



**BROOKLYN
ZEN CENTER**

ANNUAL REPORT
2023

Practice Leadership

Kosen Gregory Snyder
Dharma Teacher, Senior Priest

Shingetsu Laura O'Loughlin
Dharma Teacher, Senior Lay Practitioner

Sarah Dōjin Emerson
Zen Priest, Dharma Teacher

Charlie Korin Pokorny
Zen Priest, Dharma Teacher

Kidō Ian Case
Zen Priest, Entrusted Teacher

Yoko Ohashi
Lay Practice Leader

Board of Directors

Alexandra Gekas Cain
Board Chair

Martin Duus
Board Vice Chair

Kristin Miscall
Board Member

Weishin Huang
Board Member

Pamela Weiss
Board Member



Dear BZC Community,

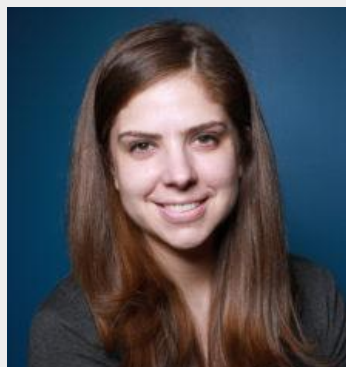
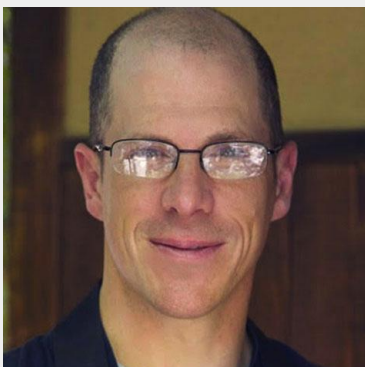
We write to you at the start of 2024, after a year of much change and promise for Brooklyn Zen Center. Now with more leadership, a growing sangha, and three interconnected temples, BZC is on its way to a truly sustainable future. We want to thank you for your ongoing support of this community, and update you on our last twelve months.

Overall, BZC feels more stable than perhaps ever before. After hiring our first Development & Membership Manager, our administrative team is the most robust it's ever been. The opening of the Millerton Zendo last August has helped to broaden our reach in the Hudson Valley. And the lay ordination of 16 sangha members at Boundless Mind Temple offered us all renewed faith in our sangha and in this practice.

These and so many other events have helped our internal team spawn a clear vision for BZC's future—one we are finally of sufficient strength to begin to execute. In November, we held a far-reaching, two-day Strategy Meeting—the first time we convened the current configuration of the board, administrative staff, teachers, and senior students—to take stock of BZC's current condition and finetune a course forward for the coming 2-3 years. A potential major grant, a BIPOC complement to our Undoing Whiteness program, and a search committee for a full-time Brooklyn space lie ahead.

Though it's clear the horizon is bright, challenges for our community of course still remain. Our relationship with Christ Church has been critical to resuming weekly programming post-pandemic; *and*, with a steady stream of newcomers to Boundless Mind Temple, there is a clear collective desire for something more permanent. We have work to do to fully re-establish the sense of community we had before 2020—whether it is through a more permanent space, or continued efforts for community building outside of practice. Upstate, although the Millerton Zendo has offered BZC a more prominent local presence, we're still working on the zoning permits, architectural vision, and partnerships required to make Ancestral Heart a fully functioning training temple.

All that said, our greatest challenge undeniably remains the state of our world. Environmental devastation, racial and class inequities, and war continue to remind us of the importance of a socially engaged Buddhism alongside individual practice. One cannot function without the other. That BZC is home to an entire community of people living that truth offers us more hope than you know. Thank you for your commitment—your vow—and may all beings be freed from the realm of greed, hate, and delusion.



Deep Gratitude,
Charlie Korin Pokorny, President
Alexandra Gekas Cain, Board Chair



