



JANUARY—MARCH 2023

ILLUMINATING FORMS AND RITUALS

The following is taken from a dharma talk given by Jakusho Kwong-roshi at SMZC on April 1, 2022. This talk took place during Buddha's Birthday Sesshin.

I'd like to read from and comment on an interview of Noiri-roshi done by Carl Bielefeld, his wife Fumiko, and Jane and Peter Schneider. Noiri-roshi was our transmission master, and he knew Suzuki-roshi very well. He was also a revered Zen teacher. This interview was done in 1973, two years after Suzuki-roshi died, and can be found on David Chadwick's website cuke.com.

"We American students have probably also felt the same kind of thing: a very special kind of stillness and peace in Suzuki-roshi. Whether he's alone, sitting, walking, whether he's in the middle of a crowd, there's that same kind of peacefulness about him." It's not the peacefulness or calmness that ordinary people think about. "This kind of peacefulness is the enlightenment of Dogen. And we, as students of Suzuki-roshi, should continue this tradition and maintain this kind of stillness; what we say about enlightenment is called Nirvana Enlightenment.

The Bodhi-style, that's the other kind, belongs to the Rinzai School, often mistakenly considered to be the Zen-type of enlightenment. This was more attractive to the West at first glance, a kind of flashy, quick, powerful image that we have of the Zen master. But if we think that this is all that enlightenment is, then we have made a bad mistake. As students of Suzuki-roshi, we should try to maintain this Nirvana Enlightenment tradition."

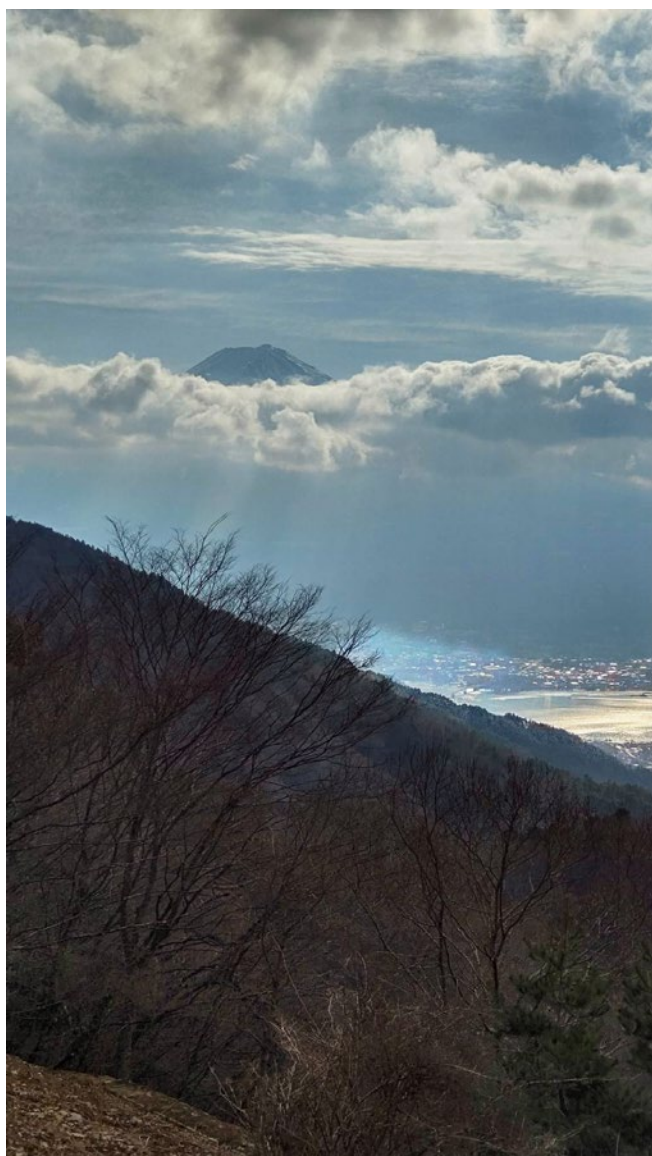
What this means for me is that the zendo is everywhere. This is the first zendo, of course. But in your off hours from the zendo, this is where you

should manifest peacefulness. First you have to receive that peacefulness. You have to realize that peacefulness. Actually, you probably already have, but you just don't know it. Because it comes from yourself anyway. And when you are sitting somewhere by yourself, you are not by yourself. You are all one with everything. So you are not alone. No one can be alone in this kind of practice.

Hoitsu Suzuki was at this meeting, and adds, "His interpretation emphasized the relationship between the stillness that Noiri-roshi felt and the importance of the precepts in Zen practice. Kishizawa-roshi, though he wasn't in Suzuki-roshi's lineage, was a teacher that influenced Suzuki-roshi tremendously. In Kishizawa-roshi's tradition, the emphasis was on zazen within the context of the precepts; zazen in daily life, so that the order of daily life makes possible the emergence of this Buddha nature. That kind of reawakening to what you already have becomes possible through the precepts, working not just in your mind but in your body, in your daily life. When your body is completely in accord with the precepts and your daily life is just this continuous practice of the precepts, then the power of meditation comes out in this, and you are what you already have." That's very beautiful.

So the precepts for us preceptors are not saying, "you can't do this," or "you're bad if you do that." I've heard that in the Rinzai tradition they give the pure precepts last, because they are so difficult to understand. Maybe 40 years ago, I interpreted precepts as preliminary, implying that you have it before you take something. This is just an example: I remember reading about eating meat. It's a violation of the precept if you kill something to eat, and it is also a violation if you don't kill something to eat. Isn't that

continues next page



wonderful? People say, “Yeah, I follow the precepts. I’m good. I don’t eat meat.” But that’s also a violation of the precepts. That’s just a sample of how deep and profound the precepts are.

My favorite is the Three Cumulative Pure Precepts. The three of them are in succession, increasing in size. If you go to a precept ceremony—maybe this could also be in the Christian tradition—they say, don’t do anything bad, always do something good, and then do good for others. This is pretty common, pretty universal. But this is not what Zen means. The first Cumulative Pure Precept, the Precept of Fulfilling Forms and Rituals, I interpret not as what people usually say—don’t do anything bad—but that the precept means illuminating forms and rituals not just in the zendo or in a temple, but in your everyday life. It’s a ritual. You know, eating oryoki, the detail and the care that we put into the form of eating oryoki, you learn how

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to use your utensils and tools. How could you throw a hammer down? I mean, if you throw a hammer down, really throw the hammer down, that’s ritual. Trungpa Rinpoche adopted the Soto Zen practice of oryoki not because it’s so meticulous, but because it shows our relationship to the outside world. This relationship is alive, and because it is alive it helps us become alive.

