

Springs Mountain Sangha

Welcome to the Springs Mountain Sangha!

Springs Mountain Sangha (community) is a Zen Buddhist practice community: a group of people who study and practice the Zen way of awakening together. Our tradition has an emphasis on meditation and shared inquiry, and in particular, we are part of a stream of Zen in which koan inquiry is practiced in a number of forms and venues. We are a part of **The Open Source**, a network of individuals and communities in the western United States engaged in Zen practice together.

We offer several available meeting times for Dharma (teaching) talks, meditation and discussion each week virtually on Zoom and in-person (when available) and ALL ARE WELCOME. A schedule of all these offerings is available on our website, and in our newsletter. The newsletter is most current with zoom links, schedule changes, and happenings. Please subscribe to newsletter at <http://www.smszen.org/joinourmailinglist/>

Ongoing Meditation Schedule:

Mondays: Evening meditation, followed by a teacher talk or sutra service, and usually discussion 6:00-8:00pm MT

Wednesdays: Morning meditation, two periods of meditation 6:30-7:30am MT

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: Morning simple sit (camera's off): 6:30-7:30am MT

Saturdays: Morning meditation 6:30-8am and discussion 8-8:30am MT

Sunday: Evening candlelight meditation, 8-8:30p MT

*Note: Additional sitting times, study groups (koan, sutra, precept and book studies), introductory classes, retreats, and other teachings are usually updated in the newsletter first.

*If you'd like to connect and ask questions, or share thoughts, before or after any meeting please email Sarah Bender, Roshi, at sembender@gmail.com

This packet contains information that explains more about our Sangha, our teachers and teachings, and some basics about Buddhism and meditation. You will also find answers to frequently asked questions and some orientation to our order of service.

Sarah Bender, Roshi

To learn more about our resident teacher, Sarah Bender, Roshi, who received full transmission from Joan Sutherland, Roshi, in 2017, please visit our website at <http://www.smszen.org/our-teachers/>

Website

Access all additional information on our website www.smszen.org
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Guidelines for a Harmonious Sangha

In order to maintain a safe environment that is conducive to Buddhist practice and that respects the dignity of all who come for refuge in the Sangha, we ask that you carefully consider the guidelines below. Keep in mind both your needs and the needs of others that could contribute to an atmosphere conducive to meditation practice and mutual support.

Springs Mountain Sangha Statement of Inclusion

All people are welcome here. Springs Mountain Sangha believes that diversity is strength, and we embrace and value the diversity of all. We affirm all people regardless of their ability, age, citizenship, culture, ethnicity or nationality, gender identity or expression, marital status, race, religion or religious affiliation, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status.

We affirm the worth and dignity of every person. We treasure that our discussions reflect a variety of perspectives and a wide range of lived experiences. We believe that this diversity is of fundamental value.

We are committed to supporting a wide range of identities and social, cultural, and political needs in the development and planning of Sangha activities. This support includes (but is not limited to):

- Practicing non-discrimination in the Sangha's events, retreats and gatherings
- Increasing access to opportunities for all, to include working to reduce physical, social, and economic barriers to participation in Sangha activities
- Cultivating an awareness of the ways in which various social, cultural, political, or economic privileges are, at any given time, accessible to some within the Sangha and not others
- Developing an environment rooted in a belief of equal respect for all persons. Such an environment, among other things, should encourage listening nonjudgmentally.

We're aware that meeting this commitment will be a challenging and ongoing process. If you have concerns that need addressing, please contact us so that your reflections can inform our efforts.

Meditation Etiquette

- Please observe silence during meditation practice unless called upon by a teacher for assistance.

- For inside sitting or walking practice, please leave your shoes outside of the meditation space.
- Please silence cell phones if in person, or place your microphone on mute if the practice is virtual.
- We invite you to join us in the bowing rituals we do to respect the traditions, ancestors, and the path we share together. Please observe others if you are unfamiliar with them, or ask a teacher for guidance.
- Please remain still during sitting meditation. If you need to move, please do so quietly.
- During virtual meditation practice, be mindful of the announced times for sitting, and, if you join after starting time, be sure to mute your microphone.