Leadership

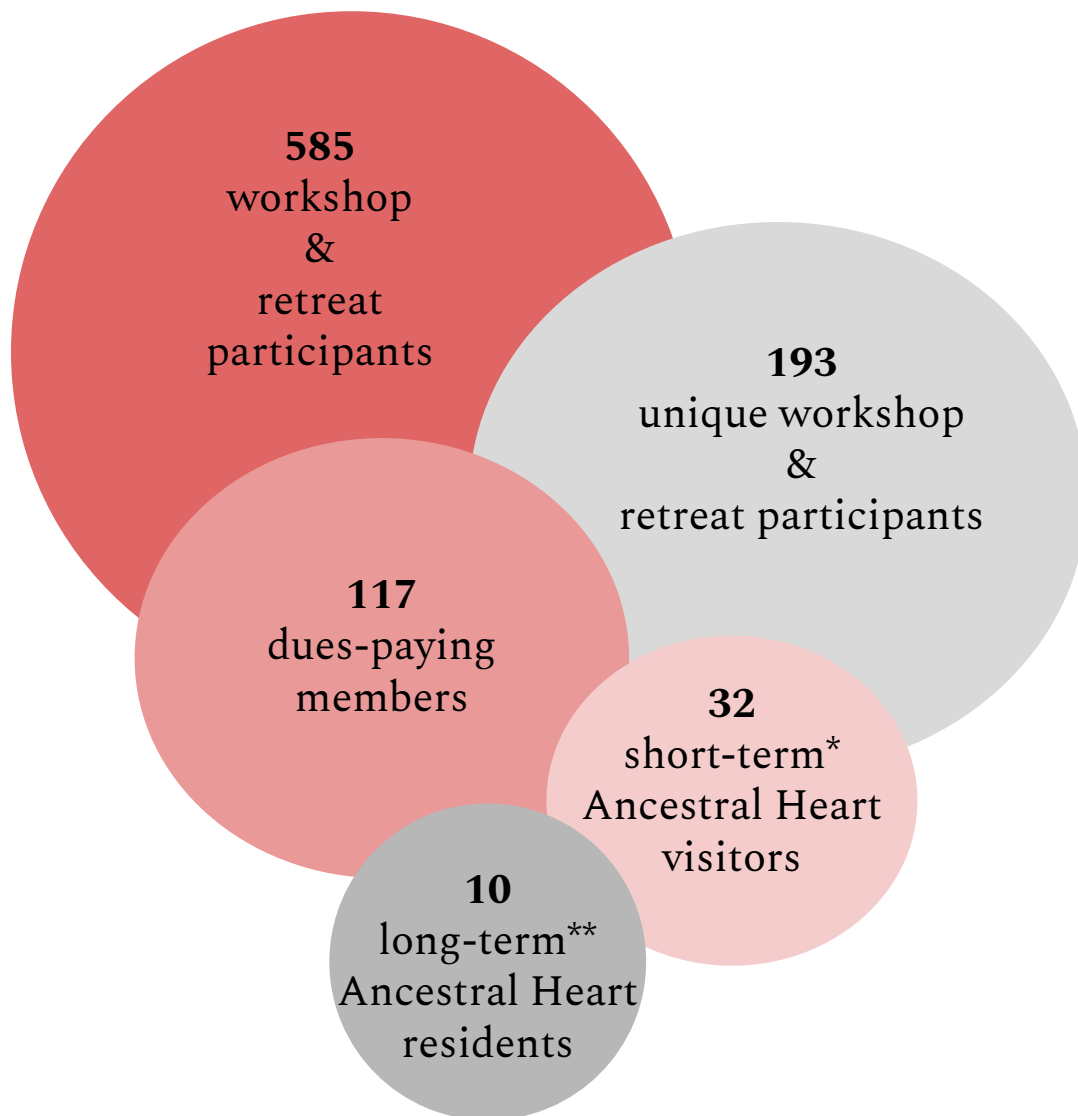
In 2023, BZC saw the formation of our most robust leadership team yet. Longtime sangha member Alexandra Gekas Cain stepped into the role of Board Chair, and Pam Weiss, a Dharma transmitted lay teacher in both the Soto Zen and Theravada traditions joined as a Board Member.

Zen priest and Dharma teacher Charlie Korin Pokorny became BZC's President. He and fellow priest and teacher, Sarah Dojīn Emerson, have also lovingly taken on full teaching responsibilities at Boundless Mind Temple. Thanks to a generous grant, Bianca Ozeri, a Zen practitioner and graduate of Union Theological Seminary's Buddhism program, was hired as our first Development & Membership Manager, and newly ordained priest Kaishin Victory Matsui became Ancestral Heart Temple's Director. All of them join Ryan Wong (Administrative Director), Dulce Fernandes (Communications Coordinator), and David Chow (Accounting Consultant) on our East Hall, or administrative team.

In addition, to better serve BZC's vision for true communal leadership, we implemented a new organizational structure that includes a Practice Council, Teachers Council, and Administrative Council. Together with the Board of Directors, these bodies ensure a methodical and ethical process to any programmatic or organizational updates.

All of these changes finally carved a path for BZC co-founders Kosen Gregory Snyder and Shingetsu Laura O'Loughlin to take a long-overdue 12-month sabbatical. This comes after 18 years of voluntary service to our community. They will return to teaching rested and renewed in July 2024.