So this illuminating is *eko bensho*. *Eko* means to turn the illumination. We’re always illuminating the way *outside* of ourselves. This is turning the illumination [gestures inward] and *bensho* means return the illumination. Not just one way. Seeing the star, the star sees you. You turn the light (inward) and return the illumination (outward).

I thought about one of the patriarchs we studied recently. They put him in a tomb and the tomb opened up. And I said that’s *eko bensho*. That’s the second part of *eko bensho*, when someone actually dies and you are there with

them maybe a day or two before. And they look like they could get out of bed because they don't look sick or dying. That's *eko hensho*, the illumination that returns and even opens up the door of the tomb. In Christianity, when Christ was in the tomb, that's one part of *eko hensho*.

OK, that's about illumination and rituals. Rituals are like when we brush our teeth, when we eat, when we talk, all of it. It's *menmitsu no kafu*, one continuous practice. And it's not that you're checking up on yourself, but that you find yourself in that practice. It's a rhythm and purity and alertness and compassion.

The second precept is Fulfilling Wholesome Dharmas. It's the same thing, illumination, *eko hensho*, on things. Dharmas are things. And the third one is called "doing good" in ordinary precept ceremonies. The first one would be "don't do bad things." The second one is usually referred to as "do good things." The third one is "do good for others," and it's the precept of fulfilling all beings, illuminating all beings. It's *eko hensho* again. And the conclusion for this one would be transcending sacred and profane. It is transcending the opposites, sacred and profane, and taking others across the sea of suffering.

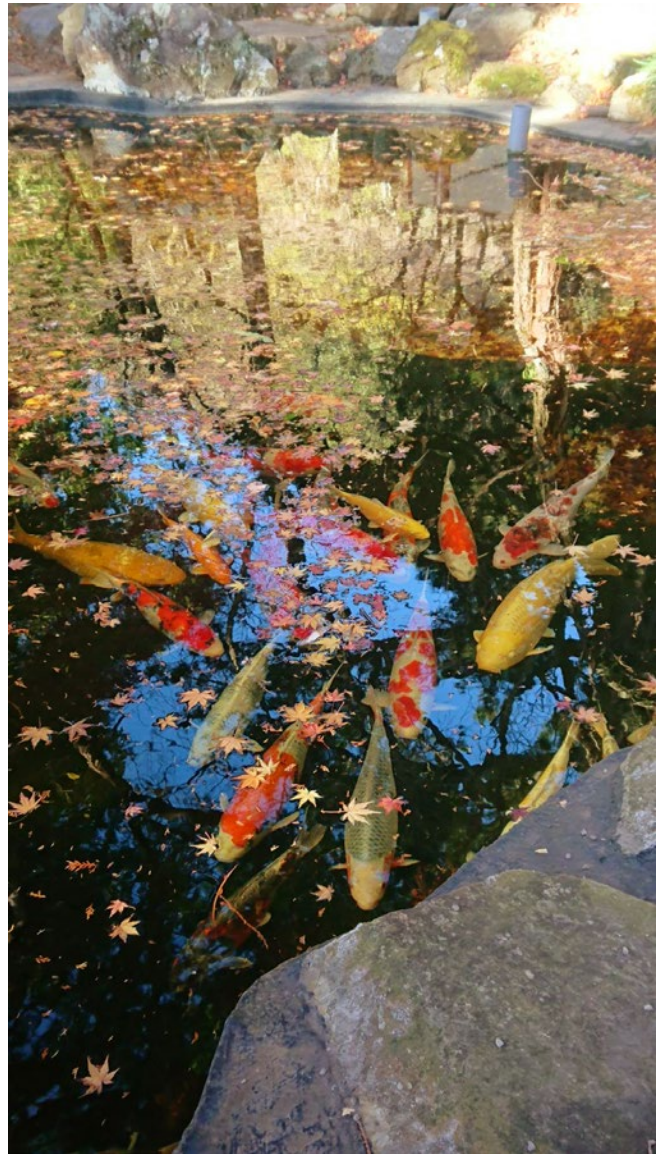
We could make copies of this if people would like the interview with Noiri-roshi. We have time for questions if you'd like to ask anything.

Student: You said something that really affected me, and that was taking others across the sea of suffering. Could you talk about that a little more?

Roshi: Usually if a person asks, if they want help or something, then I will respond. But when people don't ask, it's a very sensitive thing. They don't even know that they are suffering. In fact, when Thich Nhat Hanh used to give a talk, he'd say, Look into your suffering. And I said, I don't have any suffering. But when you start looking, everyone has a lot of suffering. It's a sea of suffering. I mean, look at the world. It's not going to get better because there is a separation of subject and object.

Shinko and I watched a little bit of the Oscars, and the comedian Chris Rock said something about Will Smith's wife that prompted him to walk up to the stage and slap him. Everybody, the Oscars committee and thousands of people all over the world were all surprised. And they were going to arrest him. They were going to throw him out of the Academy. I mean all this stuff was going on, but what I was interested in was what he said about his wife. They never even got to the bottom of it. They never even asked the question, what made him do that. And then on top of that, Will Smith won the Oscar for Best Actor. See how crazy the world is.

You know, years ago when I went to Poland, on TV and posters everywhere they said that smoking causes cancer, especially Polish cigarettes. And then underneath the posters it said you can buy them next door. I mean, this created schizophrenia. Smoking is bad, period. But there's greed,



anger, and ignorance involved in that marketing. So it continues the negative karma. This is the sea of suffering. We are in the sea of suffering.

In the Dhammapada from the Pali writings, we studied Dogen's essay "Shohaku Makusa," refraining from evil. When I saw that line in Dogen's writing, I said I don't want to read that. I don't want to find out what evil is about. But it's just refraining from doing bad things, basically. And then the next line is: Because you're refraining from nothing, you are doing something good. You have good karma. The third line, the most important line, is about clarifying the mind. That means ending the war.