Community Safety

- Harassment of any kind is not tolerated.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Please refrain from using drugs and alcohol at the Zendo, and just prior to practicing with the Sangha.
- Weapons of any kind may not be present at any of our meetings.

Discussion Guidelines

Our conversations, during general meetings, responding to talks, and during koan gatherings, are at the heart of SMS practice. We have noticed how a generous and welcoming field of inquiry held by all of us, allows the Dharma to appear among us and take the form of our very lives, our hearts and minds, and our shared insights. This is how we dream the Dharma onward, creatively meeting the moment together with warm curiosity. Here are some practices to make this happen:

- Be guided by the direction and format of the teacher. Different conversations may have different pacing and forms of interaction.
- Speak for yourself, from the heart, and briefly; and listen with your heart open, too. This way you will naturally be respectful of all those who choose to ask questions or share experiences or insights.
- Be respectful of time; allow for others to share or ask questions before speaking repeatedly.
- Our discussions are for the benefit of all who have gathered to study and practice the Way together; disagreements and strong feelings are welcomed! We expect these to be expressed and received respectfully.

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Basic Forms

Forms are ritual ways of doing things in the meditation hall, such as how we walk or sit in meditation, hold our hands, or bow.

Forms can help to focus your attention, experience deeper meditative states (for your mind and body), and provide subtle and powerful teachings about ourselves and others.

“As we move together in these ways, our responses to the forms evolve and can support us in unexpected ways.” ~ Sarah Bender, Roshi

Entering the Hall

- On coming through the doorway, pause to bow towards the altar and then walk to your seat.
- Bow to your cushion; turn 180° (in the direction of the altar), bow to the hall, and sit down, facing the center of the hall.

Seated Meditation

Postures:

- Half lotus: one leg crossed over the top of the other
- Burmese: legs folded flat on the ground, one in front of the other
- Seiza: kneeling on the lower legs, sitting on an upturned cushion
- Royal ease: one leg folded on the floor; the other leg upright and bent at the knee, foot flat on the floor; hands folded on the upraised knee

Using a chair:

- Sit as upright as possible, away from the back of the chair. It helps if the seat slants forward, rather than back.
- Place feet flat on the ground for support; if they don't reach, put a cushion underneath the feet.

Hand positions: Hands held comfortably against the body

- About 3 finger-widths below the navel, the hands horizontal, palms upward, left over right, finger joints matching and thumbs just touching, creating an empty oval in the middle
OR
- About 3 finger-widths below the navel, hands clasped one over the other, palms flat against the body, thumbs tucked inside

Gaze:

- Eyes partially open & looking downward, about 3 feet in front of the cushion
- Soft gaze, not focused
- Remove eyeglasses; don't wear contacts, as the eyes will dry out

Staying comfortable

- Check that the back and neck are aligned naturally, pelvis tilted slightly forward, shoulders and arms relaxed, jaw and hands unclenched, eyes in soft focus. Notice and release tension.
- Breathe into any area of discomfort, letting the attention follow the breath.
- Move discretely as necessary.
- Change positions from period to period; move to a chair.
- Don't skip walking and moving meditations.
- During walking meditation, leave the hall to stretch or do yoga.
- In extreme cases, take a break from sitting.

Basic Meditation Practices

- Breath counting: silently count 1 to 10 on the exhales; repeat the cycles; when the mind wanders, return to 1 and begin again.
- Watching the breath: rest one's attention there, coming back to the breath whenever the mind wanders.
- Mindfulness: note physical sensations, emotions, and/or thoughts as they arise, then return to the breath.
- Visualizations: such as lovingkindness or tonglen meditations
- Just sitting: sit in still awareness, without any object of attention.
- Working with a koan or koan-style inquiry

Guidance

- When questions come up about your meditation, don't hesitate to ask the teacher for guidance.

Walking Meditation

- When the bell ends a meditation period, bow, turn and straighten cushions and stand up (slowly if your legs are asleep); stand in front of your cushion with your hands folded at the solar plexus.
- At the sound of the clappers, bow (hands folded at solar plexus), turn to the left, and begin walking.
- Eyes are lowered, hands folded at solar plexus
- **For in-person meetings**, follow person in front of you at about an arm's length distance.
- Walk close together, as one body.
- Note: when leaving walking meditation, bow out at the doorway.
- Return and stand at your seat when clappers sound again (~ 5 minutes), wait and watch leader for signal to bow together before sitting down again.

