



Thousand Harbours Zen Annual Report 2023

Thousand Harbours Zen is a community committed to providing authentic Zen Buddhist practice and teachings to all. In the spirit of the Buddha Shakyamuni and the founders of the Soto Zen school, Dogen and Keizan, we hold to three basic principles: practice is undertaken as a community, practice and realization are not two, and practice is taken up in a spirit of offering and vow.

We're a hybrid community: we meet in person in Halifax, Nova Scotia and online, with members joining us from around the world. We are guided by our Priest, Koun Franz, and a Board of Governors numbering 7.

This year, 2024, marks the 10th anniversary since this Sangha first came together as Zen Nova Scotia. The past 10 years has been a period of exploration and change, culminating in our expansion beyond the borders of Nova Scotia and the completion of our home temple, Sensōji.

As we look forward to the next 10 years, we are focused on expanding our ability to provide access to the practice, and to ensuring the sustainability of our community.

Board of Governors

- Ko-e (Jennifer) Archer, President
- Konnen (Claire) Michalewicz, Vice President
- Dave Murphy, Treasurer
- Toshin (Philip) Wilson, Secretary
- Teishin (Camille) Gajria, Member
- Nora Jacobson, Member
- Shikaku (Paul) Baker, Member
- Koun Franz, Priest (non-Board member)

Board Activities

- Bylaws - This year the Board made minor revisions to the THZ bylaws in the sections governing membership and board members to be voted on by members as a special resolution at the AGM.
- Committees
 - The Communications Committee currently consists of Konnen, who maintains the THZ newsletter and website. Together, Teishin and Konnen also maintain THZs social media feeds.
 - The Space Planning Committee was retired with the opening of the new temple.
 - The Sangha Activities Committee includes Teishin and Toshin. The Sangha Activities Committee solicits ideas for and facilitates the Tuesday Night community discussions.
- Strategic Planning - Board members have engaged in quarterly strategic planning meetings focused on building sustainability for Thousand Harbours Zen community. Part of this involves clarifying who our community is, ensuring we are providing practice opportunities

that meet our community's needs, and finding ways to invite community members to become more involved in our activities.

Membership Update

The new bylaws brought in last year outlined a new approach to membership. Anyone who supports and upholds the purpose, ideals and values of Thousand Harbours Zen is welcome to become a member. Members are recorded on our membership roster by completing a membership form and must confirm their intention to stay members annually. Members can vote on resolutions at AGMs and other members' meetings. There's no financial obligation to membership, but members may be asked to donate their money, time or skills to THZ as they're able to. Prior to our AGM, a membership form was circulated for new members, and existing members were contacted to confirm their ongoing membership. We currently have 26 voting members.

Activities and Achievements

Temple Opening

On July 9, we celebrated the opening of Thousand Harbours Temple (千湊寺, Sensōji). Daiken Yoshitani-roshi, the abbot of Myōhonji in Isayaha, Nagasaki, is one of Koun's teachers. and has been one of the biggest supporters of our community. Yoshitani-roshi gave us our name and provided the calligraphy for the temple sign. He travelled from Japan with Taido Miura-osho to officially consecrate the temple.

Yoshitani-roshi officiated the two ceremonies to officially open Sensōji—one to open the Buddha's eyes, and one to celebrate the construction of the temple. The temple opening was followed by a community celebration and meal at Sura Lounge. We are grateful to Yoshitani-roshi and Taido-san for coming all this way for these events, and to everyone who else who helped make it possible.

Retreat and Jukai

This year marked a return to in-person practice as we hosted our first one-day retreats since the start of the pandemic. The first was held on April 22, and the other on December 9. Our December retreat also included a Jukai ceremony where some of our sangha members formally and publicly received the bodhisattva precepts. They each received a rakusu (a small version of the Buddha's robe that they sewed), a dharma name, and a lineage chart.

Preceptees included Jennifer Archer (Kō-e), Stacey Boulter (Gyō-en), Camille Gajria (Teishin), Claire Michalewicz (Konnen) and Phil Wilson (Tōshin). Two others, Nyo-on and Yo-ze, also received the precepts for a second time to reaffirm their commitment to the practice. (It was also the second time for Teishin—she joined on Zoom, but actually had her jukai in person when Koun and his family visited the UK in the summer.)

As always, we are grateful to the Atlantic Buddhist Meditation Centre for the use of their space.

