

# sangha

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA CRUZ AND MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTERS

JANUARY 2010

## FEEDING THE HUNGRY GHOSTS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

We perform a special ceremony each fall called *segaki* or *sejiki*. I would like to talk about that a little bit, especially in relation to the “Awareness of the Self Receiving its Function,” the *Jijuyu Zammai* of Dogen Zenji, that we have been studying. The meaning of *segaki* is “feeding the hungry ghosts” or “making offerings to hungry spirits.” These days we sometimes call it *sejiki*. *Sejiki* means “Offering of food” (*gaki* is a hungry ghost and *jiki* is food).

One way to talk about a hungry ghost is that which is left over anytime we don't receive our function completely. There's some resistance to fully receiving our experience, whether good or bad, and this resistance creates a ghost. And this ceremony is a way to actually nourish these ghosts created by the non-reception of our experience, because there's some pain and suffering in our inability to receive or accept what is happening. Even if our experience is unpleasant, our life is diminished if we don't fully receive it. As beings in the human realm, our life degenerates, just a little, toward the dissatisfied hungry ghost realm where something is missing or we feel lacking in some way.

In our Zen tradition, I think that maybe more than any other ceremony, *sejiki* is really based on pure compassion. Sometimes we say that this is a ceremony for nourishing and fulfilling the unfulfilled parts of ourselves. I think that's a wonderful way to talk about it, an American way. I think they wouldn't talk about it so much that way in Asian countries where there's more belief in an external Hungry Ghost realm. I think it's great that we speak of it that way to bring it home, but it's important to remember not just our own unnourished aspects, but the “hungry ghosts” all over the world, any beings that are created from not fully receiving their experience.

In Buddhist cosmology the hungry ghost realm is one of the classes of beings created through resistance to complete reception, and whether we take this cosmology literally or metaphorically may not be that important in the end. I consider myself not so superstitious really; when I hear about these six realms I think about how we all go through these mind states as humans. However, the more that I practice, the more open I am to the possibility that there are realms other than human that share this universe with us. In this country we connect *sejiki* ceremony with Halloween, particularly the practice of trick-or-treating. I don't know the origin of this Halloween practice,

but it's a similar thing when “ghosts” come to the door and ask to be satisfied with food and candy, and we practice making offerings to them. The inner meaning of this ritual is not unlike *sejiki*.

Regarding the origin of this ceremony, it comes from a Mahayana sutra called the *Ullambana Sutra*. *Ullambana* means “hung upside-down” – the suffering of the hungry ghosts is like being hung upside-down, that kind of discombobulated discontent of being suspended in such a way. The story goes that Mahamaudgalyayana, Buddha's disciple, one of the ten great disciples known especially for his spiritual powers, the kind of magical powers popular in India at that time, with his Divine Eye, his mystical vision, could see into these other realms. He perceived his own deceased mother in the hungry ghost realm. Because of rebirth, any humans could be born in the hungry ghost realm, as well as in the animal realm, or others. Due to Maudgalyayana's mother's non-reception of her experience during her lifetime she had ended up in this hungry ghost realm. When Maudgalyayana with his vision saw her there, he was greatly distressed and wanted to help her in some way.

The hungry ghosts are depicted as having giant bellies and very narrow necks; there's this big space to fill but it's hard to get food to it. That's the symbolic image: big empty space and very hard to satisfy it. So Maudgalyayana's mother was like that, and he watched as she would pick up food, and how just as she was about to put it in her mouth, it would turn into burning coals. She couldn't eat it. So he went to his teacher, the Buddha, and said, “Is there some way I can help her?” The next part of the story is really wonderful. Buddha said, “Not only can you not help her, but all these other spirit beings and human beings can't help her either. Only the awesome power of the assembled sangha can help her in the hungry ghost realm.” This is one of the really key parts from this origin story that plays out now. We all have these realms in ourselves, and we see the suffering of the world and feel helpless on our own. But the “awesome power of the assembled sangha,” when we come together in this ceremony, when we chant together and make these offerings together, creates a group intention that is very moving. When we come together in numbers, with unified, positive intention, amazing things can happen.