Chanting

- Hold books or put them on your mat; please don't fold back or place on floor.
- Sing with your ears: listen and join in with heart; you'll hear both your voice and your neighbors', and then all one voice.
- It's fine just to listen; and, singing is an offering.
- Raise hands, palms together, for dedications.

At the end of a meditation gathering

- After everyone is standing, bow to the altar with everyone.
- Turn, bow all together facing inward.
- Plump cushions, then turn and stand, hands folded at solar plexus.
- When the bell rings, bow with hands in that position and leave the hall.
- There is no need to bow at the doorway when leaving the hall.

Rakusu wearers

- First time in the hall each day: Kneel facing your cushion, take out your rakusu and either place it on your head or hold the pine twig to your forehead, say the rakusu verse silently with your palms together, put on the rakusu, and sit.
- Subsequent times: Sit in the usual way, take out your rakusu, touch the pine twig briefly to your forehead, and put it on. Silently recite this verse:

VERSE OF THE RAKUSU
This is the robe of freedom,
the bare field, the blessings.
I receive the Tathagata's
teaching, which wakes all beings.

Forms article

For more about how forms are understood and used in the Open Source tradition, see this article by Joan Sutherland, Roshi, that appeared in the Lion's Roar Journal in 2017:

<https://www.lionsroar.com/through-the-dharma-gate-november-2010/>

Here is a brief excerpt:

"We sit down and gather ourselves. We are creatures of habit, using habit—a particular sitting posture, the smell of incense, the sound of a chant repeated many times—for our benefit, to bring body, heart, and mind together. In gathering ourselves we make ourselves available to be acted upon, to be marked by the worlds, visible and invisible, in which we sit."

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Zoom Hall specific guidelines to create presence and community:

- Please observe silence and keep yourself on mute (bottom left of screen) in the Zoom Hall.
- Please silence other forms of technology on your computer or in your environment.
- Stay on camera when possible, to create a sense of community. Turning your camera off while meditating or temporarily leaving the Zoom Hall is fine, but leave your camera on during dharma talks or discussion if possible. *Please note: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday morning simple sit meditations are cameras off
- When it is your turn to speak, please unmute yourself, and then re-mute after your sharing.
- Please do not utilize the chat feature to all participants during meetings unless it is called for.
- Sitting, walking, and bowing guidelines using your own or the zoom leader's altar are the same as in person.
- Gallery or Speaker view can be accessed at the top right of your screen for your preference.
- During discussion periods, be mindful of how lengthy your contributions are and of others in the Zoom Hall who may want to speak as well. Be guided by the teacher's directions and requests.

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About Buddhism

About 2,500 years ago, Siddhartha Gautama was born the son of a king of the Shakya clan, in northern India, at the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains. There are many, many different accounts of his birth, life, teachings and death. Although he was a real person, most of the accounts have the quality of myth, and all take on the biases of the speaker or the tradition from which they come. Taking the story of Shakyamuni Buddha as the story of each one of us can be a particularly helpful kind of reading.

A mysterious soothsayer, at Siddhartha's birth, told his father, the king, that he would become either a great and powerful ruler, or a great and powerful spiritual leader. Siddhartha's father had a distinct preference in this matter! He arranged for the palace and grounds to be provided with every delight, and with the best education possible in all areas: physical, intellectual and spiritual. Perhaps Siddhartha, as he reached manhood, recognized that he could not be a good ruler without knowing his people. In any case, he grew curious. He slipped out of the palace compound and went to town. There, surely with the help of the powers of Life itself, he encountered sickness, old age, and death. He was profoundly shocked and changed by this experience. It grabbed him in the gut the way it grabs us as we reach adulthood, too: Here I am. I have been given so much. Now I find there is this intractable problem of suffering! How on earth will I be of any use if I cannot help with this problem? He had to leave and find out, and he had also seen a promising sight in town: a monk, walking peacefully. Again he slid out of the palace, leaving his wife and newborn son.

