



BROOKLYN
ZEN CENTER



Annual Report 2024



PRACTICE LEADERSHIP

Sarah Dōjin Emerson

Dharma Teacher, Senior Priest

Shingetsu Laura O'Loughlin

Dharma Teacher, Senior Lay Practitioner

Charlie Korin Pokorny

Dharma Teacher, Senior Priest

Kosen Gregory Snyder

Dharma Teacher

Kidō Ian Case

Entrusted Teacher, Zen Priest

Yoko Ohashi

Lay Practice Leader

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Martin Duus

Interim Board Chair

Pamela Weiss

Board Member

Andrew Harris

Board Member

Charlie Korin Pokorny

Board Member, Ex Officio

Flo Lunn

Board Member, Secretary

LETTER FROM THE BOARD



Dearest BZC Community,

The splendors of this long, mild autumn have delighted us—city and country dwellers alike—as we put our window boxes and gardens to bed and prepare for winter. Against the backdrop of this change of seasons, we pause to reflect on our shared experience of 2024 and to feel grateful for the refuge that is offered by sitting in our zendos at Christ Church in Brooklyn and downtown Millerton, or overlooking the Oblong Valley from the garden at Ancestral Heart during this acutely tumultuous moment for the world. We abide in that tension, held by the BZC community.

Before reflecting on the specifics of BZC's current state, we would like to express heartfelt gratitude to the BZC community for its commitment to the sangha and organization's mission. We are not a large community, and so the actions of each of us make a proportionately larger difference. We are grateful to our founders, the teachers, the monks, our tiny, but fierce, administrative staff, the membership of our sangha, and to our small, but committed, Board of Directors. Together, we carry on.

Facing challenge and change, we seek a sustainable way forward for our community.

We are a growing sangha. It feels as if we have reached a new place post-pandemic, with a thriving community in Brooklyn thanks to fresh leadership from Charlie and Sarah, and a deepening, creative relationship with Father Mark and Christ Church. We have reestablished

our physical presence in Brooklyn, which is animated by a sangha that is both younger and more diverse than our pre-pandemic version. Fresh programming has been enthusiastically embraced, and it feels as if we are on firmer footing at our city temple.

Upstate, at Ancestral Heart, under the leadership of Kosen, Laura, Kaishin, and Kidō, our modestly sized residential practice is flourishing, while a short distance away in Millerton, our recently established zendo is serving an ever-growing community drawn from the immediate area. While an ambitious expansion plan and the construction that would have supported it have been tabled for the moment, our deepening local collaborations, most notably with The Watershed Center, have fostered expanded programming, including our upcoming January intensive.

The BZC community was saddened by the news of the dissolution of its founders'—Laura and Greg—marriage. Over these past 19 years demands have been such that they were required to remain in founders' mode far longer than was healthy, with all of the attendant pressures and stresses upon their spirits and bodies. Consequently, the Board takes very seriously its charge to reconstitute a leadership structure that more equitably distributes the responsibilities; this is already well underway. As Laura and Greg take the necessary time to navigate this difficult change together, finding new roles for themselves within BZC, they have the full support of the Board and the sangha.



It is our pleasure to welcome new Board members Andrew Harris and Flo Lunn, both committed, longtime sangha members who bring new skills and enthusiasm to BZC's governance. At the same time, we shall miss the energetic and big-hearted presence of Board member Kristin Miscall, who stepped down in October after five years of dedicated service, and who will remain a member of the ethics committee.

We are also delighted to announce the appointment of Maiko Tanaka as our new Communications and Graphics Coordinator, whose early work for us may be appreciated in this very annual report. Finally, we are pleased to announce a new Administrative Assistant role at Boundless Mind Temple, which will be filled by Vipassana Vijayarangan.

The highlights of our programmatic accomplishments over the past year are many. They are ably elucidated and illustrated in the pages that follow. While we have been thrilled to experience growth in our in-person programming in both locations, we have also seen a dramatic expansion of our online offerings. All of this feels very promising.