The physical war, climate change, we have a different relationship to things outside ourselves. They are not objects and things. They have their nature. They have their virtue. Anyway, please come and practice. It is the best way. Okay? Thank you. ❖

DECEMBER RENEWAL

by Keizen Li Qian

There had been dukkha at home.

There were nights on the couch, and this week my partner was staying with a friend. I gave up on lying awake, turned off the alarm, and left an empty house to ascend the mountain.

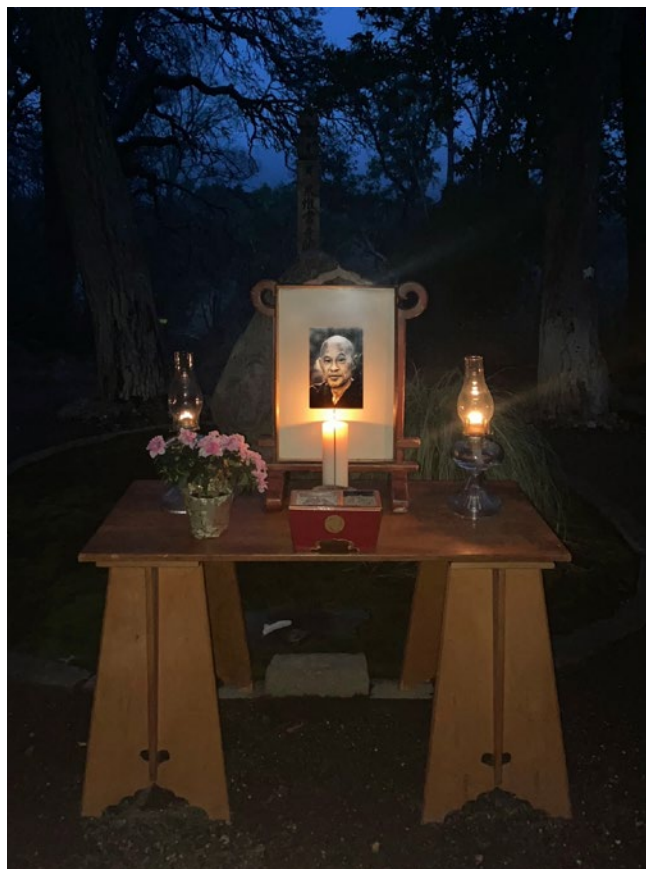
In the driveway, I switched on the headlights manually. The winding road up Sonoma Mountain is completely dark at night. Last year we discovered that the automatic headlight feature on my new car would switch off the high beams after a few moments. Having grown up without a spiritual north star, I had chosen Zen partly for its incessant invitation to act with intention. These start the moment I wake from sleep, but immediately I forget them. This night was an opportunity to change.

Tetsuya is a traditional Zen practice done on the final night of Rohatsu Sesshin. We sit without a break, from midnight until four in the morning, to honor the Buddha's all-night sitting during which he attained enlightenment. Warm bodies arranged themselves in the dim zendo to the sound of the han. Quiet devotion and collective surrender filled the small hours. After the first hour, time became too subtle for my awareness to track. My mind drifted through moments of drowsiness, and pain rose as heat from my legs until I shrugged off my coat. In a moment of difficulty, I touched the floor with my fingertips, echoing the Buddha's response to Mara's challenge that fateful night: *What right do you have to attain freedom?*

So soon the quiet was broken by the bell. Hands met in gassho, and we chanted the Atonement Vows, taking bittersweet ownership for the causes and conditions of suffering in this lifetime and beyond. I have been intimate with not only my passions and emotional pains but my habit of blaming them on others and avoiding responsibility to care for myself fully.

After a moment to collect ourselves, we walked in procession in the morning dark to the stupa of Suzuki-roshi. Familiar gray dawned new and precious as one by one we paid respect to the founder of our lineage. It's hard to work with other flawed human beings to repair injustices. Before our teacher and the sangha gathered there, Suzuki-roshi's gaze offered a soft invitation to open the heart and give up acting out of greed, hatred, and delusion. All smiles, we broke our fast in the Sangha House with offerings from the morning cook.

I left deeply refreshed, but not yet done with ritual. My partner and I returned home, a sangha of two. We sat before our home altar and arranged our shared intentions in the form of symbolic offerings upon it. Every moment is an opportunity to start again. ❖



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正氣 RABBIT METEOR

I AM THE RABBIT
I AM THE UNIVERSE
IN MY UNBORN SILENCE
I HEAR THE SONG OF THE SPIRIT
I AM NOT HINDERED
BY NEGATIVITY
I SUBDUCE BY MY NATURE
to TRANSFORM
I VIEW MY WORLD
IN SUBTLE COLORS
I AM AN UNBORN WINNER
I AM THE RABBIT

UNKNOWN ANCESTOR
REFINED PROSHINKO
JAN. 1ST 2023
TO

ZENSHUJI'S JUKAI-E 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

by Naomi Kōryū Knoble



Jukai-e Jikidan-ryo Platform Managers

*front - Rev. Nyoze Kwong, Rev. Senpo Oshiro, Rev. Tenku Ruff, Rev. Ejo McMullen, Rev. Chimyo Atkinson, Rev. Kosbi Kurataki
back - Rev. Daiko Leysen, 2nd Rev. Kenzan Seidenberg, 3rd Rev. Sonko Ikeda
4th Rev. Eibun Aiki, 5th Rev. Joken Fernandes*

The huge, beautiful, generous gift that was the Jukai-e 100th anniversary celebration feels like it will take another 100 years or more to fully unwrap, but these are some of my initial reflections.

The massive generosity of this event took many forms: the years of planning, months of rehearsals, and the effort of everyone who came together from around the world. This Jukai-e was vivid evidence of how carefully, with nurturing hearts and impressive effort, our practice has been carried across time and geography to us right now. Gathering as an international sangha with ordained and lay practitioners from Japan, Argentina, France, and all around North America, all Dharma descendents of Dōgen Zenji, was a poignant illustration of this nurturing effort.

What was transmitted and received in these ceremonies? In the Sange Dojo (rite of repentance ceremony), I met the Preceptor's (Akiba-roshi) eyes and said, "Shozai muryo (small transgressions are infinite in number)" and he said, "I receive, I receive." In that moment I received a

gooey tenderness, mixed with patience and the clarity that is only possible with deep compassion. The following day, receiving the precepts landed in my heart and throughout my being, with the knowing that no matter the shape of my practice, lay or ordained, I am part of carrying this way forward.