For six years, Siddhartha studied and practiced with the greatest masters of his time, but he could not find the solution of his problem. Exhausting the wisdom available, he practiced such severe austerities that he reached the verge of death. And then he turned back into life. Siddhartha recognized that the solution to his problem, his burning question, lay in life, not in the total renunciation of life. With greater determination than ever, but with a new gratitude and softness in his heart for all of life, he sat down beneath a tall shade tree and vowed to stay until the matter could become clear for him. For six days and nights he sat, simply allowing all aspects of life to rise and fall around and in him. He did not run, and he did not fight what appeared. He simply stayed and looked at it all, his heart-mind opening, opening. Finally, in the dark of night, he saw the house of suffering that he himself had been creating, over, and over, and over, and he declared that he was now free of that compulsion: never again would that house be rebuilt! Everything became very, very still. Just at dawn, he looked up and saw the morning star—and he experienced a profound awakening, one that would never fade for him. He said something like, "Wonderful! Wonderful! Now I truly see that I and all beings together are perfectly enlightened, just as we are! It's just that our hindrances prevent us from acknowledging this." After this our young man was known as the Buddha: the awakened one. He knew that what he had seen could not truly be described, and he was not inclined to teach. But upon seeing him, people were so moved by his very presence, that they begged and

begged, and finally the Buddha agreed to teach. He taught for 47 years, until his death, and established communities of practice to help people find the support they would need to walk the path of awakening.

What the Buddha taught came to be known as the Four Noble Truths. You will come across many translations and descriptions of these, developed over the long voyage of Buddhism around the world. Here is one for you to consider, remembering always that the Buddha himself insisted that each of us must be guided by his or her own light.

1. Human life is characterized by a sense of pervasive unsatisfactoriness. We are not at ease. Life won't cooperate with our plans for it.
2. The source of our dissatisfaction, our profound discomfort or dis-ease, is our misunderstanding of the fundamental nature of reality, of happiness, of ourselves.
 - we think that we exist as a separate self, not dependent on the rest of life, and therefore that our job is to protect the interests of this self.
 - we think that change can be controlled: that if we are smart enough or persistent enough, we can get the things we like to stay that way or get collected, and the things we hate to go away, for good.
 - we think that we can act as independent agents, not subject to the laws of cause and effect.

So, we get caught in the clutches of urges: the urge to get more (greed), the urge to push away what we don't want (hatred) and the urge to see ourselves as not subject to reality (ignorance). These urges become a prison for us.
3. Freedom is possible! We can get free of the clutches of these urges, when we clearly see the real nature of reality, which is unutterably beautiful: constantly changing, all of life interwoven, with each thing an indissoluble part of the whole and yet, at each moment, distinctly itself. This freedom provides a deep, deep joy beyond happiness and unhappiness, and leaves us able to respond to all beings with generosity and openness.
4. There is a path that leads to this freedom. In most formulations, this is expressed as the Eightfold Path, and the Buddha spent the rest of his life teaching how to walk this path. There are many resources available for those who choose to walk it, and many methods of practice.

For now, though, I would leave you with the words of the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado:

Traveler, it is your footsteps,
the road, nothing more;
traveler, there is
no road, the road is made by walking...

May this be the road that brings delight to you and to all those touched by your life!

-Sarah Bender Roshi

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“In Case You Were Wondering”

Frequently Asked Questions about Springs Mountain Buddhist Sangha

Regarding the Sangha:

Why is it called a **Sangha** – what does that mean?

Sangha means community. This term was used at the time of the Buddha to identify his community of monks and nuns. It has come to mean the community of those striving to understand and follow the teachings of the Buddha whether they are laypeople or ordained monks and nuns. Sangha is considered one of the Three treasures of what you take refuge in. (It can also refer to those who support you in your practice, or the larger, or global communities that support your practice or seeking.)

To what **Buddhist tradition or school of thought** does this Sangha subscribe?

