

Tenshin Roshi Dharma Successor Biographies

Zengyu Paul Discoe 1988

Zengyu Paul Discoe is a Japanese master builder and Zen Buddhist teacher. He studied architecture as a Buddhist temple builder in Kyoto, Japan, for five years during the 1970s. Upon returning to the United States, he founded Joinery Structures to continue pursuing his passion for Asian architecture and now has his own design studio. He personally trains his team in Japanese techniques and represents the architectural process as an embodiment of Zen practice. He helped introduce Asian architecture to the western world. Zengyu received Dharma Transmission from Tenshin Roshi in 1988.

Website: <https://joinerystructures.com/>

Contact: pauldiscoedesign@gmail.com

Eijun Linda Ruth Cutts 1996

Eijun Linda Cutts came to San Francisco Zen Center in 1971 and was ordained as a priest in 1975. She has lived at Tassajara and SFZC's City Center and has resided at Green Gulch Farm since 1993. In 1996 Linda received Dharma transmission from Tenshin Roshi. After having served as Abbess of SF Zen Center from 2000 to 2007, she was appointed Abiding Abbess of Green Gulch Farm Zen Center in 2010 and Central Abbess of SF Zen Center from 2014 serving until 2019. Linda continues to teach and lead practice periods and retreats at Tassajara, Green Gulch, and elsewhere, and has been leading Yoga-Zen retreats and workshops for many years.

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Furyu Nancy Schroeder 1999

Furyu Nancy Schroeder, a resident of Zen Center since the 1970s, became Abiding Abbess at Green Gulch Farm Zen Center in March 2014 and stepped down from that role in March 2023. Fu has held most of the monastic positions at Zen Center and has been an active supporter of programs for children, people of color, the gay and lesbian community, and the interfaith community. In 2008 she was elected to the Marin Women's Hall of Fame and in 2010 she was appointed to the Board of the Marin Community Foundation. In addition, she has previously co-led Zen Center's Contemplative Caregiver Course. Fu received Dharma Transmission from Tenshin Reb Anderson in 1999.

Contact: furyu.schroeder@sfzc.org

Myo Denis Lahey 1999

Rev. Myō is the Abbot at Issan-ji, Myō shū zan located in San Francisco, California. A Dharma heir of Tenshin Reb Anderson, Myō has previously served as the *tanto*, head of practice, at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center and was a sometime board member of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association of North America (SZBA). He is also a current member of the Association of Sōtō Zen Buddhists (ASZB), a group composed primarily of Western clergy who have maintained a close connection with the Sōtō School in Japan. Rev. Myō began sitting practice in 1969 and attended zazen-kai at Haiku Zendō in Los Altos, which had recently been established and which hosted Suzuki-roshi from time to time.

Contact: info@hszc.org

Taigen Dan Leighton 2000

Taigen Dan Leighton is a Soto Zen priest and Dharma successor in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. Taigen began formal everyday zazen and Soto practice in 1975 at the New York Zen Center with Kando Nakajima Roshi. Taigen was ordained in 1986 by Reb Anderson Roshi. Taigen practiced and resided for years at San Francisco Zen Center, Tassajara monastery, and Green Gulch Farm Zen Center. Taigen was an elected member of the Board of San Francisco Zen Center, which he Chaired for three years. He also practiced for two years in Kyoto, Japan. He received Dharma Transmission in 2000 from Tenshin Roshi and is an authorized Kokusaifukyoshi (Official Foreign Representative) in the Japanese Soto school. Taigen is Guiding Dharma Teacher for Ancient Dragon Zen Gate. Taigen has written numbers of books about or translations from traditional Soto teaching, including *Cultivating the Empty Field: The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi*, *Just This Is It*; *Dongshan and the Practice of Suchness*, and *Dogen's Extensive Record: A Translation of Eihei Koroku*. Taigen has a Ph.D. from Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and has taught at a number of universities, including since 1994 at the Institute of Buddhist Studies of the Graduate Theological Union. He lives with his wife on the north side of Chicago.