For me, this Jukai-e was also an opportunity to connect with the continued living legacy of Soto Zen's arrival in North America and Shunryu Suzuki's lineage, known and unknown (or at least unknown to me). It was truly special to meet Nyoze in his role as jikidan (platform manager) and learn about him, Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, and Kwong-roshi's lineage. I was deeply moved to learn that SMZC has a stupa for Suzuki-roshi and Mitsu Suzuki, as well as Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche honoring his Dharma friendship. Nyoze shared about his family's many interconnections with Suzuki-roshi and Mitsu Suzuki, for example growing up playing together with Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi's son on visits to Japan. He shared how these



*left – oryoki meal
bottom left – Jukai
recipients (kaitei) & priests
bow during the Jukai
ceremony
bottom right – Naomi
Kōryū Knoble and Rev.
Gyokei Yokoyama*



family relationships have supported ongoing connections for SMZC, with Sotoshu, and practice here all over the US, including the Del Ray Zen Center near where I live in the Washington DC area. Living and being lived by this legacy is no small thing. My deep bows to the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center sangha for sustaining our Soto Zen practice.

Generosity, nurturing effort, awakening and being awakened for the benefit of all beings, and carrying this beautiful practice forward, with stories of friendships old and new—these are among the many gifts of this Jukai-e. My hope is that these sangha connections—in the US and around the world—will continue to grow and support us all, so that we may all be of benefit to all beings and one another. ❖

Editor's Note—Zenshuji's Jukai-e

From Nov. 16-20 a major event in the Sotoshu Zen school of North America took place in Los Angeles. For five days

eighty-four participants prepared for and received the Buddhist precepts. This extended period of preparation, including the actual Jukai ceremony, is called Jukai-e. A description in the program handbook states: "Jukai-e is a special event spread over several days in which participants gather at a temple to practice zazen, take refuge in the Buddha, listen to lectures on the 16 Bodhisattva Precepts, and enact many special rituals. Through the various activities of the Jukai-e the participants, known as kaitei, receive the Bodhisattva Precepts through the Dharma Lineage of the Kaishi. The Jukai-e, from ancient times, has been an important practice within the Soto Zen School of Buddhism as we endeavor to walk the Buddha Way. Our two head temples, Eihei-ji and Sojiji, along with many other Soto Zen temples across the world continue to conduct Jukai-e today."

This special Jukai-e marked the 100th anniversary of Soto Zen in America as well as the 100th anniversary of Zenshuji Temple.

TRAINING AT SONOMA MOUNTAIN ZEN CENTER—GENJOJI

by Rev. Wasai Fukushima

I learned a lot during my month and a half at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, where I had the opportunity to study as part of the training program of the Soto Zen Research Center. Deer, squirrels, and other creatures live in abundant nature at Genjo-ji temple. It was not very different from the monastic life I experience in Japan. I found it a familiar and easy place for a Japanese monk to practice.

We had morning zazen and classes, and meals prepared by a kitchen *tenzo*, allowing for a well-balanced diet. Of course, the taste is also excellent. In December we had Rohatsu Sesshin. Sundays I had a full day off, which lessens the strain on the body. I felt that I was able to lead a good training life.

I was particularly impressed that the schedule was designed for zazen and samu. Work consisted of cleaning the temple, as well as work in the woods and fields, since the vast site covers 80 acres. Sometimes I even made cushions. The work was varied, and I honestly never felt bored. I can only express my gratitude to Kwong-roshi, the temple family, and all the sangha members for their kindness and hospitality. ❖

Editor's note: Rev. Fukushima was a guest at SMZC for about 6 weeks in the fall of 2022.



Rev. Fukushima & Kwong-roshi

NEW TO THE SANGHA

Listed by membership signup date.

W. Russell Bradley, Alexandria, VA — Currently with Del Ray Zen in Alexandria, Virginia.

I was introduced to Zen meditation at Naropa Institute in 1978, and also attended churches intermittently through the 1980s and '90s. In 2012 I resumed activity in the Episcopal church, and resumed regular zazen practice in 2017. Joining the Del Ray Zen sangha in March 2020 was the next step on my path, as it put me in deeper communion with the community of fellow practitioners. I am a divorced father of three adult sons and grandfather to a 9-year old grandson. I retired after 33 years in the technology industry, and enjoy photography as a hobby. I am also a professional Santa Claus for hire.

Nena Caviness, Santa Rosa, CA

We are Michael and Nena Caviness, originally from Salt Lake City, UT. We have lived in various places around the country and made Santa Rosa our home in 2009. We have three children—Max, 7, Audrey, 5, and Penelope, 2—who attend school in Sebastopol. For fun we enjoy riding bikes, hiking, eating, reading, traveling, and learning. We operate an equipment manufacturing and supply store serving wineries, breweries, and distilleries. We enjoy meditation and personal spiritual study, but are novices in both. We

joined this sangha in the hope of furthering our understanding and bringing the practice to our everyday lives.

Kaya Cooper, Sonoma, CA (renewed)

I started doing transcendental meditation when I was 20 years old and have always been motivated toward practice of some form. But because I am on the spectrum and bipolar, I was frustrated by a lack of progress. I didn't even know how to be very kind, very often. It was always about me, which I realize now was a complete delusion. Belonging to Sonoma Mountain Zen Center in my past is something I cherish now. I was so appreciative of being near Kwong-roshi, and every word he spoke. I owe an apology to Nyoze, as I remember showing him very little respect. I hope you will all give me another chance in this last part of this lifetime. I asked Roshi about death once, and he said that when I die, my family dies, the sun dies, the moon dies, and Roshi dies. I am thinking he meant we each create our own universe, which of course dies with us? It would be such an honor to be welcomed back. ❖



PICKING UP A SPECK OF DUST

Last Saturday morning, our 5-day Rohatsu sesshin commemorating Shakyamuni Buddha's Enlightenment ended. Winter cold turns this shining radiance inward. Bright morning stars hang from the mid-night sky: our zazen posture is expressed on top of Sonoma Mountain. What can be more true than this!

We are happy to announce 2023 marks the 50th Anniversary for Sonoma Mountain Zen Center—Genjoji. We will be celebrating this year with Nyoze's Shinsanshiki (Mountain Seat Ceremony) scheduled for Saturday September 2, 2023. Through this ceremony Nyoze will ascend the Mountain Seat, installing him as Genjoji's 2nd Abbot. Jakusho and Shinko will be stepping down and moving into their new positions as Wisdom Chair Holders.