It's really about the intention behind such a ceremony that makes actions such as reciting mantras transformative. Even when doing them without any particular intention there may still be some effect, but if we put wholehearted intention into some particular

*(continued on page two)*

*“Even if our experience is unpleasant, our life is diminished if we don't fully receive it.”*

# SANGHA EVENTS AND NEWS

(continued from page one)

mantra, an effect starts to happen, because actually intention creates the world. In the beginning of the Chinese version of this ceremony, the first lines include a quote from the *Avatamsaka Sutra*: “The three worlds are created by mind only.” That kind of sets the stage for the ceremony. That’s actually the spirit of this ritual of feeding the hungry ghosts, this strange, esoteric ceremony—it’s mind, it’s all mind, which is another word for intention; so if our intention is directed in a certain way, that actually does change the world. So the basic spirit or intention of this ceremony is: “May all beings be able to receive their experience completely so that they may function completely.” And this is also the spirit of Dogen Zenji’s *zazen*, or *Jijuyu Zammai*: just sitting in the awareness of the self receiving its function. And when the self receives its function, this is the self’s fulfillment or enjoyment. Hungry ghosts are nourished and satisfied, no longer hungry, and they can then be more available to help others.

—from a talk by Rev. Kokyo Henkel

---

## SANTA CRUZ ZEN CENTER

---

### WINTER PRACTICE PERIOD, JAN. 28-MARCH 24

Our next Practice Period will begin **Wednesday January 28 and close on Wednesday March 24.**

Traditionally practice periods are a focused period of time for *zazen* practice and Buddhist study. Everyone is welcome to join our *zazen* practice as well as our class and workshop schedule.

We are experimenting this winter with our *sesshin* schedule, beginning with a five-day *sesshin* with first and last days being “informal.” This means that the weekend days, Jan. 30-31, will have a required schedule of *zazen* from 5am to 9pm. The opening days, Jan. 28-29, and the closing day, Feb. 1, will be “informal” *sesshin* days, meaning students are welcome to participate as they are able, with no fixed schedule. No meals will be offered on these days. Students interested in this option should talk with Kokyo Henkel to clarify their participation. The fee for the informal days is the same as for a half-day or full day sit: \$7/\$10 for a half-day and \$12/\$15 for a full day. Our usual *sesshin* daily fees will apply for scheduled days when *oryoki* meals will be served (see paragraph below for our *sesshin* fees).

There will not be a head student for this practice period. We will have our usual Sunday afternoon discussion group and tea to share practice experiences. These will be held **weekly beginning Jan. 31**, prior to the Sunday evening classes.

There will also be day sittings February 21 and March 6 as well as the closing five-day *sesshin* March 18-22.

Our regular *sesshin* fees are: **\$35 and \$45 per day 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.

### TURNING THE DHARMA WHEEL: THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Classes, Sun. Feb. 7-Mar. 14

Kokyo will offer a class on the Buddha’s first teaching, the *Sutra* on Setting the Wheel of Dharma in Motion. In this short scripture, the Buddha teaches the four noble truths of discontent, its origin, its cessation, and the path that ends discontent, also called the Middle Way. These truths are the content of the Buddha’s own awakening.

Classes will follow evening service, from **6:35-8:00 pm. Feb. 7 to March 14.** 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.

---

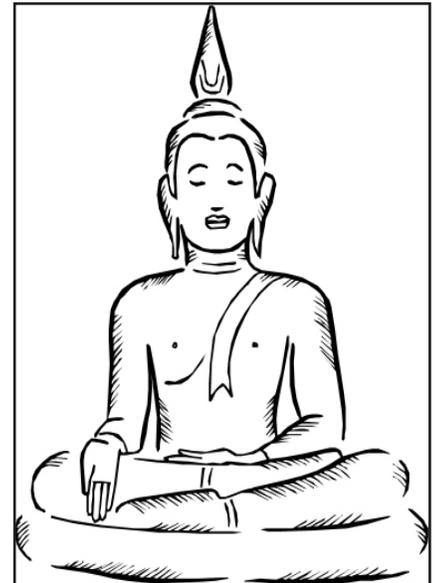
### INTRODUCTION TO ABHIDHARMA: A BUDDHIST VIEW OF THE MIND

Workshop Sat., Jan. 16

Kokyo will offer a day-long workshop exploring this ancient Indian system for understanding the human mind, how it creates unnecessary trouble, and how through understanding how it works, we can function more harmoniously in the world. Please plan to attend the whole day, and bring a bag lunch.