Membership & Attendance



* at least 2 days

** at least 3 months

Programming



BZC held **21 sesshins** (retreats) in 2023: one 1-day and eight 3-day retreats at Ancestral Heart; seven 1-day and three 3-day retreats at Boundless Mind; and our longer, annual Watershed and Rohatsu retreats.

Alongside this standard programming, we were excited to be able to offer plenty of workshops, classes, and other events, including:

- Hidden Wisdom, an 8-week course on the teachings of Buddhist women ancestors
- Sangha Day in the Park, a community-wide gathering in June
- A doanryo training weekend at Ancestral Heart in September
- Several afternoon workshops that addressed racial conditioning, including Sitting with Ancestors (for BIPOC students) and Healing Racial Harm (for anyone seeking to heal from the culture of white supremacy)

A New Aesthetic



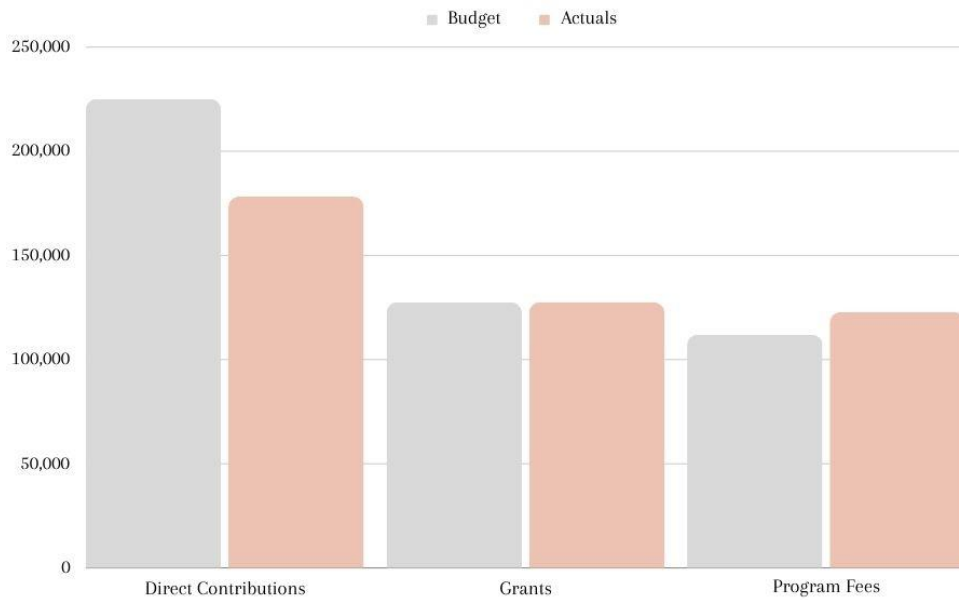
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With the help of website designer and developer Cathleen Tseng, BZC completed a full [redesign](#) of our digital presence, the first for the organization in over ten years. This new appearance supports our ability to communicate BZC's unique vision clearly and effectively to a wider audience.

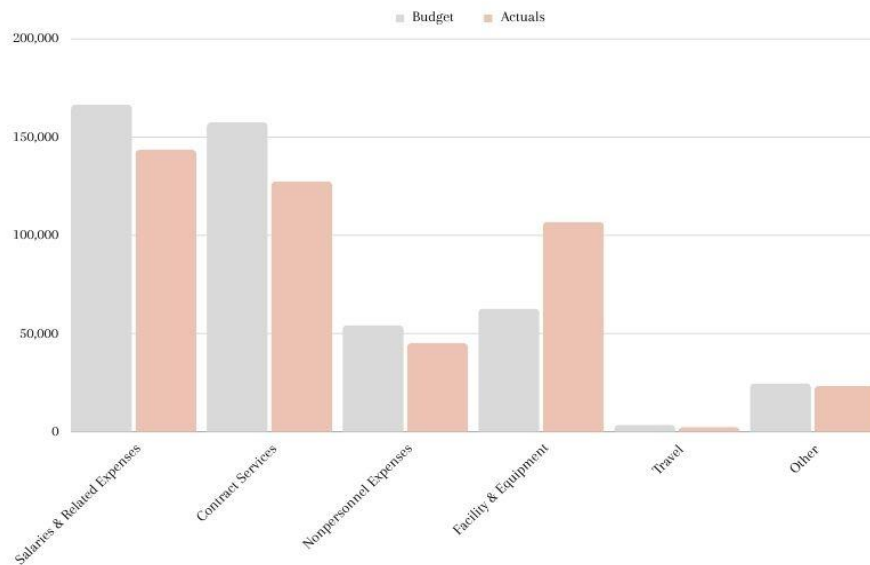
In an extension of this work, BZC was also selected in a competitive application process to take part in the inaugural TIDEL Fellowship at Union Theological Seminary. This initiative helps faith-based organizations to fulfill their mission and confront critical challenges through a creative use of technology.