This auspicious event is a significant turning point for Genjoji, launching into a new era. Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi, Suzuki family, Sotoshu International dignitaries from Japan and other special teachers and honored guests will be present to witness this event. This celebration acknowledges and confirms the 92nd generation from Shakyamuni Buddha down to Shunryu Suzuki's profound lineage; thus holding this vibrant practice of upright sitting—straight and deep into the future.

Please share this wonderful news with your sangha's and sitting groups. We are starting to plan and the entire Wisteria Wind Sangha is asked to support, participate and join in this momentous event unfolding. More announcements, details and logistics of this event will follow.

KyuHai (nine bows),

Jakusho Kwong, Jushoku

Nyoze Kwong, Fukujushoku



Jan 21 Sangha Gathering: Preparing for Shinsanshiki (Mountain Seat Ceremony) On-site + Online

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM PST

We are hosting an informal get-together for Sonoma Mountain Zen Center's sangha members, families and friends. This is an opportunity for members to connect, give feedback and hear about Nyoze's upcoming Shinsanshiki (Mountain Seat Ceremony) on September 2. Open to the public. Light lunch included.

Jan 28 Meditation Instruction (Includes Saturday Community) On-Site

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM PST

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.

Jan 28 Winter Ango: Shuso Opening Ceremony On-site + Online

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM PST

Join us for Winter Ango - Shuso Opening Ceremony by Mitchell Hoden Katzel. 10:30–11:00am Zazen 11:00–11:45am Opening Ceremony

Feb 04 Meditation Instruction (Includes Saturday Community) On-Site

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM PST

See description in previous event, Jan 28.

Winter Ango: Shuso Talk On-site + Online

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM PST

Shuso talk will be given by Mitchell Hoden Katzel, following 10:30-11:00 am zazen. 10:30 am–11:00 am Zazen 11:00 am–12:00 pm Shuso Talk

Bodhisattva Monk Ordination (Shukke Tokudo)

On-site

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM PST

Please join us for our Bodhisattva Monk's Ordination Ceremony. Students will publicly make their commitment in "Leaving Family Life" to transcend the values of secular life and to assume the forms of a Buddhist Monk. Open to the public.

Feb 11 Meditation Instruction (Includes Saturday Community) On-Site

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM PST

See description in previous event, Jan 28.

Winter Ango: Shuso Talk On-site + Online

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM PST

Shuso talk will be given by Mitchell Hoden Katzel, following 10:30-11:00 am zazen. 10:30 am - 11:00 am Zazen 11:00 am - 12:00 pm Shuso Talk

Feb 12 "Actualizing the Way" 7-Day Sesshin

7:30 PM PST – Feb 19, 4:45 PM PST

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 email to confirm accommodation details and complete your registration. \$85/night & up. 10-20% discount for members.

Feb 25 Meditation Instruction (Includes Saturday Community) On-Site

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM PST

See description in previous event, Jan 28.

Winter Ango: Closing Ceremony &

Mondo

On-site + Online

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM PST

Join us for Winter Ango - Closing Ceremony & Mondo by Mitchell Hoden Katzel. 10:30–11:00am Zazen 11:00–11:45am Closing Ceremony & Mondo

SMZC Closed Feb 27– Mar 1

Mar 04 Meditation Instruction (Includes Saturday Community) On Site

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM PST

See description in previous event, Jan 28.

Saturday Community (Dharma Talk by Kwong-roshi)

On-site + Online

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM PST

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

Mar 07 Fall Study Group On-site + Online (All-Class Pass for 12 Weeks)

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM PST

A rare opportunity to explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and build a foundation for daily practice through discussions on a book. The "All-Class Pass" includes 1 free class. You may attend either online or on site.

Mar 10–11 'Just This Moment' 1-Day Sitting On-site + Online

Mar 10, 7:30 PM PST – Mar 11, 5:00 PM PST

This retreat is an introduction to Zen training and an opportunity for beginners and experienced sitters to plunge into the heart of Zen practice. RSVP and we will contact you to confirm accommodation details and complete your registration. \$85/night & up. 10–20% discount for members.

SMZC Closed Mar 13

**Mar 18 Saturday Community
(Dharma Talk by Uji Markiewicz)**

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM PDT

Dharma talk will be given by Uji Markiewicz, Abbot of Kannon Sangha Warsaw, Poland, following 10:30-11:00 am zazen. 10:30 am - 11:00 am Zazen 11:00 am - 12:00 pm Dharma Talk

**Mar 25 Meditation Instruction
(Includes Saturday Community) On Site**

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM PST

See description in previous event, Jan 28.

**Saturday Community
(Dharma Talk by Katsuzen King)
On-site + Online**

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM PDT

Dharma talk will be given by Katsuzen King, Founding Teacher of Windsor Zen Sitting Group in Windsor, California, following 10:30-11:00 am zazen. 10:30 am–11:00 am Zazen 11:00 am –12:00 pm Dharma Talk

**Mar 26 Spring 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!

SMZC Closed Mar 27

**Mar 29 Buddha's Birthday 3-Day Sesshin
On-site + Online**

Mar 29, 6:00 PM PDT – Apr 01, 3:30 PM PDT

This retreat is a period of time set aside to let go of the conditioned self and resume our original nature in the spirit of Shakyamuni's birth. RSVP and we will contact you to confirm accommodation details and complete your registration offline. \$85/night & up. 10–20% discount for members.

SMZC Closed Apr 3–4

**Apr 02 Buddha's Birth Ceremony
On-site + Online**

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM PDT

Join us on site for this joyous occasion to celebrate the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha by offering incense and pouring sweet water over the baby Buddha, symbolizing the soft rain in the fragrant garden of Lumbini when Buddha was born. Open to the public.

**Apr 07 April Fusatsu Ceremony
On-site + Online**

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM PDT

Join us for Fusatsu Ceremony (Monthly Atonement Ceremony). 7:30–8:00pm, Zazen 8:00–9:00pm Service



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>.

SANGHA NEWS FROM ICELAND

by Zenki Traustason

Over the summer, Gyda Myoji and I finally had a chance to visit SMZC for Ango practice after three years away. Driving up the mountain after the flight from Iceland, I always feel like I'm coming home after a long journey, almost like Genjoji is my second home. As I write these words, I miss everyone there as well as the training.