Fee for the workshop will be **\$55 for sustaining and \$65 for nonsustaining members.** The workshop will be held

from **10:00 am-4:30 pm**, with a break for lunch, in the Zendo.



---

### A WORKSHOP WITH JANA DRAKKA: PRACTICING IN THE COMMUNITY

On Sat., **Feb. 20, 9:30am to 3:30 pm**, Jana Gengetsu Drakka will talk about her work with residents and social service agencies of San Francisco’s Tenderloin District. For six years she has offered pastoral counseling, stress reduction and meditation instruction in this neighborhood known for poverty, substance dependence, homelessness and prostitution.

The day will include meditation and a discussion on practicing with social issues in our communities. We will also participate in a mindfulness and stress reduction exercise at the River Street Shelter. A vegetarian lunch will be provided.

# SANGHA EVENTS AND NEWS

The fee for the workshop is **\$55 for sustaining; \$65 for non-sustaining members.** Continuing Education Units (six) are available for LMFTs and LCSWs for an additional \$30.

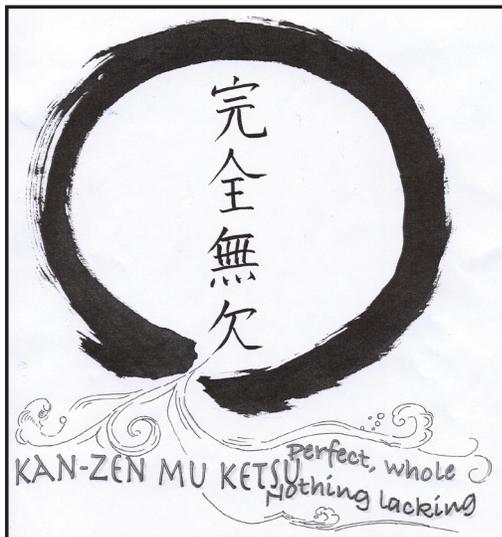
## FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Board of Trustees has come together strongly in its first year. Our primary focus has been completing the transition to the new head teacher, Kokyo Henkel, who has joined us with gentle enthusiasm for zazen, service and ceremony. People are feeling enlivened and encouraged by his presence.

The Board has a two-year agreement with our three leaders: Kokyo as head teacher, Gene Bush as administrator, and Patrick Teverbaugh as Global Sangha leader. In addition to these three and the abbot, volunteers staff the Practice Committee and the Zen Center Operations Group. It really does take a community of committed volunteers to sustain and grow the Warm Jewel Temple. We invite your continued or renewed involvement and encourage you to find your place here with us. We look forward to seeing you in the new year.

—Beata Chapman

## FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR, GENE BUSH:

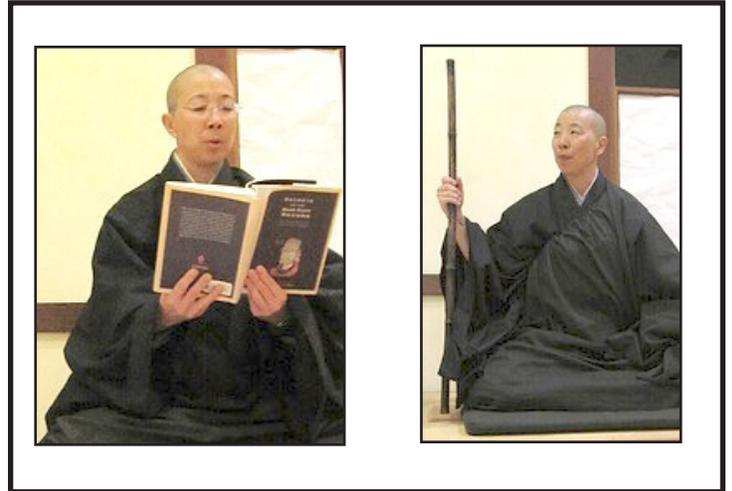


## GLOBAL SANGHA

Global Sangha will meet Thurs., Jan. 14, 6:30-8:00 pm. Please join us to plan for 2010. On-going activities include a weekly lunch program at the Homeless Garden Project, the newly organized Ordinary Recovery meeting, and joining the LGBT Pride Parade. We are considering participation in a prison meditation program and an environmental project.

