

Sanctuary and Action
By Central Abbess Eijun Linda Ruth Cutts

Amidst the political and social challenges of our times, when public expressions of racism, bigotry, anti-semitism and hatred and violence are rising, I wanted to make very clear that San Francisco Zen Center, in our commitment to the practice of waking up and living in wisdom and compassion, strives to be a place of tolerance, openness and welcoming, and a community of peaceful spiritual sanctuary.

San Francisco Zen Center will host a gathering for those interested in educating themselves on what it means to be a spiritual sanctuary. We will look at how we might join with other churches, temples, mosques, and meditation groups in an interfaith response and support for immigrants, refugees, social justice and for our planet.

Our work as a spiritual sanctuary temple will be self-defined and based on the assessment of our internal capacity and the unique ways that we may offer assistance and alleviate suffering. We look forward to working together.

In the spirit of spiritual sanctuary and making a safe and protected place to practice, SFZC values and celebrates diversity, inclusivity and respect for all beings and the inherent dignity of all people. We serve a diverse population of students, visitors, lay people, priests, and monks guided by teachers who follow in Suzuki Roshi's style of warm hand and heart to warm hand and heart and all are welcome.

We endeavor to express our respect and support for the rights and well-being of all people who are marginalized and oppressed because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, class or immigration status. We will work with others to find ways to support public action that protects and promotes the values of inclusivity and non-harming acting for the well-being of all people and our beloved Earth--reaching out to the community, supporting prisoners, the homeless, and those in recovery; protecting the environment; and working for peace.

Affirming the interdependent nature of reality we acknowledge that our own well-being and liberation is bound in the well-being and liberation of others. The only basis for a life flowing from Dharma is upright action, respecting each thing, and caring for one another

There is a Zen koan in the Book of Serenity in which the Buddha is walking with his students and points to the ground saying, "This spot is good to build a sanctuary." Indra, who was with the assembly, took a blade of grass, stuck it in the ground and said, "The sanctuary is built." The Buddha smiled.

Just as placing a blade of grass in the ground can become the building of a sanctuary acknowledged by the Buddha's smile, so we can offer what is at hand --our ordinary practice: sitting, working and meeting together and responding to the cries of the world.