



Encouraging Words

Maggie Gluek
Demons

*In the centuries since Shakyamuni, false views are deep,
Demons are strong, the Dharma is weak, disturbances are many.
People hear the Buddha's doctrine of immediacy,
And if they accept it, the demons will be crushed
As easily as a roofing tile.
But they cannot accept it, what a pity. (from the Shodoka)*

I don't think much has changed since Yung Chia's time in 9th c. China. In our world today disturbances are many, demons are strong. Mind you, they have never been in short supply. Who or what are demons? As beings with particular characters, they abound in Buddhist myth and cosmology. They exist interestingly as energies which, originally harmful, have the capacity to become forces for the good. *If* the Buddha's doctrine of immediacy is realised—that is, if you apprehend the one liberating truth that lives inescapably right here and now where you stand—demons can be crushed, seen through as the ephemeral non-entities that they are. Or to put it another way, they cease to be separate from the whole. In Tibetan Buddhism traditionally they are understood not to have been destroyed but to have been transformed. This is the way of tantra where greed becomes selfless love, hatred becomes compassionate action and ignorance becomes wisdom.

In all cultures, I believe, demons are synonymous with hell realms. Being assailed by them is a torment. They represent powerful movements in the mind, mental formations, emotions and intrusive thoughts with which we may identify, thus reinforcing ego, the belief in isolated self. These demons can feel very "real!" Like old acquaintances. One's impulse is usually to exclude them in order to be rid of them. Which of course means that their insistence grows. They demand inclusion. And as such, they may serve to strengthen practice. They can not only wake us up but redeem us.

To embrace suffering as the Dharma is transformational. But not necessarily easy. The discipline of practice is demanding. One must stay steady and still and focussed. To distract the Buddha, to keep him from becoming enlightened, the demon Mara sent his three beautiful daughters on the one hand and his army of fear on the other. He generated the "eight worldly winds," presenting dramas of pleasure and pain, gain and loss, fame and shame, success and failure, a back-and-forth ping pong, tempting the Buddha to fall down on one side or the other. But the Buddha sat and sat, not swayed, his mind open as the sky, realising, finally, that one great body. "All beings are the Tathgatha."

Grace Schireson in her book *Zen Women* writes about the 12th c. nun Miaodao who studied with prominent Zen Master Dahui, and, most unusually, became one of his Dharma heirs. She first came to him and said, "I am not yet clear about myself and therefore I wish to beg for instruction." His advice to her? "Sit with all the noise and demonic obstacles in the mind." What brilliant counsel. It normalises

and encompasses “the noise and demonic obstacles” when it seems that they are encompassing. The fear of “something to contend with” vanishes. Inclusive compassion wins the day and transforms the mind.

Upcoming Events

Kodoji Weekend Retreat

4-5 July

This retreat at our bush zendo, Kodoji, is led by apprentice teacher, Peter Bursky, over two days - Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th July.

Set in the Upper McDonald Valley, Kodoji is absolutely beautiful in Wintertime. Blue skies, warm fires and the song of birds fill our hearts. Come along to experience the crispness of your practice.

Contact Peter if you plan to come: petermbursky@protonmail.com

Reports

Buddha's Birthday and Baby Naming Ceremony

Sunday 12 April



The Buddha's birthday and baby-naming ceremony was held on Sunday morning 12th April at the Annandale dojo with Shauna Murray organizing bookings and activities. Gilly Coote was meant to lead the ceremony as usual. Unfortunately, Gilly ended up in hospital at this time (safely back home now and recovering), so Jane Andino stepped in to take Gilly's place.

The occasion began with Shauna's daughters, Marisol and Saoirse, expertly showing the children, parents and other participants how to make origami paper cranes, symbols of healing and peace. The ceremony then began with Ti Sarana and some opening words from Jane. Then, while we all chanted Kanzeon, each person presented their origami crane and flowers to the Jizo Buddha, and bathed the Buddha in water (traditionally in sweet tea). Some of the children brought gifts of toys for the baby Buddha.

We then shared stories and responses to the ceremony. We commented on how Buddha's Birthday brings together all the generations. For example, Marisol was brought by Shauna to a Birthday ceremony when Marisol was a baby and now, in a beautiful example of Dana the paramita of giving, Marisol is now contributing by teaching today's children who attend. The morning's program finished with a potluck lunch in the garden.

Sing Out Day

On the afternoon of Sunday April 19, a group of us from SZC got together at Annandale to rehearse and video two songs related to Climate Change.

This was an initiative of the ARRCC (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change) to invite faith-based groups to sing about solutions to climate change, and post videos of their songs on social media in order to promote climate action. The lyrics were provided by ARRCC, and the music were all well-known tunes.

The main aim was to show support for the Fossil Fuel Treaty being discussed at the conference, 'Transitioning Away From Fossil Fuels' to be held in Santa Marta, Colombia, April 24-29.

