

2019 StoneWater Zen Activities with photos of a Year In The Life of the Sangha

Dear Sangha members and friends of StoneWater Zen,

Here is a list of our activities throughout 2019. As you can see the sangha is growing and thriving. My hope is that this translates into something meaningful and helpful in all our lives and that the sangha provides a refuge, and an accessible and as well sometimes challenging vehicle, for each of us to practice within the Zen tradition. May I take this chance to thank the many folk who help to make all these events happen and the sitting group leaders around the country who commit to and maintain a place for local people to access this practice. Thank you to Sarah (Kokai) for all her skilled and hard work as editor of the Newsletter.

Finally, a special thanks to Jenny (Shoshin) who patiently and meticulously archives all our activities and Andrew (Tanzan) and John (Suigen) who support me and the sangha on a daily basis, year in year out.

With best wishes and warm regards,

Keizan Roshi

Retreats and Visits

Jan 19 - Dying and Death retreat in the Lakes Zendo led by Keizan Sensei and Jez Yushin Lovekin.

April 7th to 13th - Crosby Sesshin with Tenshin Roshi & Keizan Roshi.

It is ten years since Keizan Sensei received transmission and during this spring sesshin at Crosby Hall, Tenshin Roshi conferred Inka on Keizan. This certification of final completion of training, meant Keizan Sensei was recognised as a fully independent teacher and is now addressed as Keizan Roshi. This took place in a private ceremony at dawn on Wednesday 10th April when Keizan was given the Inka certificate and rakusu by Tenshin Roshi.

The occasion was celebrated by the sangha after the evening sitting on Thursday 11th April. The forty-five sangha members on the retreat were joined by many sangha members from Liverpool and across the UK, and by friends from as far away as Holland, Norway and Sweden for this special occasion.

As a sign of the sangha's appreciation for Keizan Roshi's commitment to the practice over four decades, and for his unstinting support for the StoneWater sangha he was presented with a rakusu signed by over 80 members of the sangha.

Photos can be accessed [here](#).

June Yokoji visit, USA

Every year the White Plum Asanga, which is Taizan Maezumi's lineage, holds a teachers' meeting which is open to all registered WPA teachers. This year's 3 day meeting was hosted by Tenshin Roshi at Zen Mountain Center in California and was attended by Keizan Roshi, who is a board member representing the European sanghas, and Stone Water's three dharma holders Shinro, Suigen and Tanzan. This is their account of the visit. 'We found it was an invaluable opportunity to meet and share with WPA teachers from across USA, and also meet Tenshin's other successors including Kaigen from San Diego and Shinko who came over from New Zealand. It was also good to see again Tenshin's successor Jokai Blackwell and senior student Yugen Lakey, who both began their training with Keizan in Liverpool, and Gavin Mokuin Strathie who is now resident at Yokoji.

Workshops included maintaining healthy boundaries in the relationships between teachers and students, a Zenga calligraphy workshop taught by Maezumi's widow, Enko, as well as a memorial service for Taizan Maezumi and other teachers and ancestors, and a guided tour of Yokoji. The days began with zazen and service, followed by workshops, but it was the informal chats over meals that were often the most interesting and useful. A highlight of the meeting was the Saturday evening social where Tenshin's band, (made up of himself and Ryodo Roshi called 'Joe Riki and the Three Treasures') performed several of their own rock numbers, including Bodhidharma Blues – twice by popular demand! Some useful connections were made and many of the US teachers were particularly keen on a future WPA meeting in Liverpool. We think StoneWater made a good impression at the meeting. Certainly, it was clear that in terms of our activities across the UK and the numbers of people who attend the local groups SWZ is doing very well, at least as well as most of the US sanghas.'

Photos can be accessed [here](#).

June 'Retreat to the City' at the StoneWater Zen Centre, Liverpool led by John Suigen Kenworthy.

August Summer Ango (Shuso Retreat) at the Lakes Zendo with Karen Shoji Robbie followed by a Shuso ceremony in Liverpool on Saturday 24th August. Photos [here](#). A Tokudo ceremony was performed on 1st August 2019 for Mark Kogen Shawcroft. Photos [here](#).