Ango got off to a bumpy start since the virus decided that it wasn't quite finished with us. But that's just how it goes, and a good practice for all of us. The stay was as good as always and it was wonderful to see everyone again after such a long time.

The Icelandic sangha has gotten back to normal, as if the pandemic never happened. No one speaks about it here in Iceland, and we are back to our day-to-day rhythm.

We had our yearly Urban Sesshin in October, as always. We also had a well-attended five-week introduction to Zen training workshop, something we do at the start of spring and fall.

Brynjar Shoshin has finished translating Roshi's book, *No Beginning No End*. He's done a great job, and I'm excited to finally have Roshi's book in Icelandic. The translation is now being proofread, with the goal of publishing it in 2023. We have been reading and discussing the translation in reading groups, chapter by chapter. The whole project has been quite a journey for us all.

A few changes have been made in dharma positions here. Alfred Chozetsu is now the tenzo and Matthias Ekai is assistant tenzo. Gulli Mushin is now the head doan. Gyda Myoji and Brynjar Shoshin are inos.

I hope everyone had a happy and peaceful holiday, and that we can meet again in 2023. ❖

For the blessing of all sentient beings,
Zenki



Zenki Traustason with participants of Urban sesshin—October, 2022

Jukai is the ceremony in which Zen students receive the Buddhist precepts, or vows; it is also known as taking refuge. It is lay ordination, a confirmation of one's deep commitment to the Three Treasures of Buddhism. We take refuge in the three treasures: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Many young Americans take refuge like, oh, it's a piece of cake—just a nice ceremony! Taking vows in Zen Jukai goes much deeper. The Buddha is the essence of your life, the light within yourself. The Dharma is Buddha's teachings. The Sangha is the community of people who practice together. We are all practicing in our lives, individually and collectively, and this Sangha really includes the sun, the moon, the stars, and the trees as well. It's all Sangha. Everything is one. Everything is sacred.

The best way to practice with constancy is in a sangha, where we are all practicing together. In receiving the precepts, you are making a public statement to the sangha, openly asserting before all of us that you're no longer narrowly preoccupied or clinging to your small self. Constantly attending to that small self has no real benefit. In asserting big self, you're helping others emerge from their own darkness, because they are also you. Big self is beyond the duality of self and other.

Suzuki-roshi always said he gave precepts to students so that we could help others. All sentient beings need help. If you help spontaneously and wholeheartedly, it actually helps you as well. I continue to travel to Poland and Iceland every year to help students in Europe; I am deeply moved by their commitment and resolve, and return energized.

—*Jakusbo Kwong-roshi from "Jukai" in his recent book Mind Sky*

NEWS FROM THE POLISH SANGHA

by Małgosia Myoju Sieradzka

Poland is covered by snow. Nature rests under the cool white blanket, but most people don't. We are busy getting ready for the end-of-year holidays. Maybe January will allow us to slow down.

The Polish sangha has been quite busy since summer. On Sept. 11 we officially inaugurated the Warsaw Zendo, a beautiful space in the city center. The 70 guests included members who traveled from other cities and members of other religious communities. We ate, reconnected, listened to speeches, and received many gifts and good wishes!

We have had many activities at the Warsaw center, including a *kido* chanting practice led by Polish nun Won Hyang Sunim and a meeting of newly ordained nuns to share reflections from time spent at SMZC. Uji met with Monika Figiel, an active member of the Lubin community, to discuss long-term cooperation between Kannon Sangha and the Christian meditation community. We held four one-day sittings, two Silence for the Climate street sittings, and a seven-day Rohatsu sesshin led by Uji and Kazik Sokuze Hołubowicz (who currently lives in Ireland). Other activities include zazen instruction led by Kuun online and in person, and a talk by Won Hyang Sunim as part of the Hidden Lamp project.

Kąciki, our forest Zen center, hosted two sesshin this season: a seven-day autumn sitting, and Rohatsu sesshin. A one-day sitting was held in November. Work on upgrading our buildings at the forest Zen center is ongoing. We hope to be able to practice there in more comfort.

The tri-city sangha has also had a change in location, moving from Gdansk to the lovely seaside city of Sopot. Groups from Gdansk, Gdynia, and Sopot now practice in a beautiful prewar building that will be known as the home of the Three Treasures Sangha. Four smaller cities in Poland also hold regular practice: Poznań, Jasień, Toruń, and Wrocław.

The tri-city sangha regularly holds meetings online and in person led by Jarek Kaiin to read and discuss Roshi's book *Mind Sky*.

Currently we are focused on extending our online offerings from three Zoom sittings per week, for people who cannot come in person to one of our city centers.

Finally, we are happy to be able to raise money for our dharma brother Piotrek Jahołkowski to visit Sonoma Mountain Zen Center in February to be ordained by Kwong-roshi. Piotrek is an artist who lives in Gdansk. He has been practicing for more than 20 years, and has visited SMZC several times for periods lasting several months. We are thrilled that he will be able to make this very special trip. ❖



top — Rohatsu sesshin, Dec. 2022
middle — Zendo, Sopot, Poland
bottom — Quince harvest from Kąciki Zen center

A NOTE FROM YOUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES— THE SHINSANSHIKI (MOUNTAIN SEAT CEREMONY) IS COMING

Your Board of Trustees cannot emphasize enough our joy over Roshi's announcement of the Shinsanshiki (Mountain Seat Ceremony) to install Nyoze Kwong as abbot on Sept 2, 2023. (See announcement, pg. 9) This year's one-month Summer Ango practice period will close with a traditional Shinsanshiki and Hossenshiki Shuso Ceremony. The importance of this watershed event to the future of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center cannot be overstated. The board has allocated funds necessary to support this auspicious occasion, and we now seek to engage all sangha members to help with preparations for the ceremony. In January we will hold a meeting to assign teams and lead positions. We need everyone's help; please let the office know how you can contribute as the date approaches.

As part of the ongoing effort to build a dharma container to sustain Suzuki-roshi's teachings and lineage on Sonoma Mountain, we will be constructing a sanmon (mountain gate) for the event. Over the past month we have met with Paul Zengyu Disco, a lifelong student of Suzuki-roshi and a Japanese master carpenter who has started work on a rough construction plan.