Our particular stream of Zen comes through the Sanbo Kyodan, formed in Japan by Hakuun Yasutani Roshi. It was further developed by Robert Aitken, Roshi, who founded the Diamond Sangha, and now by the Pacific Zen School, founded by John Tarrant and Joan Sutherland. This lineage is characterized by a lay practice rather than a monastic one. We are specifically affiliated with the “Open Source” founded by Joan Sutherland. Emphasis: the development of authentic American expressions of Zen, and the confluence of koans and creativity. The Open Source is part of the Pacific Zen School. The house style honors the original Chinese koan way while emphasizing the integration of koan inquiry with contemporary lives, communal as well as individual koan practice. House style also highlights the contributions of women to the koan tradition, and seeks to develop a body of Western koans. Additional information for the Open Source can be found at Joan Sutherland, Roshi website, at: https://joansutherlanddharmaworks.org/Who_We_Are/The_Open_Source/

What does the teacher designation of Sensei mean?

In our lineage, a Sensei is one who is authorized to teach independently by a Roshi. Sensei can perform rituals like weddings, funerals, baby blessings and house blessings and other ceremonies; can work with individual students in (and out of) the koan curriculum, and can guide someone through our deep study of the Buddhist precepts, and the act of ceremonially Taking Refuge in the Bodhisattva Way. A Sensei’s teacher has recognized their insight, their embodiment of the Way, their leadership in community, and the community’s desire to have them as a teacher and community leader. Most often, in our lineage, a Sensei will have completed work in the koan curriculum and shown skill in facilitating the koan practice of others. A Sensei is not authorized to make someone else a teacher.

What does the teacher designation of Roshi mean?

A Roshi in our lineage is one whose Roshi recognizes that a transmission has occurred—that their student (usually already a Sensei) has received and is ready and willing to dream on their Dharma. The new Roshi's commitment is somewhat changed by this charge: more than a responsibility to support the community, they now have a deep responsibility to the Dharma itself, to the ancestors and descendants of this Way, to let it live, breathe and grow wherever they find themselves—and to find and train one or more others to continue the line.

How is the Sangha governed? There is a Steering Committee that is responsible for decision making and events offered in the Sangha. Steering Committee members are elected by the membership at the Fall Business meeting. We seek to function as a democratic community with input by all members using consensus as much as possible. We have monthly business meetings which are open to all members and nonmembers who attend this Sangha.

How do I **become a member** of the Sangha?

For now, anyone who considers themselves a member, is a member. For voting purposes, sign up as member during the Annual Meeting in the fall.

Regarding the meditation service:

How do people greet each other and how do they address and greet the teacher?

Our community is not very formal, as Zen communities go. We mostly greet each other, including the teacher, by first names.

Is there any special clothing required to meditate?

People wear loose, comfortable clothing for meditation. It's helpful to also have a shawl to drape over your knees, because having a warm lower body and a cooler upper body supports your meditation. It's a courtesy, when we meet in person, to wear plain clothing, dark or neutral in color rather than bright colored or strongly patterned, because this helps make the meditation hall visually quiet, which supports meditation. When we are meeting online, clothing doesn't seem to present so much of a distraction.

Why does everyone **remove their shoes** before entering the meditation hall?

Removing one's shoes is a Buddhist tradition that reaches back for 1,000's of years. By removing our shoes as an act of respect for the meditation hall, we create in our own minds a transition from the rush of the everyday world to the meditative world.

I am **not comfortable removing my shoes** - am I still welcome here?

Yes! We only ask two things. One, that you not wear your shoes while sitting on the cushions. This is a matter of wear and tear on the cushions. Two, that you consider trying removing your shoes as you feel comfortable.

Why do some people sit on cushions and others on benches?

In our tradition, people mostly take up a meditation posture seated on a cushion or bench. For

some, sitting on a cushion in the traditional meditation posture causes pain in their joints or back. For others the traditional posture on the cushion aids them in staying alert and focused while meditating. You can experiment to find what works best for you.

I have health problems such as back pain that interferes with sitting for long periods - what can I do?

Do what you can. You may alternate sitting on a bench or chair, or lie down. Ask for ideas from the teacher or a seasoned practitioner, and /or attend an orientation session. Ask about support cushions. If you need to, only attend one period of seated meditation, then take a break. If there is anything we can do as a Sangha to aid your meditation practice, please let us know. We will do our best to accommodate your needs.