## ORDINARY RECOVERY IN SANTA CRUZ

A weekly meeting discussing Buddhist practice with addictions, emotions, and relationships. A short meditation, a Dharma reading, compassionate discussion and support. **Friday evenings, 6:45pm-7:45pm, in the zendo.**



Dana Takagi's closing ceremony for practice period in Santa Cruz: reading her case from the *Blue Cliff Record* and responding to a question.

## MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTER

### ORDINARY RECOVERY GROUP

This is an open group for people working with recovery and/or with the addictive mind. The group meets every Saturday morning 9-10am at the Cherry Center. For further information call Robert 920-8303.

### HALF-DAY SITTINGS

There are half-day sittings on Sunday, January 10 and March 21, from 8:30am-noon at 98 Via Campana, Monterey. For information and reservations call Kathy, 375-7826.

### INTRODUCTION TO ZEN

Introduction to Zen meditation and teaching on Saturday January 16, 10:15am – noon at the Cherry Center. For information and reservation call Susan, 620-1195.

### BROWN BAG ZEN

Beginning Friday, January 8 there will be a weekly noon sitting during January to explore Zen meditation and teaching. We will meet at St. James Church at the corner of Franklin and High Street from 12:15-1:15pm. There will be a 20 minute meditation, 10 minute talk and discussion with tea and cookies. There is no charge and no reservations. Bring lunch if you wish. For information call Kathy, 375-7826.

### WINTER PRACTICE PERIOD

Winter practice period will start on February 5 with sesshin at Villa Angelica, and will end Tuesday March 23. This is a time to intensify our practice by committing to more zazen and classes.

# SANGHA EVENTS AND NEWS

As we all have busy lives each student is invited to design their own schedule from the activities available during this time. Registration forms are available at the Cherry Center or can be obtained from Kathy at 375-7826.



The new head student, **Anne Muraski**, has been practicing at MBZC since 1999. She received the precepts in January 2004 and the name *Wisdom Wind, Perfect Joy*. She serves as chant leader, has participated in student work practice at Tassajara, and also produced the *Sangha* newsletter one year. Anne was born in Chicago, grew up in the suburbs with her three sisters, and attended the University of Illinois where she received a writing degree. She has lived in California for nearly 20 years and works as a publications consultant providing concept development, writing, and design services. She specializes in animal welfare, wildlife conservation and environmental issues.

---

## WEEKEND SESSHIN

Our annual weekend sesshin is scheduled for February 5-7 at Villa Angelica in the Carmel Highlands. We encourage people to apply early for this sesshin since there are a limited number of spaces available. Application forms are available at the Cherry Center or from Kathy 375-7826.

---

## LOTUS SUTRA CLASS

Katherine Thanas will continue her Sunday morning classes on the Lotus Sutra starting February 14 through March 14. For information call Kathy, 375-7826.

---

## MEDITATORS WHO WRITE

A group of writers are meeting bi-weekly to share their writing. If you are interested in joining this group please call Kathy 375-7826.

---

## ZEN & PSYCHOTHERAPY: PARTNERS IN LIBERATION with Joseph Bobrow, Roshi

The invitation of Zen is to experience our vast essential nature, for ourselves, right here and right now. And to share it freely with those we meet, in accord with the changing circumstances and conditions of our lives.



We are already doing it but we remain unaware of this marvelous functioning. Waking up is opening deeply to the enlightened nature of all beings through our direct, moment to moment experience of being alive. This transforms afflictive experience from compost to rich soil.

Joseph will describe how Buddhist principles and practices, in concert with those from psychotherapy and neuroscience, contribute to an integrated view of liberation. The workshop includes meditation practice, experiential exercises and living Zen dialogue.

Joseph Bobrow is the author of *Zen and Psychotherapy: Partners in Liberation*. He is in the Diamond Sangha lineage and Roshi of Deep Streams Zen Institute in San Francisco. Deep Streams serves the community through the Coming Home Project, a peace-building initiative for Iraq veterans and their families and care providers. A psychologist-psychoanalyst and author, his writings explore Zen, and the interplay of Buddhism and psychotherapy in transforming suffering. He teaches throughout the U. S.