Paul's work has included building the home of Larry Ellison, co-founder and chief technology officer of Oracle computer company. Paul recently met with Lucas Benjamin, a carpenter who studied in Japan and who has worked with him for ten years, and we are fortunate to have Benjamin assisting in this effort. Together, Disco and Benjamin designed and built the tea house gate at Yale University. For guidance they have looked to Gyokudenin, the temple in Shizuoka where Ian Kishizawa, teacher to Suzuki-roshi, lived. There is also the example of the gate to Kaisuisai Sodo training monastery, where Suzuki-roshi lectured in his earlier years. Disco and Benjamin will be using the Sonoma Mandala Project plans to establish the scale for our sanmon.

To finish the Mountain Gate in time for the Shinsanshiki ceremony will be a heavy lift, but it marks the opening of a new dharma era on Sonoma Mountain, as well as the Zen Center's 50th anniversary. We are hard at work completing Phase 2 of the Sonoma Mandala project with construction of the Manjushri Zendo Meditation Hall, and Wisteria House Kitchen and Community Building. The board has also created a new Strategic Planning Subcommittee charged with rethinking efforts to build sustainability and focus on the long-term vision of the Sonoma Mandala.

The board is grateful to say that with your support, we will not have to dip into savings this year to fund operating costs. Thank you to everyone for your generous ongoing support. We did make the difficult decision to charge a modest fee for the first time to attend the Saturday Community program, starting in January as the board plans to



above — Gate of Kaisuisai, a training monastery founded by Jochu Tengen-daiosho where Shunryu Suzuki-roshi used to lecture

below — Proposed conceptual model for the entrance gate at Genjoji by Lucas Benjamin



review the decision later in the year and welcomes your feedback. Please contact the office with comments or offers to contribute to the Mountain Gate ceremony.

Finally, we on the board would like to express our deep appreciation for your ongoing support and commitment to practice on the mountain. We wish everyone a healthy and peaceful Year of the Rabbit.

Yours with three bows,

Lizbeth Myoko Hamlin, Secretary

Tensan Chuck Ramey, President

SONOMA MANDALA PROJECTS IN REVIEW

by Shunryu Kwong

During 2022, the Zen Center worked on several small but essential Sonoma Mandala projects.

This fall we completed installation of more than 200 feet of wire fencing for the water tanks along Sonoma Mountain Road. The fence will serve as a deterrent to trespassers and provide security for the Zen Center's water system.

Over the summer, light fixtures were installed at the ag/maintenance building. More than 650 feet of electrical wire now connect the building to the electrical panel at the old concrete water tank, providing the agricultural building with power. As the year comes to a close, Craig and Koten are working to organize this building to provide support for future building projects. They are also replacing the treacherous Ando Quarters pathway with a new 150-foot pathway with a safer, gentler slope.

After decades of patched leaks, the Kanzeon House finally has a new roof! Nyoze led the project, working with various sangha members over several months to complete the new roof. Before it could be installed, old shingles, rotted structural roof members, and plywood had to be replaced. New insulation was installed between the ceiling joist and new plywood, providing a flat, stable substrate for the asphalt roofing shingles. After the last rain storm, Nyoze reported that the family remained warm and dry!

We are excited to announce that the Zen Center will embark on a project in 2023 to build a *sanmon*, or temple gate, northwest of the restroom building by the lower parking area. Construction will coincide with the Zen Center's Shinsan-shiki, or Mountain Seat Ceremony. The gate will open to the future zendo, the Manjushuri Hall, and serve as the main entry to the Zen Center. Roshi has asked Paul Zengyu Discoe, a monk ordained by Shunryu Suzuki-roshi, to help design and build the *sanmon*.

Our deepest gratitude to all of you who have volunteered and donated to make these projects possible. Please continue your support in the new year! ❖



top — Kanzeon House with new roof
bottom — Craig Stepanek clears brush for fire prevention

EIHEIJI VISIT DURING WINTER BREAK

by Coco Mellinger



top – Great Kannon of Chokokuji Temple, Tokyo
bottom – Eiheiiji - Sotoshu Headquarter Temple



It started snowing several days before my *sanzen* (temple stay) at Eiheiiji with my mother. Surprisingly, it wasn't as cold as I expected. Our *sanzen* date had been moved to one day later than we requested. When we arrived at 3 p.m., we learned the schedule had also been changed, from two 50-minute periods of *zazen* including a 10-min *kinhin*, to 40-minute *zazen* periods without *kinhin*, for a total of four sitting periods over two days. When I asked about this, the instructor said the schedule was changed to accommodate those new to *zazen*. Since reopening after Covid, the temple has seen more beginners than repeat visitors, who are more experienced at meditation.

Participating with us in *sanzen* were two male college students. After meditation instruction by an *unsui* (training monk), we sat for about 15 minutes. Then we enjoyed the spacious women's bath house all to ourselves, followed by the *shojin ryori* (Buddhist vegan cuisine), made up of nine small red dishes on a square plate. After a short break, an instructor showed us how to breathe correctly from the *tanden* (energy field in the abdomen), along with correct posture and how to hold the cosmic mudra. The highlight of my visit was observing with my own eyes how the monk's *hara* (belly) moved as he breathed in front of us.

My aging mom was greatly relieved to find our guest zendo and guest rooms warmed to 70 degrees. We woke at 4 a.m. and sat once before the morning service at 5:30. It was super cold in the *batto* (dharma hall) where the morning service was held. Seated in chairs, visitors are allowed to wear socks to observe the morning service, but I kept mine off to see how cold the tatami mats felt. They were indeed very cold, exactly as described in a YouTube video I watched before our visit. After the morning service, the *unsui* gave us a tour. We sat *zazen* one more time after breakfast and then wrote our reflections on a piece of paper to give to the instructor. We asked him a few questions about himself and the training at Eiheiiji, and then concluded our visit at 9 a.m.

Currently, 96 monks train at Eiheiiji, the temple founded by Soto Zen master Dōgen in 1244. It was wonderful to see the place where Nyoze had trained. I also briefly visited Eiheiiji's Betsuin (a separate temple), as well as a smaller Soto Zen temple in Tokyo called Chokokuji, where I was fortunate to see the great 33-foot tall statue of Kannon. ❖

VISIT TO RINSO-IN

by Natalia Jeffs



After years of planning, delays, and re-planning, my daughter and I were finally able to go to Japan in December. Among the many wonderful experiences we had there was the great fortune to visit Rinso-in and spend time with Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi and his family.