For now, it would be fair to say that BZC's finances are stable. We continue to rely on the sangha for membership support and individual donations; this critical support has slowly been rebuilding in Brooklyn since the pandemic and is growing in healthy ways in Millerton. We were especially pleased with the results of the reinstated Sit-a-thon this year. BZC has also become ever-more successful in finding and securing foundation funding; we are pleased to announce a major grant from the Hemera Foundation, which will support numerous existing and new programmatic initiatives over the next four years.

While arguably this is a tender moment for our organization, especially with the leadership transition underway, we believe that Brooklyn Zen Center is well-positioned for the next phase of its development. Many of the elements are in place to foster continued flourishing at our city and mountain temples.

As the focus of our fall Practice Period, we have been exploring healing. We are not taking up healing as a gesture towards a static, pre-defined state, but as a dynamic, open-ended process of becoming whole, including everything we are as individuals, and as collectives within the sangha, as well as with all beings and the great Earth. Our way of healing is imbued with the courage of vulnerability, the deep, open, embracing stillness of zazen, and the profound encouragement of walking, hand-in-hand, through the devastations of these times, together in intimate community.

With warm bows of gratitude and respect,

Martin Duus
Interim Board Chair

Charlie Korin Pokorny
Guiding Teacher & Board President



THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



134

**dues-paying
members**



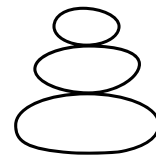