September European Buddhist Convention in Barcelona attended by Sarah Kokai Thwaites and Margarita Setsurin Camiña-Pardo. Here's a brief account by Kokai.

The European Buddhist Union members include 14 national Buddhist unions (including for the UK the NBO) but 13 international members, and 23 regional members including SWZ. Their EBU meeting (attended for SWZ by myself and Margarita Setsurin Carmina) took place in northern Spain over 4 days. As well as its formal business, such as reports back on the EBU's work with the European Parliament and European Commission, there was plenty of time for members to learn about and share from other organisations, countries and traditions. This included hearing how three large international Buddhist sanghas are dealing with issues of abuse and misconduct and the repercussions of this. It also included workshops on dealing with conflict and on Digital Dharma. The Digital Dharma workshop was facilitated by someone who works with Wake Up (the Plum Village tradition's young adult network) and encouraged groups to reflect on the strengths of the organisation or sanghas they come from and how IT can support this. For StoneWater Zen my reflection was that part of our strength lies in sangha, in the way in which coming together to practice provides a warm support which allows us to go deeper in our practice than we might otherwise be able to do. This prompted various ideas about how we might use IT to help support new members to feel part of the sangha and allow members who do not live near a local group to feel more closely connected to the sangha.

The EBU's online newsletter can be found [HERE](#). The latest issue is on the subject of Meditation and Mindfulness and includes a piece written by myself on behalf of StoneWater Zen, "[Secular mindfulness as a gateway to Buddhist practice](#)"

Overall both organisations (NBO and EBU) are starting to feel to me like sources of ideas, support and learning and ways in which the connections brought about in our practice can extend beyond our own sangha to the wider Buddhist community'.

October 27th to 2nd November 2019 Crosby Autumn Sesshin led by Keizan Roshi with Tony Shinro Doubleday.

Jo Isshin Dennys and Tim Zenki Steele were awarded the role of Risshin during this sesshin.

This new role of Risshin is conferred by Keizan Roshi on a practitioner who functions as a pillar that supports the sangha and has the ability to express themselves in the role of monk or senior lay practitioner — in effect a Guardian of the Sangha. This change now allows equal recognition of practitioners who have or will have a supportive teaching role and those who have shown a long term active commitment to the sangha and the dharma. Photos can be accessed [here](#).

December Rohatsu 'Retreat to the City' at the StoneWater Zen Centre, Liverpool led by John Suigen Kenworthy.

Group Activities

StoneWater Zen Liverpool

- Regular weekly zazen continued on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings; Wednesday and Thursday evenings and weekly zazenkai on all but the first Saturday morning in the month. There was a change to Thursday morning sittings to 10am from 18th April, to accommodate folks with school age children or those who have slightly unusual work patterns.
- Monthly beginners sessions continued.
- In January a group of ten year 6 children with their pastoral support teacher from Florence Melly Community Primary School visited the Liverpool Zendo. This was led by John Suigen Kenworthy. Some of the comments made by the children after the visit:

Jack - 'I thought the Buddhist Centre was amazing, like we got to meditate for 3 minutes and it was a really good experience to use mindfulness, trying to count in our head how many times the man rang the special Japanese bell'.

Neive - 'Today we learnt about being a Buddhist and how they meditate, we looked in the rooms and sat on special cushions and looked at bells and had a go at them'.

Luke - 'We went to a Buddhist centre. I thought that the man was kind because he gave us some biscuits and juice. We tried some meditation. If I was asked to go back I would say yes'.

Andrew - 'We went to the StoneWater Zen place. We had orange juice and biscuits. We learnt about the different types of bells that they use and we were told the back story of the Buddha. We learnt to meditate. I loved this trip. 10/10'.

Shreya - 'At the Buddhist centre we had so much fun. It was amazing. We learnt about different bells and were allowed to have a go. We meditated for 3 minutes which was very relaxing. We were taught about Buddha and different ways to meditate. One big bell was rolled from one piece of metal'.