Financials

Budget v. Actuals: Income



Budget v. Actuals: Expenses







Millerton Zendo & Ancestral Heart

In July 2023, BZC [opened](#) the **Millerton Zendo**, a small storefront in the Hudson Valley that brings Zen practice and dharma offerings to the local community. The space, just off Main Street in Millerton, NY, is supported by the priests and residents of Ancestral Heart Temple (AHT), and has quickly become a beloved practice center for many regular attendees. Opening day, pictured at top left, brought fifty new faces to our community.

The opening of the Zendo has been an important opportunity for BZC as **Ancestral Heart Temple** moves toward proper zoning and sufficient infrastructure to become a public-facing center. We are close to approval on the permitting process for Ancestral Heart, with a detailed plan including multiple buildings, such as a meditation hall and additional residential facilities. In November, the board unanimously voted to finish the process utilizing our cash reserves, and we are optimistic our zoning permits will be approved in 2024.

In order to expand Ancestral Heart we are also exploring a closer a partnership with Watershed Center, a social justice retreat center adjacent to AHT where we already host regular retreats and continue to vision deep engagement with land and community. As plans for this expansion slowly move forward, the Millerton Zendo has become critical in engaging local community and creating a Millerton BZC member base before AHT opens our doors to the public.



Engaged Practice Groups

BZC continues to offer our various [Engaged Practice Groups](#), all of which examine particular social identities through the lens of the Dharma. Our vow to practice undoing harmful and oppressive conditioning to compassionately transform our world is actualized through these small groups. **B-12** (for those in recovery), **Queer Dharma Share**, **Parents Practice**, **Zen Students of Color**, and **Undoing Patriarchy** remain powerful refuges of healing and support both for Zen practitioners in our community and others.

This year also marked the start of the second cohort of our **Undoing Whiteness as the Path of Liberation** (UWPL) program. After several years of fine-tuning UWPL, we've landed on an iteration that feels truly revolutionary—in curriculum and in effect. The 10-month program is founded on the belief that, as a spiritual community, we have a primary responsibility to hold and guide the collective heart-work of witnessing, repairing, and transforming the myriad forms of ancestral pain and resulting violence that rend us from each other and from Mother Earth. A recent participant said of the program, “It was through this intensive and very tender exploration that I found the courage to begin a life-long process of healing myself for the sake of healing others.” This year, UWPL was marketed as a BZC flagship program, and brought in 22 participants from as far as California and Portugal.



A solid dark blue circle is centered on the page. Inside the circle, the word "Jukai" is written in a white, elegant script font.

Jukai



On June 11, 2023, at the end of a three-day sesshin at Boundless Mind Temple, 16 members of our sangha received the Bodhisattva Precepts. The ceremony followed one year of formal study and was the first Jukai ceremony at BZC since 2019. Lay ordination is an opportunity for practitioners to take a formal vow to Buddha, Dharma (Buddhist teachings), and Sangha (spiritual community). Alongside this commitment to live an ethical life, receiving the Precepts marks a deeper devotion to the BZC community. Teachers and sangha members, as well as family and friends, gathered to support the ordinands and [witness their vows](#).





Giving

The expansion and growth of Brooklyn Zen Center has been made possible by the hundreds of individuals who have given so open-handedly to our community, and by generous grants throughout the last five years.

Thank you to all our contributors, including our major funders:

Still Water Foundation
Paula Vial Fund
Hemera Foundation
Frederick Lenz Foundation

About

Brooklyn Zen Center



[Brooklyn Zen Center](https://brooklyzen.org) (BZC) is an embodied training community in the Soto Zen tradition. We aspire to offer opportunities to realize personal and collective liberation through the cultivation of intimate, ethical, and just relationship with ourselves and all beings. Our vow to practice undoing harmful and oppressive conditioning compassionately transforms our world.

Founded in 2005 as the first Zen Center in Shunryu Suzuki's lineage in New York, BZC embraces both Soto Zen tradition as well as the complex realities of practice in a diverse urban environment. BZC has grown rapidly to become one of the most active, community-engaged Zen centers in the northeast.

BZC operates three separate temples: Boundless Mind Temple (BMT), which shares space at Christ Church Cobble Hill in Brooklyn; Ancestral Heart Temple (AHT), located two hours north of New York City; and Millerton Zendo, a public-facing community space down the road from AHT. Ancestral Heart is the first training temple in Suzuki Roshi's U.S. lineage in the Northeast.



Thank you to all who make this community the bright light it is.





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