Contact: <https://www.taigenleighton.org/>

Meiya Honshu Wender 2001

Meiya Wender has practiced at San Francisco Zen Center since 1972. She was ordained as a Zen priest in 1986 receiving the name Luminous Night, Original Practice, and received Dharma Transmission in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi from Tenshin Reb Anderson in 2002. She also trained in traditional Soto Zen forms at Zuioji in Shikoku, Japan and has held many monastic leadership positions at Tassajara and Green Gulch, including Director, Ino, Tenzo, Tanto and Godo. Meiya has studied the Way of Tea for many years, including a year at the Urasenke Midorikai program in Kyoto, and teaches Tea in Sowing the Moon Teahouse at Green Gulch.

Contact: tea@sfzc.org

Leslie James 2001

Leslie James is the Abiding Teacher at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center and has practiced at San Francisco Zen Center since 1971. She received Lay Dharma Transmission from Tenshin Reb Anderson in 2001. Leslie has two grown children and has lived at Tassajara with her husband, Keith Meyerhoff, for 30 years.

Konjin Gaelyn Godwin 2003

Konjin Gaelyn Godwin received ordination as a Zen Priest from Tenshin Roshi in 1991, Dharma Transmission in 2003, and was appointed Kaikyoshi (formal recognition from Japan) in 2005. The Abbot of Houston Zen Center, Setsuan Konjin Gaelyn Godwin is connected nationally and internationally with Buddhist teachers and organizations. She serves as the Director of the International Center of Soto Zen, North America, a department of Soto Zen Headquarters based in Japan.

Website: <https://houstonzen.org/>

Kiku Christina Lehnher 2005

Kiku Christina Lehnher served as Abiding Abbess at City Center from 2012 to 2014. She has degrees in physical therapy and clinical psychology, and practiced both in Switzerland. A student of Tenshin Reb Anderson, she was ordained as a priest in 1993 and received Dharma Transmission in 2005. From 2003 to 2006 she served as Tanto (Head of Practice) at City Center. Christina lives in Marin, where she continues to support students as a non-residential teacher.

Contact: christina.lehnher@sfzc.org

Taiyo Lipscomb 2009

Taiyo Nyushin (Great Sun, Flexible Mind) was born on Jan 7, 1943 in a Navy hospital in Corpus Christi, Texas. His early years entailed many family moves, including Jme in Scotland and Germany, and he made his way to Northern California in 1972. During a spontaneous visit to Tassajara with a friend, he walked into the office with the dharma questions: “what is this place and how can I live here? “ In short order, he was living in the basement dormitory at City Center and spent the next 26 years working and living in community at City Center, Tassajara, and GGF. Taiyo was part of Tenshin-roshi's first group of priests ordained in 1986, and in 2009, received dharma transmission. Continuing to explore his original dharma questions, Taiyo now lives in Asheville, North Carolina with his wife, Susan, enjoying nature, photography and lawn bowling.

Offered by Rev Hōgetsu Laurie Belzer in consultation with Taiyo.

Contact: taiyo@taiyosan.org

Kokyo Henkel 2010

Kokyo Yakai Henkel has been practicing Zen since 1990 in residence at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, Green Gulch Farm Zen Center, No Abode Hermitage in Mill Valley, and Bukkokuji Monastery in Japan. He was ordained as a priest in 1994 by Tenshin Roshi and received Dharma Transmission from him in 2010. Kokyo is interested in exploring how the original teachings of Buddha-Dharma from ancient India, China, and Japan are still very much alive and useful in present-day America to bring peace and harmony to this troubled world.

Website: <https://kokyohenkel.weebly.com/>

Zesho Susan O'Connell 2017

Zesho Gentaku Susan O'Connell is a Zen teacher with 30 years of meditation experience. She has lived at San Francisco Zen Center since 1995, was ordained as a Zen priest in 1999 by Tenshin Reb Anderson and received Dharma Transmission in 2017. She has served in many key positions at SF Zen Center, including as Vice President and President from 2006-2016. She is currently Spiritual Director of the Zen-inspired Senior Living Community Project. Susan is a mother and a grandmother.