37

**new members
in 2024**



475

**workshop & class
participants**



531

**sesshin (retreat)
participants**



29

**short-term Ancestral Heart
residents**



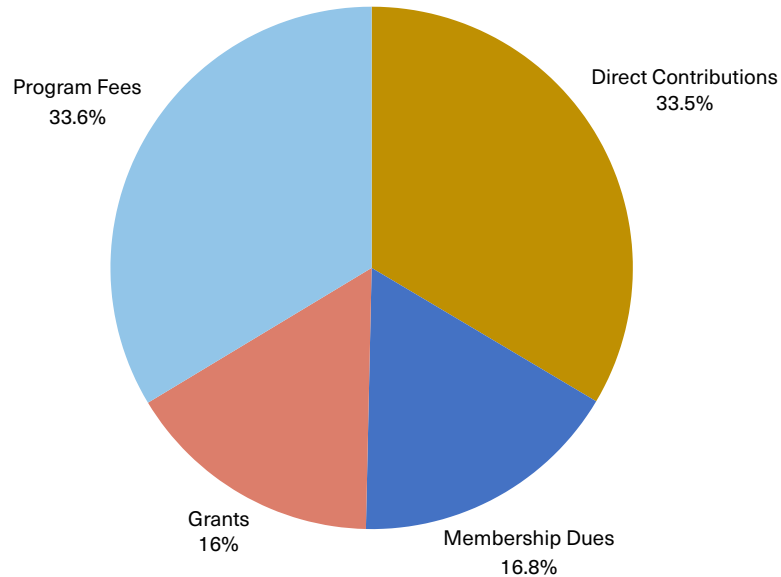
8

**long-term Ancestral Heart
residents**

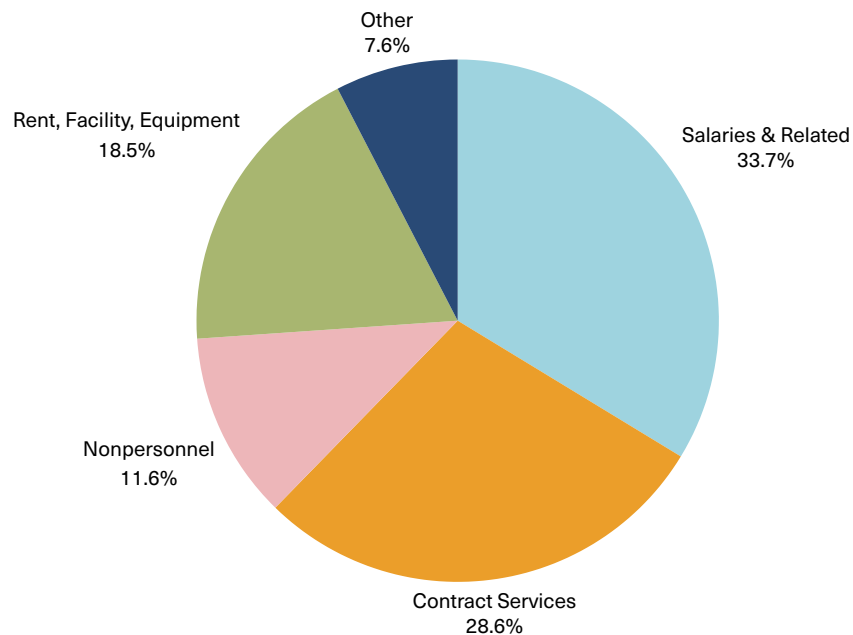


THE YEAR IN FINANCE

Q1-Q3 Income: \$412,241



Q1-Q3 Expenses: \$420,567



THE SIXTEEN BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS

with Charlie Korin Pokorny

Thirty-four students attended BZC's seventh course on the precepts, Zen Buddhism's **basic code of ethics**. This often acts a springboard for those who wish to lay ordain in a formal jukai ceremony.

KARMA & COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

with Kosen Gregory Snyder

In this hybrid class, **53 students** explored the Buddha's **teaching on intention** and its relationship to our karmic actions and consequences. This was BZC's first class held in person at the Millerton Zendo.



2024 BZC CLASSES

WRITING TO STUDY THE SELF

with Ryan Wong, Charlie Schneider,
& guest lecturers

Held online with **78 students** from across the US, this course was our largest to date. It asked participants to use the **practice of writing** to look deeply at conditioning. **Guest lecturers** included Chenxing Han, Jenny Xie, Norman Fischer, and Ruth Ozeki (pictured below from left to right).



BEGINNER'S MIND EXPERIENCE

with Charlie Korin Pokorny &
Sarah Dōjin Emerson

This year, this four-week class, open to all, gave **29 students** a basic understanding of and **orientation towards Zen** practice and history. Beginner's Mind is an important course for newcomers to Zen and to BZC. It will be **offered annually** moving forward.