- In July, Andrew Tanzan Scott took part in an interfaith event as part of a Culture Day at Calderstone's Comprehensive School, coordinated by Liverpool Community Spirit, an interfaith educational charity. Buddhism alongside two other faith groups, Judaism and Global Christianity were represented. Approximately 120 pupils in small groups attended throughout the day.
- Also in July, Andrew Tanzan Scott visited Appleton Thorn prison in Cheshire to do a presentation of Zen and lead zazen for pre-release prisoners as part of a multicultural awareness training.
- Hanamatsuri festival 11th May at the Liverpool StoneWater Zen Centre.
Photos of Hanamatsuri can be accessed [here](#).
- WhatsApp Group continued for all SWZ sangha members
- Monthly sitting at Miranda Wayu Forward's home continued
- Monthly "A time to talk' group hosted by Alan Kaishin Crawford at Miranda's continued
- Family group convened by Colin Shinjo Salmon continued with 4 sessions
- Quarterly newsletter which continues to require a lot of work by Sarah Kokai Thwaites, supported by Andrew Tanzan Scott. The 2019 themes have been:
March 19: The Four Noble Truths
June 19: Two Zen Ancestors
December 19: My Favourite Koan

StoneWater Zen Mid Wales - Karen Shoji Robbie

- The Aberystwyth group continued to meet every Tuesday 6-8pm
- Shoji ran a 'Stillness Heals - A Morning of Zen' 30th November 2019 - 9.30-12.30

StoneWater Zen North London - Tony Shinro Doubleday

Details of the group can be found [here](#).

- The regular Zen class schedule continued throughout 2019, with weekly zazen on Wednesday evenings and monthly classes on Sunday mornings. Most classes included Dharma talks and interviews, as well as the practice of chanting.
- StoneWater Zen London celebrated Hanamatsuri with a special day of practice on 12 May and held its first AGM on 24 July.
- During the year, Tony Shinro Doubleday supported the Saturday classes in West Wickham, led by Tim Zenki Steele.

- Members of StoneWater Zen London supported Buddhist action month, in June, the theme of which was climate crisis; they linked up with other Buddhists in the Dharma Action Network for Climate Engagement to join silent meditation vigils calling for halt in investment in fossil fuels; and they supported an interfaith walk to witness to demand action on the climate crisis. In April, July and October sangha members also lent their support to Buddhist practices and activities within the Extinction Rebellion.
- In June, Dorinda Genju Talbot led an 11 km conscious walk from Croydon to Chelsham Common, along the Vanguard Way.

StoneWater Zen Northampton - Alasdair Taisen Gordon-Finlayson

Continued to meet each Wednesday evening.

Further details on the group can be found [here](#).

StoneWater Zen Bromley, Kent - Tim Zenki Steel

Although the sitting group has been running for several years, last year saw a more formal schedule established and the initial venue was a yoga studio in West Wickham once a week on a Saturday at 4:30pm. The commitment of the half a dozen members who all turned up on a reasonably regular basis allowed for the successful purchase of the associated bowls, bells and cushions.

Tony Shinro Doubleday continued to be a support when opportunity allowed for him to attend and he was always a welcome addition.

This year also saw the first additional person traveling from this group to the Crosby retreat which Zenki was delighted about.

In 2020, the group eagerly anticipate the successful leasing of a full-time studio which will be the new permanent home with an extended sitting schedule. Zenki is also planning to run some weekend sitting retreats in the south east.

StoneWater Zen Oslo, Norway - Chris and Guro Huby

The Oslo group now sits every Wednesday evening in Chris and Guro's flat. The group is still small, but growing! For more details go to: <https://www.swz-oslo.org/>

StoneWater Zen Bolsover - Mark Kogen Shawcroft

The Bolsover group reconvened on the 3rd December and meets Tuesday evenings 7 – 9pm

Ceremonies

Photos can be accessed [here](#).

Keizan Shoji Roshi officiated

- 2 Jukai - Paul Bushin Robinson and Lorena Yoshi Rivero de Beer
- 1 Tokudo - Mark Kogen Shawcroft
- 1 Shuso Hossen - Karen Shoji Robbie
- 1 Hoshi - Simon Kogen Heale
- 1 Naming Ceremony for Noah Davies and Bodhi Davies on the 19/10/19 at Stone-Water Zen Centre Liverpool. Dharma names are for Bodhi, Taisho (Tree of Illumination) and Noah Taishin (Peaceful Dragon).