Being new to Buddhism and Zen, I was a little nervous, because I was not sure about the correct protocol for our visit. Or maybe it was that I did not want to somehow mess up and—by association—cast a negative light on SMZC. Either way, my worries were unfounded, because Suzuki-roshi and his family are the nicest people one could hope to meet.

When we arrived at the temple, it was immediately apparent that this was a very special place. It is beautiful, serene, and has many amazing features, some of them rare. But more than that is the energy that runs through it. I don't know how to describe it exactly in words. It's experiential—the kind of thing you feel when visiting Shunryu Suzuki-roshi's stupa at Sonoma Mountain. Visit Rinso-in, and you'll know what I mean.

We went into one of the buildings and wandered around for a few minutes, then found a room where several women were putting together flower arrangements. I was looking for the daughter-in-law, Kumi-san, but we ran right into Mrs. Suzuki, who immediately greeted us warmly and took us to meet Roshi. We waited for him to finish a meeting, and meanwhile the rest of the family gathered to meet us.



*Natalia & Dana Jeffs,
Rinsoin Temple, Yaizu, Japan*

The next thing I knew, I was in the room with Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi, selecting fabrics for Nyoze while drinking tea. Very informal, no pretense. Hoitsu-roshi is down to earth, comfortable, and humorous. He has a presence, a calm, quiet, stable feeling that emanates from him. He doesn't speak much English, and I speak no Japanese, so I knew we wouldn't have any deep conversations about Zen. But that's not what mattered. Sitting around the table, watching him compare fabrics (he had an obvious favorite!), trying to help, chatting with Roshi's son Shungo-san and his wife Kumi-san—nothing special, and at the same time very special.

Mrs. Suzuki took us on a tour of the temple. It was wonderful to hear her talk about Kwong-roshi and the family visiting Rinso-in years ago, and to see the grounds and halls. We also got a chance to sit a short period of zazen in the zendo, an amazing experience.

After the visit, Kumi-san drove us to the train station, telling us about her kids, schools in Japan, exams, and asking my daughter about her studies at UC-Santa Cruz. Again I caught myself thinking that while this was nothing special, it was all very special indeed. It was one of the best days of my life. ❖

ZEN DUST NEWS

by Janet Buckendahl

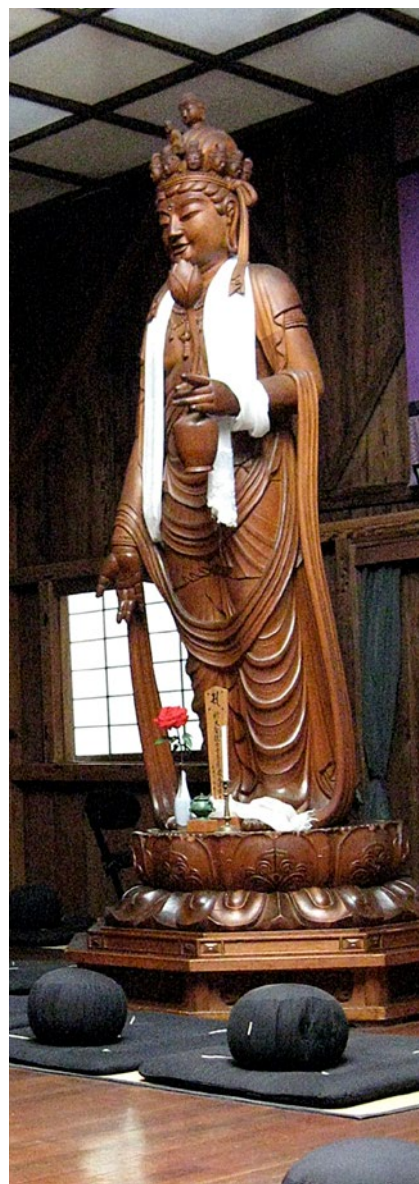
Happy New Year, everyone!

I look forward to welcoming you all to the store this year. We are fully stocked again and open after Saturday Community from noon to 1:30 p.m. The store is located at the back of the Sangha House, and can be reached through the back door or the gravel pathway to your left when facing the Sangha House.

Please come in and browse. We have a good selection of new books, and several used books at good prices, plus free publications and magazines. Set up your home altar with one of our statues and an incense burner, or choose a favorite fragrance of incense. Listen to our brass bells and dark metal gongs. We have zafu, zabutons, wedge cushions for chair sitters, and a variety of malas, t-shirts and cards.

A new Square point-of-sale system makes ordering online much easier and more secure. If you have any inquiries about the store or our merchandise, please contact me at janet@smzc.org

May 2023 bring you good health and happiness! ❖



Waka Poem

BY DOGEN

詠見桃花悟道

ei ken tōka godō

Poem on Realizing the Way
upon Seeing Peach Blossoms

春風に	<i>harukaze ni</i>
綻びにけり	<i>hokorobi ni keri</i>
桃の花	<i>momo no hana</i>
枝葉にわたる	<i>eda ha ni wataru</i>
疑ひもなし	<i>utagai mo nasi</i>

Blown by the spring wind
peach trees in full blossom
without any doubts
extending branches and leaves



All Contributions
Help Maintain
the Buddhadharma!

DONATE ONLINE SMZC.ORG

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!* ❖

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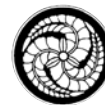
SMZC's website conveys the essence of our practice to others and invites their participation at the Zen Center. It is found at **www.smzc.org**.

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**.

"The best" of Roshi's talks are available free through two websites—Podbean and iTunes. Access via **iTUNES**—Open iTunes on your computer; click "iTunes Store" in the left navigation column; click "Podcasts" on the top row; in the small box at the very upper right side shown with a "Q", enter "smzc"; hit the enter key on your computer; in the middle of the page with Roshi's picture, click on "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" under the heading "Podcast"; and Roshi's talks then appear.

Access via Podbean—Go to **www.podbean.com**; in the box at top right of page, enter "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" (not case sensitive); click "SEARCH"; click on "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" next to Roshi's picture or on the picture itself. **OPTION 1:** click on the "Listen" button beside any talk or **OPTION 2** (recommended): click on **smzc.podbean.com** beside Roshi's picture; once in the site click on any "Listen" button. ❖



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