Visit from Sokanbu

On Sunday, October 15, we were visited by Dokan Kojima and Gyokei Yokoyama, both representing the Sokanbu in Los Angeles (the administrative office for Soto Zen in North America). To honour their coming and provide an opportunity for learning and connection, we hosted a morning practice at the Halifax Independent School, followed by a community lunch at Cha Baa Thai.

This was a wonderful opportunity to meet these two priests and deepen the connection between our sangha and the broader Zen community.

Myohonji 450th anniversary celebration

October 26–30, Koun, Jennifer, and Jennifer's daughter Esme went to Yoshitani-roshi's temple, Myohonji (in Isahaya, Japan), to take part in events marking 450 years since the temple's founding. The events included two days focused on traditional robes (kesa), with displays and talks; one day of celebratory services; and a two-day jukai ceremony for 53 people. Koun interpreted over the five days. Jennifer and Esme were able to take part in the precepts ceremony, receiving the dharma names Ko-e (Jennifer) and Eshin (Esme). It was wonderful, following Yoshitani-roshi's visit here, to be able to deepen that connection at his own temple.

Sangha activities

We continue to offer daily zazen and recitation of vows at 6:30 AM, and at 9:30 AM on weekdays, zazen followed by vows in Japanese, French, and English.

We continued the Tuesday night practice schedule with options to sit in person in Halifax and online on the following days:

- 1st and 3rd Tuesday - monthly with zazen and Dharma talks
- 4th Tuesdays - extended zazen and service
- 5th Tuesdays- variable

On the 2nd Tuesday of each month, following zazen (online only) we have a community-led discussion. This year themes included: koans, home practice space, exercise, artificial intelligence, a series on vows, chanting, wintering, parenting, and a visit from guest speaker Rick McDaniel who authored many Zen books. These sessions support people getting to know each other informally. Thank you to everyone who facilitated or attended an evening, and please let us know if you would like to host one.

Also to support connection amongst the Sangha, we have a virtual cloakroom to mirror the effect of mingling after a session in person. The zoom room is kept open after every Tuesday evening for anyone who wants to connect in this way.

On the first Sunday evening of each month, Koun hosts a study group on *Zazen Yojinki* by Keizan-zenji. This continues this year and prior attendance is not necessary.

As in previous years, we hosted extra sittings in Rohatsu week and saw in the new year with an extended sit.

Financial Report

The following is an unaudited statement of the Thousand Harbours Zen Financial Position 2023

Opening Cash Balance \$34,903

Closing Cash Balance \$32,153

Total Cash in \$12,103

Total Cash Out \$14,853

Thousand Harbours Zen had a net decrease in cash of \$2750 and thus costs were not fully covered by income in 2023.

Comments on income:

- All income was generated from donations which, like 2022, averaged approximately \$1000 per month.
- Donations were kindly provided by 49 individuals throughout the year with many being monthly contributors. The frequency of donations however is not necessarily reflective of the size of the donation, and all are important to the operation of Thousand Harbours Zen and greatly appreciated.

The breakdown of donation frequency by donor is as follows:

- Monthly Contributors - 19
- Frequent (4 to 8 donations) – 5
- Occasional (2 or 3 donations) – 11
- One Time - 14

Comments on Expenses:

The last year was a particularly eventful one for Thousand Harbours Zen and this drove expenses. The single largest event was the temple opening in July which cost approximately \$ 6300.00, including hosting and hotel expenses for Daiken Yoshitani-roshi and Taïdo-san who travelled from Japan for this event. We also increased the monthly donation to our Priest, Koun Franz from \$150.00 to \$300.00 per month.

All other expenses were incurred in support of the operation of Thousand Harbours Zen, improvements to the temple, donations or costs for other facilities for the one day retreats, and online experiences for our community.

Looking Ahead

As we move into our second decade together as a community, part of our goal is to return to an annual schedule of offerings that provides more opportunities for us to gather, practice, and connect in a hybrid way on a more regular basis. We are looking forward to continuing to hold in-person retreats, and would like to explore hosting a longer sesshin. We also want to find regular times for us to come together as a community to connect, celebrate and share, perhaps hosting a founder's day picnic each summer to commemorate our temple opening.

Whatever we do, we cannot do it without you. We are so grateful for all of our community members, and to be able to come together in this way, to learn and practice Soto Zen together in a spirit of offering and vow. We look forward to hearing from you on your hopes for our next 10 years together!

Thank you to our Board, Sangha and to everyone who donated time, energy, funds or other support to Thousand Harbour Zen in 2023, and through the past 10 years!