

Sakaji Hall
111 Bush Street
June 4, 1961

JK

Bishop Yamada

Dear Sir:

We, the meditation group under Rev. Suzuki, have decided to establish a study center for layman here in San Francisco.

This center will be founded primarily for the purpose of practicing meditation, studying Buddhism in general, and emphasizing Dogen's original Zen in particular. # We are searching for ~~the~~ ^{the} pure and original Zen ~~free from~~ ^{which is UNIVERSAL IN ITS} ~~ritualistic and sentimental ritual~~ ^{CONCEPT.} ~~which~~ ^{IT MUST} be suited to the American people, meet their life situations and thereby ^{IT WILL} flourish on American soil. This Zen can neither be over ritualistic ^{NOR} ~~or~~ lack intellectual stimulation. Affiliation with the Sotoshu of Japan is desirable and necessary since we will look to it for spiritual guidance and teaching of right meditation.

We realize that Westerners meeting with Zen meditation for the first time will be confronted with many problems. This Center will provide a means to understand those problems, giving insight into their nature and origin and the way to ultimate freedom. We also realize that the way of Zen is through each individual's effort, thereby making right understanding and right practice essential. We believe that the proper approach to Zen in the West is "in the market place" as subscribed by Huang Po; therefore, the Center's activities must be so directed. It will try to prepare people to live a poetic life in the social conditions as they exist, not by negating the life situation but rather bringing out its true nature and purpose.

OK

OK

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During your last visit here, you spoke of a Zen Gakuin for Japanese and American priests and that our group would be known as supporters of this group. We hope that in the near future the Center will be financially able to ~~do this~~ ^{help support the Zen Gakuin}; but we believe that the immediate problem is the founding of this study center. A tree must have roots before the branches and leaves can appear. As the center grows in members and vitality, it could and would help support such an institute, ~~and where we hope it were to be located here in San Francisco.~~ We hope that in the immediate future the Center will be able to support an assistant priest at Sokoji to aid Rev. Suzuki in our heavy training schedule. This priest could be the forerunner of the Zen Gakuin.

OK

Accompanying this letter are the proposed constitution and the initial program of activities of the Center for your consideration. In order to form this Center we must incorporate under the California State Law. ^{we are presently raising the money for this} To incorporate, we must send the constitution ~~to incorporate under~~ ^{for this purpose.} and the proposed name to the State of California for approval.

The name "Zen Center" has been chosen for its simplicity, and ^{symbolic infere} its sound. It can easily be found in the telephone book under "Zen" eliminating the difficulty we've all met with when initially looking for Sokoji. We believe that the name should contain the word Zen and denote a place of study in English. ~~If~~ If you feel it too brief it could be lengthened to "Zen Buddhist Center", "Zen Buddhist Study Center" or simply "Zen Study Center". We wait your concurrence with this name before writing the State of California.

OK

Soon after incorporating, we will be faced with the problem of facilities to house our activities. ~~With the initial money~~ we plan to begin the center here @ Sokoji and as the group grows we hope to be able to

remodel the present ^{meditation hall} ~~zen room~~. ~~possibly in~~
~~the near future~~

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obtained through pledges, we ~~plan~~ ^{hope} to solve this problem one of two ways. ~~First we could rent a house with option to buy and remodel or demolish it and build anew. Secondly, we could approach the Japanese Congregation with a scheme to remodel the present meditation room which now needs more sitting space and is a bit dreary.~~ In order for this Center to flourish, it must be housed in a facility with proper Zen attitude and atmosphere of austerity and simple elegance, so that people on their initial visit will be struck by a space that is in harmony with their inner hopes and ideals, ~~not being further depressed.~~ ~~In either case,~~ we ultimately hope to build a new facility which can house both this Center and the Zen Gakuin.

Please excuse us for the lengthiness of this letter, ~~and for our limited knowledge of Japanese.~~ We hope that our intentions are now clearer to you and will wait for your answer.

Humbly yours,

We all send our kindest thoughts to you & shall anxiously await your answer.