---

Date: Sat., Jan. 30, 10am-4pm

Location: The Carl Cherry Center for the Arts,  
4th and Guadalupe, Carmel

Fee: \$50; (includes vegetarian lunch)

Information: (831) 624-7491; [yblnwj7965@sbcglobal.net](mailto:yblnwj7965@sbcglobal.net)

---

## ZEN WOMEN: BEYOND TEA-LADIES, IRON MAIDENS, AND MACHO MASTERS with Rev. Myoan Grace Schireson

Workshop: Saturday, March 27, 10am to 4pm

Myoan Grace Schireson is author of the recently published *Zen Women: Beyond Tea-Ladies, Iron Maidens, and Macho Masters*. The book is a result of over a decade's research into what women's practice has looked like in the history of Zen.

She is the founder and head teacher of the Empty Nest Zen Group, Modesto Valley Heartland Zen Group, and the Fresno River Zen Group. She has practiced Zen meditation for more than 35 yrs. and received Dharma Transmission from Sojun Mel Weitsman-roshi of Berkeley Zen Center. Grace also has trained in Rinzaï Zen in Japan under Keido Fukushima-roshi. She has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and has taught Zen throughout the U.S.

Location: The Carl Cherry Center for the Arts,  
4th and Guadalupe, Carmel

Workshop: \$50; (includes vegetarian lunch)

Information: (831) 624-7491; [yblnwj7965@sbcglobal.net](mailto:yblnwj7965@sbcglobal.net)

**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

**LIBRARY HOURS**

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



Suzuki-Roshi Memorial	Mon. Jan. 4, Thurs.Feb.4, Thurs.Mar.4	6:25 am, Zendo
Ordinary Recovery	Fri. Jan.8, & Every Friday	6:45-7:45pm, Zendo
Global Sangha	Thurs., Jan. 14	6:30-8:00 pm, Zendo
Intro. to Abhidharma	Sat. Jan. 16	10am-4:30pm, Zendo
Intro. to Zen	Sat.Jan.23, Feb.27, Mar.27	10am-noon, Zendo
Board Meeting	Tues., Jan. 26	6:30 pm, Comm. Rm.
Dogen's Birthday	Tues., Jan.26	6:25am, Zendo
Informal & Formal		
Sesshin	Thurs.-Mon. Jan. 28-Feb.1	5am-9pm Thurs.-Sun. 5am-5pm, Mon.
Bodhis.PreceptCeremony	Sun., Jan.31 Mon., Mar.1, Tues., Mar. 30	5:45pm,Zendo
Turning Dharma Wheel	Sundays Feb. 7-Mar. 14	6:35-8pm, Zendo
Buddha's Parinirvana Day	Mon., Feb.15	6:25am, Zendo
Jana Drakka	Sat., Feb. 20	9:30am-3:30pm, Zendo
Day Sit	Sun., Feb. 21	8:30am-5pm, Zendo
Day Sit	Sat., Mar. 6	8:30am-5pm, Zendo
Mahapajapati's Memorial	Weds., Mar. 10	6:25am, Zendo
Sesshin	Thurs., Mar.18-22	5am-9pm, Thurs. through Sun.; 5am-5pm, Mon.
Practice Period Ends	Weds., Mar. 24	7:35pm, 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 welcome. For further information call 831-375-7826 or go to our website: [www.montereybayzencenter.org](http://www.montereybayzencenter.org).

Ordinary Recovery	Every Saturday	9-10am, Cherry Center
Writers group	Sat., Jan 2	10:15-noon, Cherry Center
Brown Bag Zen	Fri., Jan. 8, 15, 22, 29	12:15 -1:15pm, St. James Church, Mty
Half-Day Sitting	Sun., Jan. 10	8:30 – noon, 98 Via Campana
Intro to Zen	Sat., Jan. 16	10:15 – noon, Cherry Center
Bobrow Workshop	Sat., Jan 30	10 – 4pm, Cherry Center
Practice Period	Feb. 5- March 23	Various places
Weekend Sesshin	Feb., 5-7	Villa Angelica, Carmel Highlands
Lotus Sutra Class	Sun., Feb. 14 - March 14	10 - noon, 98 Via Campana
Prac. Period Tea	Sun., Feb. 14 - March 14	9 - 9:50am, 98 Via Campana
Grace Schireson Wksp	Sat., March 27	10 - 4pm, Cherry Center
Half-Day Sitting	Sun., March 21	8:30 - noon, 98 Via Campana
Shuso Ceremony	Tues., March 23	6:30pm, Cherry Center

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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!

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SANTA CRUZ, CA.  
PERMIT NO. 475