Contact: susan.oconnell@sfzc.org

Korin Charlie Pokorny 2018

Korin Charlie Pokorny was ordained as a priest by Tenshin Reb Anderson in 1999 and received dharma transmission in 2018. He practiced as a resident at Tassajara and Green Gulch Farm for 12 years, formerly taught at Stone Creek Zen Center with Jisho Warner, and currently teaches at Brooklyn Zen Center. He holds a master's degree from Stanford University in Religious Studies and teaches courses at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California, and at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

Website: <https://brooklynzen.org/>

Contact: korin108@gmail.com

Thiemo Blank 2025

Thiemo Blank began Zen practice in Germany in 1989. In 2008, he left his job in medical research to move to Green Gulch Farm. He was ordained as a Soto Zen Priest in 2010 by Tenshin Reb Anderson and served as Shuso (Head Student) in Fall 2016. After being Plant Manager, Guest Program Manager and Director of Green Gulch Farm he is now in the role of Tanto (Head of Practice). Thiemo lives with his wife Stephanie and their two children, Miro and Lucia at Green Gulch.

Contact: ggftanto@sfzc.com

In Memoriam

Chikudo Jerome Peterson 1988 (1928-2010)

Jerome Petersen came to Sokoji Temple in San Francisco's Japantown in 1961 when Suzuki Roshi was there. He lived at Tassajara, Green Gulch, and for several years at City Center. He was shuso at Tassajara in 1976. Jerome received Dharma Transmission from Tenshin Roshi in 1988.

Ananda Claude Dalenburg 1988 (1927 - 2008)

Ananda Dalenberg was ordained a Zen priest by Suzuki Roshi in 1966 at Rinsoin Temple in Japan and received Dharma Transmission from Tenshin Roshi in 1988. Born in Illinois, Ananda's early life included childhood religious instruction where his proclivity towards philosophical discourse first surfaced. Ananda went on to earn degrees in philosophy from Northwestern University, the American Academy of Asian Studies, and served in the U.S. Navy. During the time of the Beats, Ananda was a friend of Gary Snyder and Jack Kerouac and appeared as a character in Kerouac's Dharma Bums. A friend and student of Alan Watts, D.T. Suzuki, Hodo Tobase, Sohaku Ogata, and Nyogen Senzaki, one may say that Ananda was part of the early founding of Zen in the West. He is known for locating a site for the San Francisco Zen Center City Center for Suzuki Roshi, served as President of the Buddhist Council of Northern

California, and offered himself as abbot for Hartford Street Zen Center during the period after Issan Dorsey's death. Ananda had an interest in the Quaker movement, was involved with the Quaker prison project, and cared about social issues. He was devoted to his daughters and they to him.

Additional sources commemorating Ananda's life include [Sweeping Zen](#), [cuke.com](#), and [OBC Connect](#).

Jakujo Gary McNabb 1998
(1943-2022)

Gary McNabb was ordained by Richard Baker on January 10, 1982, was *shuso* with Tenshin Reb Anderson at Green Gulch Farm in 1989, and received Dharma Transmission from Tenshin Reb Anderson in 1998. He was the founding teacher and later the Abbot of the Jewel Mirror Zendo in Eugene, Oregon. Born in Seattle and raised in Eugene, Gary McNabb was a Zen practitioner, yoga teacher, and gardener in the 1970s. He later had a long career as a licensed clinical social worker.

Sobun Katherine Thanas 1988
(1927-2012)

Katherine began studying Zen with Suzuki Roshi in 1967. She was ordained by Baker Roshi and received Dharma Transmission from Tenshin Anderson Roshi in 1987. She also felt a great affinity for the teaching of Katagiri Roshi and studied with him in Minnesota in the early 1980s. She began teaching at both Santa Cruz Zen Center and the Monterey Bay Zen Center in 1988 continuing at these teaching posts until the end of her life. In 2002 she was made the first Abbot of Santa Cruz Zen Center. Her teaching pointed toward daily zazen, Soto forms and services, sesshin, and Practice Periods. She taught Dogen, Precepts, and Mahayana Sutras, and especially an appreciation of our bodies as the source for non-conceptual Wisdom. She also taught the importance of healthy Sangha relationships, community engagement, and social activism. A book of her lectures entitled *The Truth of This Life* was compiled and edited by Natalie Goldberg and Bill Anelli. Essays written by Katherine Thanas are in *Being Bodies* and *The Hidden Lamp*. A more complete biography of Katherine Thanas Roshi can be found at www.sczc.org/katherine-thanas, the website of Santa Cruz Zen Center.

Offered by Rev Patrick Teverbaugh.

Created: 6/10/23

Purpose: Informational, to be linked to the Dharma Successors page for community access and use

Sources: SFZC website, SZBA website, other Zen Center websites, and personal websites, gently edited for length.

Revised: 1/29/26