Why is there a Buddha or Guanyin statue in the meditation hall?

Buddha and Guanyin represent the awakening that is our core nature. We place their statues out of respect for the historical teachings and as a reminder that we all can reach the state of freedom from suffering, universal compassion, and awakening. Guanyin represents the compassion aspect.

People bow to the Buddha statue – do you worship Buddha?

No, Buddha is not an object of worship. The historical Buddha made no claim to divinity or special status. Buddha was a human being like each of us simply seeking awakening. We bow out of respect for his teachings, and out of gratitude for his and our own awakening.

Why do people bow to one another at the close of meditation?

Buddhists believe that all beings have Buddha nature. In bowing to one another we are acknowledging this and/or acknowledging the support of our companions.

Some people also bow to the cushion before they sit on it. Why is that?

This is primarily a Zen Buddhist tradition. One way to see it is bowing to your practice of meditation or the teachings of “The Way.” Your expression and experience of the body/ life you are in is a refuge and a teacher. We are also expressing our thanks.

In a meditation service, people bow when the teacher makes her/his first bow to the community - why?

It is an acknowledgment of the dharma teachings this person has committed to carry.

Why is incense burned during meditation? Incense is an offering. Historically, the length of time to burn through one stick of incense was used to demarcate one period of meditation. Incense has been used to help with focus or concentration. Incense represents the element of air, and also purification. Our community burns offered incense later, outside, to accommodate persons with sensitivities.

The bell (bowl) is rung during meditation – why?

It is rung to get our attention and to signal the start or ending of a meditation period. Four rings

signal the beginning, and one or two rings signal the end of meditation. It's also part of the meditation itself! Two rings signal walking meditation is happening next.

The discussion time following meditation: Is it okay to just **sit and listen**? I do not know that much about Buddhism, so **can I still participate in the discussion**?

If you are uncomfortable sharing your thoughts and questions, then feel free to enjoy listening to the conversation. However, even if you may think you do not know much about Buddhism, we are all on a journey of learning. Everyone has the wisdom that comes from their personal journey. The discussion group is always enriched when you share in it.

Miscellaneous questions:

What is the cloth piece people wear around their necks that looks like a large "bib?" It is a rakusu. The people who wear the rakusu have formally taken what is called "the precepts," which are another way to deepen their practice in daily exploration of how it is to live in community and see the impacts of their behaviors. See "rakusu" and "precepts" defined below.

I have noticed the donation box placed at the entrance to the meditation hall – how is the money used?

The money is used to pay our teachers, purchase supplies (candles, incense, flowers, printing sutra books, timers, batteries...), paying for liability insurance, to pay visiting teachers, website and PayPal costs. Other than the teachers, no one within the Sangha is compensated for their work. We are all volunteers.

What kinds of outreach and service projects is the Springs Mountain Sangha involved in? How do I volunteer? Martin Luther King, Jr. Day activities, SMS Action group has led community meditations, and conversations, participated in anti-racist partnering with interfaith community leaders, activities, and book discussions. Some members individually do prison/jail work, mental health responder education, serve the homeless, work with hospice, social justice or environmental issues...Sangha volunteering can come in offering to learn the forms and to lead meditation services, lead in Retreat positions, and in joining the various committees needed to keep the Sangha running (e.g., the Retreat Planning Committee or the Sangha Steering Committee.) Please reach out to Kelly McFarland for these and other opportunities: s.kelly.hls@gmail.com

Some words or terms you may hear:

Bodhisattva: a person whose practice is nearing the realization of full Buddhahood, but who desires not to leave the earthly realm for the heavenly realm of Nirvana. A Bodhisattva chooses to be reborn in their human embodiment on earth to be of service until all beings are saved or awakened.

Buddha: a fully enlightened or “awakening” being. It can also refer to the historic Buddha, Shakyamuni (Siddhartha Gautama).

Buddha nature: The basic nature of all beings. may refer to, among others, the luminous nature of mind, the pure undefiled mind, "the natural and true state of the mind", the interpenetration of all dharmas; and the potential for all sentient beings to attain liberation. Debates on what the term means continue to be a major part of Mahayana scholastics.

