our bodies and minds, inviting them to be known and released. This annual tribute to the unfulfilled beings in us remembers also those we have lost this year. We decorate the zendo with colorful cloths and masks, and some of us come in costume. The ceremony takes place in the zendo at the usual time of Wednesday lecture. Everyone is welcome. Bring noisemakers that can create weird sounds, and come in costume if you wish.

## A FEW WORDS FROM THE ZENDO

*Being at the zendo these past weeks has been a stabilizing factor in my experience. The beauty of all of us doing the same thing in the same way at the same time: no personality, no self-debasement or self-aggrandizement, no argument, just surrender to the forms which are themselves helpful in waking up from the dream. It has been hard to sit, of course, for me and for everyone. That great goal of human attention, being present, turns out to be the arch-enemy of the ego personality.*

—Anonymous Sitter

## MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTER

## WHOLEHEARTED PRACTICE OF THE WAY

A three-part class exploring Dogen Zenji's seminal text, *Bendowa*, begins Saturday October 3 at the Carl Cherry Center for the Arts. *Bendowa* is one of the primary texts on Zen practice and expresses Dogen's teaching of the meaning and practice of seated meditation, transcending any particular school of Buddhism or religious belief.

Using Kosho Uchiyama Roshi's classic commentary, *The Wholehearted Way*, this class will provide an in-depth investigation into the spirit and tradition of meditation as practiced in Soto Zen. The class will be taught by Robert Reese.

Dates: October 3, 10 and 17.

Time: 10:15am to 12 noon

Fee: Suggested donation: \$10 per class.

Information/registration 831-624-7491

## ORDINARY RECOVERY GROUP

This is an open group for people working with recovery and/or with the addictive mind. Sessions consist of 20 minutes of meditation, a short talk followed by discussion, and time for conversation. The group meets every Saturday morning from 9-10am at the Cherry Center. For further information call Robert 920-8303.

## HALF-DAY SITTING.

We continue our monthly half-day sittings at the zendo at 98 Via Campana, Monterey from 8:30am-noon. For information or reservations call Kathy 375-7826.

## CHERRY CENTER RENOVATIONS.

The center will be closed from October 6 -9 while the wooden floors are refinished.

## SUNDAY CLASSES WITH KATHERINE THANAS

Six classes from October 25-Nov. 29. \$10 per class. We will be reading and exploring what is known as the "King of Sutras", the Lotus Sutra. This text offers us a vision of a boundless universe of space and time as well as stories of the historical Buddha. We will work with translations by Thich Nhat Hanh, Gene Reeves, and a thoughtful new book by Taigen Leighton (*Visions of Awakening Space and Time*).

## HUNGRY GHOST CEREMONY TUES. NOV. 3

See description of this ceremony in the Santa Cruz section. The ceremony takes place at the usual time of Tuesday lecture.

*The bees blew in on the wind,  
direct like blossoms from some spring-blooming tree.  
They spun in great humming swirls over the pool,  
some spiraling off,  
only to return to circle until one, two,  
then a few more discovered the hole in the old oak.  
The rest of the day they hovered, in and out,  
settling their hive, beginning again.  
Something now and forever was happening.  
Now and forever, amen.*

—Kay McMullen,

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

(with permission)



DAILY SCHEDULE

**Morning:**



Monday-Friday:

Zazen 5:45  
Service 6:25

**Mid-Day 12:00**

Saturday:

Zazen 8:30

**Evening:**

Sunday-Friday (exc. Weds):

Zazen 5:45

**Wednesday:**

Zazen  
Instruction 5:45  
Zazen 6:45  
Walking Medit. 7:25  
Lecture/discuss. 7:35

Chiden Training  
Suzuki-Roshi Memorial  
Sangha Day

Sat. Oct. 3, Dec. 12  
Mon. Oct. 5, Fri., Dec. 4  
Sat. Oct. 10

9-11am, Zendo  
6:25am, Zendo  
9:15am-4pm, Zen  
Center grounds  
7:20pm, Zendo

Head Student Entering  
Ceremony

Weds. Oct. 14  
Fri.-Sun. Oct. 16-18  
Wednesday Oct. 21

6:30pm, Fri-4pm, Sun  
7:20-8:30pm, Zendo

Weekend Sesshin  
Entering Ceremony for  
Head Teacher; Lecture  
Intro. to Zen

Sat. Oct. 24, Nov. 21  
Dec. 19

10am-noon, Zendo  
5:30-6:30pm, Comm.  
Room

Practice Period Tea

Sun. Oct. 25, Nov. 1,  
8, 15, 22, 29

Wholehearted Way Class

Sun. Oct. 25, Nov. 1, 8,  
15, 22, 29

6:35-8pm, Zendo

Calligraphy  
Bodhisattva Ceremony  
Day Sit

Sun., Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22  
Mon., Nov. 2  
Sat., Nov. 7

9:30am-noon, Zendo  
5:45-6:15pm, Zendo  
8:30am-5pm, Zendo

All-Sangha Meeting  
SCZC Board Meeting

Sat., Nov. 14  
Tues., Nov. 24

3-5pm, Zendo  
6:30-8:30pm  
Comm. Room

LIBRARY HOURS

Wednesday: 5-6:45pm and  
during tea after lecture

Five-Day Sesshin

Fri. - Wed, Dec. 4-9

6:30 pm, Fri - 4:00 pm  
Wed., Zendo

Head Student Ceremony  
Year-End Break

Weds., Dec. 9  
Thurs., Dec. 24-31

6:45pm, Zendo  
Closed after morning  
zazen Dec. 24

New Year's Eve Sitting  
Fire Ceremony  
Zendo Closed

Thurs., Dec. 31  
Thurs. Dec. 31  
Fri. Jan. 1

8:30 pm - midnight  
Courtyard, 12:15am

Regular Sitting Resumes

Sat. Jan. 2

8:30-9:10am, Zendo



WEEKLY SCHEDULE

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

Tuesday evening schedule:

Zazen 6:30

Walking Medit. 7:10

Service 7:20

Lecture/discuss. 7:30-8:30

Monday, Thursday mornings:

Zazen 7am

(followed by service and soji)

Zazen instruction is offered the  
first Tuesday of each month  
at 5:30pm. Everyone is wel-  
come. For further information  
call 831-647-6330 or go to  
our website: www.monterey

Zendo closed for renovation  
Ordinary Recovery

Tues.-Fri. Oct 6-9  
Saturdays

Cherry Center  
9-10am, Cherry Center  
920-8303

Wholehearted Practice Class

Sat., Oct. 3, 10, 17

10:15 - noon, Cherry  
Center

Half-Day Sitting

Sun., Oct. 18

8:30 - noon, 98 Via  
Campana, Mty.

Lotus Sutra Class

Sun., Oct. 25,  
Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

10 - noon, 98 Via  
Campana

Board Meeting

Sun., Oct. 25

12:15 - 2pm, 98 Via  
Campana

Segaki Ceremony  
Half-Day Sitting

Tuesday, Nov. 3  
Sunday Dec. 6

6:30 pm, Cherry Center  
8:30 - noon, 98 Via  
Campana

Winter Sesshin

Feb. 5-7, 2010

Villa Angelica, Carmel  
Highlands

Santa Cruz Zen Center  
113/115 School Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

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