SESSHIN WITH TENSHIN REB ANDERSON



A celebratory final photo



Tenshin Roshi and BZC teachers



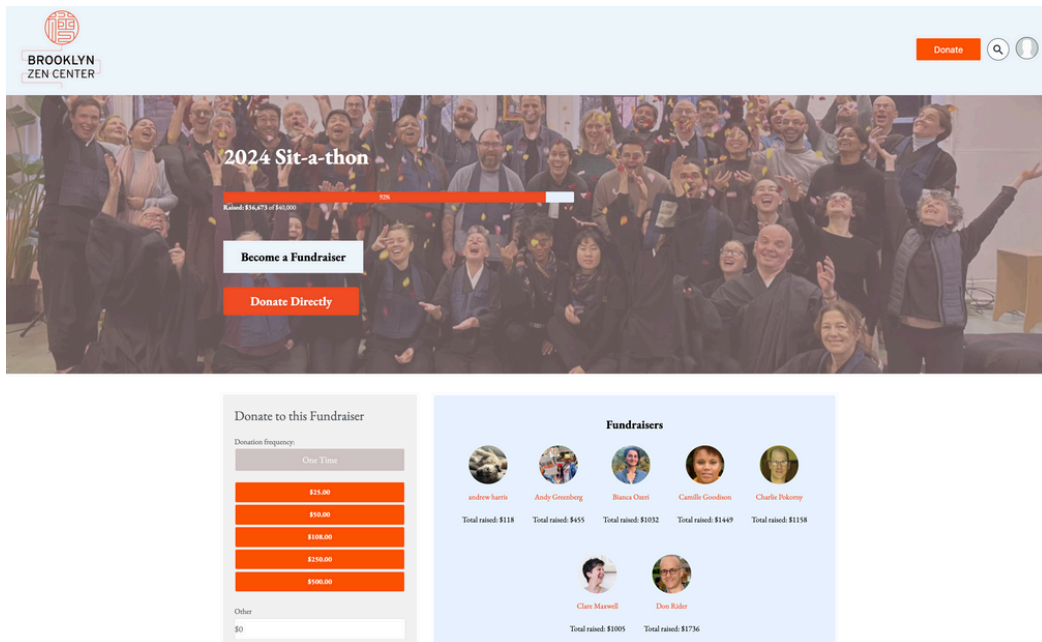
In early June, we gathered for retreat with **Tenshin Reb Anderson**, an elder in our lineage and a longtime friend of Brooklyn Zen Center. Centered around the Avatamasaka Sutra and Tenshin Roshi's teaching of "thus," the retreat brought over **60 practitioners** together for five days of poetry, conversation, and stillness. This marked Reb Anderson's final retreat with BZC before his retirement in 2025.



Kinhin, or walking meditation, in Cobble Hill Park



2024 BZC SIT-A-THON



After a five-year hiatus, BZC's annual Sit-a-thon returned! This communal fundraiser gives practitioners the opportunity to ask friends and family for **sponsorship to support BZC** and their Zen practice. This year, **we raised \$37,000—92% of our \$40,000 goal.**

The **culminating event**—a one-day retreat with open sitting periods—took place at both Boundless Mind Temple in Brooklyn and the Millerton Zendo upstate. It was our **first simultaneous programming**. The Sit-a-thon brought out a strong collective empowerment in our community, and brought us one step closer to closing our 2024 budget deficit.





HEMERA FOUNDATION: A MAJOR GRANT

Artwork: Iwasaki Tsuneo



After ten months of writing and preparation, BZC became the recipient of a **4-year program grant** from the Hemera Foundation.

Hemera is a longtime friend of BZC; this round of support marks our second-largest grant ever.

The grant will support:

- Expanded programming at Boundless Mind, Ancestral Heart, and Millerton Zendo
- New hires, including our first ever full-time Programs Manager
- Technology upgrades for hybrid and online programming
- Formal marketing and advertising
- Cross-sangha cultivation with other US Zen & Buddhist organizations

Thank you to the Hemera Foundation!



We are now in our second year at the Millerton Zendo, BZC's **community practice space in upstate New York**. Ancestral Heart priests and residents continue to offer **weekly practice opportunities** for zazen, dharma talks, and community engagement to anywhere from **15 to 40 guests each week**.



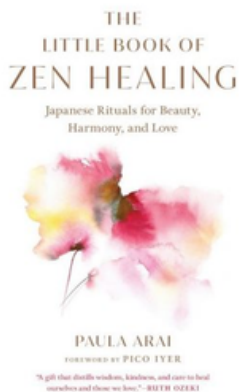
After a 1-Day Sit at the Millerton Zendo



Millerton Zendo sangha at Community Garden Day

Millerton Zendo was deeply fortunate to receive a **second grant from the CLC Kramer Foundation** to support our rent. This gift made possible our various offerings this year.

- A New Year's Eve sit and celebration
- Karma & Collective Liberation class
- 5 Community Garden Days
- 3 one-day retreats
- Sit-a-thon Campaign
- Dharma talk by lineage elder, Tova Green



”

The drone of suffering reverberating through our world begs us to orchestrate healing activities that harmonize with the rhythm of our lives.