Our choir was made up of Subhana, Maggie, Glenys, Georgina, Brian, Jason, Brendon and Ameli. Jane Andino brought along her keyboard and accompanied the singers. We had a very enjoyable time rehearsing and then recording our two songs, which were 'Bye Bye Coal' and 'We're gonna stop burning Fossil Fuels'. Ameli was video tech wiz and stage manager (as well as singing!).

If you want to sing along with us, check out the choir on our Facebook/Instagram pages.

To find out more about this conference and the next one in Tuvalu in 2027, please look up the website of the ARRCC, or anything about the Fossil Fuel Treaty.

You can also link yourself up here. Sign up as an individual or faith leader.

actionnetwork.org



Autumn Samu

What a team.

- Sean, Chiyo, Micky, Vince, Brentyn, Aeven, Anna, Greg, Diana, Cathy, Kim, Jill, Robert, Kerry, Brendon, Kellie, Angela.
- Kellie and Chiyo: window cleaning, sweeping and mopping and Chiyo sat in zazen with us all, but with her Dad in particular.
- Sean: New clothesline, nails and timber, fine exponent of the short crow bar for nail extractions.
- Vince: mowing and whipper snipping and greatly enjoying being there.
- Brentyn: mowing, whipper snipping, raking and also greatly enjoying being there.
- Aeven and Micky: painting the kitchen and the small dojo room, talking and messing around.
- Anna: seamstress extraordinaire

- Greg: tight lawn mowing, tall tale spinner and star gazing
- Diana: whipper snipper teacher, tree watering, historian
- Cathy and Kym: no chardonnay but raking and wood working, design plans and cleaning
- Jill: inventory, bush care and attention to the hearth
- Robert: wood work, some carpentry - always some carpentry like the repairs to the outdoors table - thank you, wood storage, hot water wallah
- Kerry: bug busting
- Angela: cleaning and windows and remembering
- Brendon: not certain what he did.

There were so many little jobs picked up and finished off, there was delicious food prepped and served and washing up dealt with and mattresses aired as were the zabutons and zafus. We talked and discovered more about each other.

When we got there much of the high-level painting had been done so we concentrated on detail work inside the cottage.

Autumn Sesshin



We had a truly wonderful sesshin, as sesshins always are. Each one unique, yet an expression of the Buddha's inexpressible radiance. It is truly delightful to sit at Kodoji, Temple of the Ancient Ground in the peaceful grassy paddock surrounded by the sandstone cliffs. There are so many special moments, one such moment stood out for me. A long line of Zen students stood on the veranda, upright and still, facing the cliffs. Hearing the lyrebirds early dawn cacophony of calls emerging out of the mist, awakening us. The mist danced into the valley, like a mysterious creature, swirling and rising up over the cliff tops, then disappearing. Misty mountains, crisp mornings with lyrebirds' repertoires, hot sunny days, silent dedicated figures on their zafu's and

a canopy of stars accompanying our zazen.

It was an easy, joyful and natural co-teaching arrangement with Will Moon. I was grateful for Will's support, as I had injured my left foot with a stress fracture and could not participate fully in kinhin. We had 24 students, 4 of whom were part-timers. There were a couple of new people to sesshin, but it was generally full of experienced old timers, which always adds to the depth and joy of sesshin. It is fortunate that we have a healthy scholarship fund and were able to support 3 members application.

The Dojo leaders held the dojo and supported students in their practice, with their generous presence. Many of the leaders stepped into their roles for the first time, taking on another dimension of practice. A deep bow to: Sean - Tanto, Ino - Ryan, Jishas - Sarah and Timothea, & Jiki - David. Diana offered Yoga to many tired and sore bodies, another generous Bodhisattva. Jill Steverson

graced us with her talented presence as lunch cook and Tenzo, coordinating the food beforehand and supervising the kitchen. What would we do without you Jill? She also kept an eye out for bush regen work and tackled the dreaded moth vine, seeding in the neighbour's paddock.

We offered a plant-based diet for sesshin for a number of reasons, ethics, health, kindness and non-harming to all creatures, plus environmental concerns. The etiquette on sesshin is to cultivate integrity, kindness, wisdom and to refrain from harmful actions.

A much-loved unique aspect about Zen sesshins, is that everyone pitches in, steps up to doing a samu task, many hands making light work. The cooks, servers, cleaners, choppers, sweepers, morning and afternoon teas, all creating a beautiful harmonious practice community. Each bringing alive the true meaning of Sangha, we are there to walk each other home...our original home, ever-present, saving the many beings.

Monika did Jukai on the Thursday afternoon which was another highlight that coincided with the full moon, its radiance falling on each single blade of grass, its light shepherding us through the arc of the night. Monika's vows were the teaching for Thursday, inviting a wonderful contemplation of our relationship to ethics, living with integrity, compassion and wisdom. Wearing the robe of liberation, the formless field of benefaction, the storehouse of treasures opens of itself. With an ethical foundation, a clear mind, and open heart we can keep turning the dharma wheel to alleviate suffering in the world.