Chan: Chinese word for meditation; Chan developed in China as Taoism (which was already widespread in China) met Buddhism coming in from India.

Dana: donation of money, time, service, flowers, food, supplies, leadership roles.

Dharma: teachings of the nature of reality regarded as universal truth as taught by the Buddha. Dharma also refers to the Way of liberation.

Koan: A form of inquiry, using a phrase or story which can come from our Chinese, Japanese, or Indian ancestors, or more current sources that are becoming available as Zen adapts to Western culture. Often confusing if trying to find a sure answer; more interesting if dropped into your ongoing awareness, or let it accompany you in meditation, reflection, or daily life. See what words grab your attention in the koan.

Metta: Love, or the wish for wellbeing for self and others.

Precepts: guidelines for behavior to reduce suffering written in the form of vows. Ex.: “I vow not to kill, steal, lie, gossip maliciously, ...” Our sangha recites, discusses and explores in community and individually.

Rakusu: a traditionally Japanese or Chinese garment worn around the neck of Zen Buddhists who have formally taken “the precepts”. It can also signify lay ordination in some Buddhist groups. It is made of 16 or more strips of cloth sewn together into a brick-like pattern by the student during their period of preparation for their precept ceremony. One origin story is that during the time Chinese Emperors forbid the wearing of Buddhist robes, a miniature bib-like cloth garment was made to secretly wear under the regular clothes in place of the traditional robe.

Samadhi: a state of deep settled calmness achieved through meditation.

Sangha: community of those who are striving to understand and follow the Buddha’s teachings. See FAQ at beginning of document.

Sutra or Sutta: a Buddhist scripture or sacred text.

“Work in the Room”: A private one on one conversation or meeting with a teacher, are opportunities to sit face to face and take up what is most alive for you. (This used to be called by the Japanese name of “dokusan.”)

Zafu: the round pillow-like **cushion** people sit on during meditation usually on top of the square mat.

Zabuton: the square **mat on the floor**, underneath the Zafu, cushion, or bench.

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Other Offerings

Your active participation and involvement in the Springs Mountain Sangha is deeply appreciated. The following are some ways you can deepen your practice with the Sangha:

- Volunteer to help with a specific Sangha event, or ongoing Sangha tasks, like learning how to “host” on Zoom, be a greeter, upload talks to website, help with newsletter or assist in putting out emails to the group list.
- Volunteer to serve on the Steering Committee, or Retreat Planning Committee.
- Learn how to be a leader of the sitting for a night or a morning sit.
- Share your current practices through a Saturday morning Zen threads talk.
- Do you have a skill the Sangha could use? Let us know!
- Donate Buddhist books or CD’s to our library, organize or be the librarian.
- Let us know if you or a family member is sick or needs help, or if you want to be part of the “care” committee.
- Ask Steering Committee if there are current specific needs.
- What OTHER ideas do you have?

For in-person meetings:

- Help with set up or clean up any Monday night when we meet in-person. Please let someone know so they can give you most helpful time to arrive.
- Bring flowers for altar.
- For discussions that include refreshments, bring snacks or help person setting up refreshment trays and serving.

Spring Mountain Sangha

2022 Steering Committee Members and Contact

Sarah Bender, Roshi: sembender@gmail.com

Steering Committee Chair: Kelly McFarland s.kelly.HLS@gmail.com

Treasurer: Regan Arntzen rrarntzen@gmail.com

Secretaries: Susan Rogers susandawncarson@gmail.com

Members at large:

William Holtz willholtz2001@gmail.com

Brandy Lancaster BDL0824@gmail.com

Zina Mercil zinamercil@gmail.com

General Springs Mountain Sangha information: info@smszen.org

Website: www.smszen.org

Appreciations

The following Sangha members were responsible for drafting this welcome packet, under the guidance of Sarah Bender Roshi. Adopted by the Steering Committee on July 5th, 2022:

Zina Mercil

Mary Montoya

Phil Brown

The Springs Mountain Sangha would like to express its appreciation to the Buddhist Sangha of Bucks County (Pennsylvania) for use of its welcome packet, which provided helpful structure and content in developing our own welcoming document.