“

GUEST TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: DR. PAULA ARAI

Over the last four months of 2024, BZC has had the privilege of welcoming **renowned Buddhist scholar and teacher Dr. Paula Arai**. Dr. Arai's offerings highlighted this year's Practice Period theme of healing, and were centered around her most recent publication, *The Little Book of Zen Healing*, **BZC's 2024 summer read**.

Dr. Arai's programs included an **online discussion** on at-home, lay ritual; a **3-day retreat**—Of Lotuses and Mud: The Subtle Wisdom and Fierce Creativity of Dharma-Driven Female Ancestors; and a **formal dharma talk** at Boundless Mind, our Brooklyn temple. Dr. Arai's work with BZC was made possible by a generous grant from the Frederick P. Lenz Foundation.



Dr. Arai speaking to the assembly at Of Lotuses & Mud



TIDEL FELLOWSHIP

Technology, Innovation, & Digital Engagement Lab



Gerardo & Ryan at the TIDEL launch in Atlanta, GA



The TIDEL cohort

Renho Gerardo Ciprian and Ryan Lee Wong are entering the second year of the **TIDEL** (Technology, Innovation, & Digital Engagement Lab) Fellowship at Union Theological Seminary. Together, they are building a hybrid **BIPOC Zen training program**. In addition to invaluable training and meeting with a multi-faith cohort, BZC received a grant to purchase **technology to upgrade our hybrid experiences**:

- A yearlong **Pathwright** online learning subscription for the "Writing to Study the Self" class and future BIPOC workshops and classes
- **Hardware** including a 55" TV with a stand, dual lavalier mics, a webcam, and a digital camera for improved hybrid interactions at Boundless Mind Temple

The fellowship continues with cohort check-ins and prototyping programs, and culminates in a graduation in June 2025.



Jefre Cantu with BZC Root Teacher, Teah Strozer



Future BZC priests sewing their robes



2024 has been an important year for the future of dharma teachers at Brooklyn Zen Center. **Jefre Cantu**, a priest in the community, was formally invited to be **shuso**, or **head student**, for our fall Practice Period. This process signified the next step in Jefre's path to teaching and stewardship of our lineage, allowing him to offer dharma talks and practice discussion to students.

In addition, four BZC practitioners—Yoko Ohashi, Camille Goodison, Ryan Wong, and Wesley Simmons-Antell—have **begun sewing their robes** for eventual priesthood. They will be ordained in 2025 by their teacher, Kosen Gregory Snyder.

Nearly twenty years since the founding of Brooklyn Zen Center, it is a joy to witness the next generation of dharma leaders take shape.

THE YEAR IN PHOTOS...



Solar Eclipse
viewing
on the Ancestral
Heart porch

BZC at
Brooklyn Pride
Annual
Interfaith
Service



Teachers and sangha
members at Brooklyn
Pride Parade



Buddha's Birthday Celebration at Boundless Mind Temple





Ancestral Heart Skit Night at the Millerton Zendo!

Ceremony & community at Millerton Zendo and Ancestral Heart Temple



Millerton Zendo altar arranged for a healing ceremony



Garden Opening Ceremony at Ancestral Heart



Flower collection for Full Moon Ceremony at Ancestral Heart

Visiting Teachers, Annual Member Meeting & Gatherings



Tova Green & Ancestral Heart residents



Ejo McMullen visits Boundless Mind Temple



2024 Members Meeting



Post-retreat photo with Dr. Paula Arai at Ancestral Heart & Watershed



Thank You



Brooklyn Zen Center is made possible by the hundreds of individuals who give each year to support our temples. This includes formal members, class and workshop participants, one-time visitors to the temple, family & friends of practitioners, and so many others.

A particularly warm thank you to our major donors, who year after year continue to uprightly support BZC:

Still Water Foundation

Paula Vial Fund

Hemera Foundation

Frederick Lenz Foundation

Kramer CLC Foundation



brooklynzen.org
518.592.1196