Subhana Barzaghi ~ Myoun An Roshi



May zazenkai

Clay pinch pots with Janet Selby

Guiding us through the practice of "finding one's way with clay", using one plunge of our thumb into a small ball of clay with our out-breath, we pinched the walls thinner in a rhythmic manner, creating the emptiness inside, using the form of the clay. It is this emptiness that creates its function.

The dojo was temporarily transformed for the process. Happy with our experience, we packed up and went our separate ways. Janet will dry the pieces, fire them and return them to Annandale for collecting in a few weeks' time.

News from the Board

GIFT

Deepest bow of gratitude to our long-term member and dharma friend Jean Brick, who donated a considerable percentage of her estate to us in her Will. The Board has been assessing how best to spend the money and have decided, because she loved our bush retreat centre, to inject some of the funds into our new Kodoji solar upgrade.

KODOJI

The Board has decided, in these challenging financial times, to increase the transport fee paid to drivers who kindly take us up to our bush zendo. It has been \$15 each way since time began, so we've upped the rate to \$20 each way. Thank you everyone who offers their car, their time and driving skills to our sangha.

We have also decided to leave the defibrillator at Kodoji rather than bring it back to Annandale. This is because of Kodoji's remoteness and our concern of leaving it behind at Annandale, when we visit. Also, the city has emergence services close by, if needed.

Brendon has been arranging tradies (past member Nick, and neighbour Simon) to do crucial maintenance jobs, that our members can't do like painting the high parts of the dojo (clerestory) and cottage, fixing guttering, adding first flush and overflow pipes to the tanks. So, when you visit our bush temple, please look up and marvel in the fresh new look! Thank you Brendon for keeping the building in such a good condition.

We are also looking at upgrading our electrical system - our solar panels are nearing the end of their life, as are our fridges. So look we forward to a new and updated solar run bush zendo!

BANK AUSTRALIA

Please be aware that all your regular and one-off payments need to use our Bank Australia BSB and Account number, not the CommBank account. So, if you pay your membership or facility fee as a recurring transfer, please update your records. If you don't know the Bank Australia account details, you can email Kerry: stewartkerry4@gmail.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

Thank you Ben for taking over the role of social media coordinator. Now everyone can keep an eye out for updates of our events and talks on Facebook and Instagram.



Regular Notices

Please see the regular SZC email reminders for Zoom links, or email info@szc.org.au for details.

Mondays

Annandale - Subhana

Tuesdays online

Mini morning meditation

6.55-7.00am Join/welcome,

7.00-7.25am Meditation,

7.25-7.30am Great Vows

Wednesdays

Annandale - Gillian Coote or Will Moon

Thursdays online

With Jane Andino or Peter Bursky,

7.00-8:00pm Meditation/walking,

8.00-8.30pm Discussion/Great Vows

Dokusan for members

Annandale - Dokusan is offered to members by our teachers on some

Mondays and every Wednesday

Phone - Dokusan is offered by Subhana on Thursdays and Gillian by appointment

The Blue Mountains Zen Group

We usually meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month, 3-5 pm.

All are welcome to join us for zazen with either a talk or Dharma Café.

Email Jane janeandino@yahoo.com.au for more details.

Wahroonga Friends, Upper North Shore

Saturday mornings, from 9:30am to 11:30am.

The Meeting House: 59 Boundary Road Wahroonga

Inquiries to Maggie: 0413 018 100, maggiewarble@yahoo.com

Online opportunities

If you can't come to the zendo because you live too far away, or you have work or family commitments, or you are restricted in your ability to travel, we have a solution for you.

Meditation is available online via Zoom every Tuesday morning (6.55am - 7.30am) and Thursday evening (6.50pm - 8.30pm) led by two of our teachers - Jane Andino and Peter Bursky. And you can even become an online SZC member for a very special price!

Go to the website for more details: <https://szc.org.au/classes/online-meditation/>

Members of the Board

Kerry Stewart (Chairperson) stewartkerry4@gmail.com; Zoe Thurner (secretary); Scott Nelson (treasurer); Joe Gaebel; Sean Loughman, William Verity.

Newsletter Editor: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

SZC: info@szc.com.au, www.szc.org.au

June 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 ZAZEN Annandale FMC Not stealing 7-9pm Subhana	2	3 ZAZEN Annandale FMC Not stealing 7-9pm Gilly	4 ZAZEN Zoom FMC Not stealing 7-8:30pm Jane	5 Winter sesshin	6 Winter sesshin
7 Winter sesshin	8 Winter sesshin	9 Winter sesshin	10 Winter Sesshin ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Will	11 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	12	13
14	15 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	16	17 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	18 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	19	20
21	22 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	23 Orientation	24 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Will	25 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	26	27
28	29	30				

July 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	2 Dharma Cafe Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	3	4 Kodoji Weekend retreat
5 Kodoji Weekend retreat	6 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	7	8 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Will	9 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	10	11
12	13 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	14	15 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	16 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	17	18
19 Zazenkai Gillian	20 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	21	22 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Will	23 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	24	25
26	27 Dharma Cafe Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	28 Orientation	29 Dharma Cafe Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	30 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	31	