

## **Hartford Street Zen Center**

**--- Annual Retreat: Winter Light ---**

**Online retreat & added schedule if you choose to engage in added  
home practice for 2020 and setting up a home zendo**

**Thursday, Dec 4 – Sunday, Dec 6**

Hartford Street Zen Center  
Annual Retreat: Winter Light  
4, 5, 6 December, 2020

*Thurs., 3 Dec.*

7:30 p.m. orientation  
8:00 p.m. sitting  
8:30 p.m. retire

*Fri., Sat., 4, 5 Dec.*

6:00 a.m. sitting  
6:25 a.m. walking  
6:35 a.m. sitting  
7:00 a.m. morning chanting  
10:15 a.m. Dharma talk  
11:00 a.m. walking  
11:15 a.m. sitting  
11:50 a.m. noon chanting  
6:00 p.m. sitting  
6:40 p.m. evening chanting  
8:00 p.m. sitting  
8:30 p.m. refuges

*Sun., 6 Dec.*

Same as preceding days, until...

11:40 a.m. ceremony set-up  
11:45 a.m. Bodhi Day Ceremony  
12:00 p.m. end of retreat

**Please Note:** All events are open to participation via Zoom, and we strongly recommend following the schedule completely, as well as maintaining silence throughout, in order to realize maximum benefit. Please see our website ([www.hszc.org](http://www.hszc.org)) for connection information. It may not be possible to have a host keeping constant watch on connections, so if you have problems connecting, send email to [info@hszc.org](mailto:info@hszc.org), and we will try to help. Please consider making a donation to Hartford Street Zen Center, realizing that we depend completely on your support. Thank you!

### Design a place in your home to engage in practice -

1. Choose a space that feels good. You want the space to be serene and calm, rather than in the middle of a heavily trafficked area.
2. Keep the room clean and uncluttered.
3. Make it a comfortable temperature but not too warm to where you feel drowsy.
4. Consider the lighting and if any distracting décor is best moved temporarily.
5. You want your meditation area to not be offensive to any of your senses and that includes your sense of smell. If you have your meditation area in a spot that there would be food scents, such as near a kitchen, try to pick a better spot.
6. Be sure you have the right space and equipment for good sitting posture. If you need further details on posture or a refresher please visit this page of our website: <https://hszc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/zazen-posture-2015.pdf>

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### Setting up a Home Alter – (from Soto Net)

This is a formal home alter guide so please feel free to do a variation of the alter outlined below.

#### **The Buddha-altar (Butsudan)**

Within the altar, there is an area where Mt. Sumeru (the mountain at the center of the Buddhist cosmology) is represented and in the center of that area the main image is enshrined. In the same way as a temple's main [Dharma Hall](#), the Buddha-altar is “the temple in the middle of the home”.

#### **Main image (Honzon)**



*Shakyamuni Buddha (center),*

*Dogen Zenji (right),*

*Keizan Zenji (left)*

The main image of Soto [Zen School](#) is the founder of Buddhism, Shakyamuni Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha taught us the best way in which to live our lives and is enshrined within the Buddha-altar. In principle, all that is needed is the image of Shakyamuni Buddha. However, if you have a scroll with the images of Shakyamuni Buddha and the two founders of Soto [Zen School](#) in Japan, [Dogen Zenji](#) and [Keizan Zenji](#), then it is fine to hang that in the center of the Buddha-altar. If there is already an image of Shakyamuni Buddha, then hang the scroll behind that image. (You can even print the image shown above)

### **The significance of the Buddha-altar**

The three fundamentals of Soto [Zen School](#) practice and faith are sitting, [gassho](#), and worship. It is by sitting with a quiet mind, with our hands held together in [gassho](#), and worshipping (expressing our reverence) that we are able to reflect on our everyday lives and practice the teaching of Buddha. Fulfilling this practice brings us peace of mind. To honor our ancestors is to repay our sense of gratitude for having received life from them. This is also to keenly feel that we have inherited not only our individual lives but the life of all things.

### **The way to worship at the Buddha-altar**

With regard to the way to worship at the Buddha-altar, the most important thing to clearly keep in mind is that Shakyamuni Buddha is at the heart of the Buddha-altar. The image of Shakyamuni Buddha is enshrined on the middle of the upper shelf or area of the altar.



The memorial tablets of our ancestors if any are placed to the left and right of Shakyamuni Buddha. Facing the altar, the older tablets are placed on the right side, while newer ones go on the left side. When there are many memorial tablets, there are different ways these can be combined in one tablet, so please consult with your family temple priest about this.

Offerings to both the main image as well as to the ancestors are made as if these beings are present. There are five basic types of offerings: incense, flowers, candles, water, and food (food trays, fruit, sweets, favorite food items, and so forth).

Please offer the food that you eat. Such offerings are not restricted only to rice. In order not to waste the food, please share the food among yourselves after the food has been offered. Also, make sure to offer something to the Buddha-altar whenever you receive a gift of something.

Offerings of tea and water are placed in the center of the middle shelf. In the case where only one container of liquid is used, place the food to the right of it. In the case of two containers of either tea or water, the food is placed between them. Sweets and fruit are arranged in piles on trays with high bases and placed to the left and right of the containers with liquid.

Remember that with regard to incense it isn't smoke we are offering but good fragrance. For those who have difficulty with the scent of incense, try offering incense that is made of other types of herbs.

On the lower shelf of the Buddha-altar, place flower vase, incense burner, and candlestick.

In the drawer below the lowest shelf, place items that are necessary for everyday worship such as a bell, [sutra](#) book, rosary, and so forth. During those times when you are worshipping in front of the Buddha-altar, place the mokugyo drum to the right (if you have one) and the bell to the left. If you only have a bell, place it to your right. When there isn't enough space to put things on the Buddha-altar, it is best to put out a small table in front of the altar.

Resources for products:

Incense; alter objects (supplies sfzc with their incense and sells to hszc at discounted rate) - <https://www.japanincense.com/> - suggestion is search "eihei-ji" for scent of a head Soto temple

Sitting cushions, benches and zendo supplies - <https://www.sfzc.org/practice-centers/city-center/about-city-center/bookstore-gift-shop> - or - <https://www.stillsitting.com/>

Candles for alter - [https://www.etsy.com/market/beeswax\\_taper\\_candles](https://www.etsy.com/market/beeswax_taper_candles)

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you choose to engage in added home practice for 2020  
Thursday, Dec 4 – Sunday, Dec 6

**Day 1 (Thursday, Dec 3)**

**7:30 pm orientation**  
8:00 pm sitting  
8:30 pm retire

**Days 2 to 3 (Friday, Dec 4 to Saturday, Dec 5)**

6:00 am sitting zazen  
6:25 am walking kinhin  
6:35 am sitting  
7:00 am morning chanting  
**7:50 am breakfast**  
8:45 am clean-up & rest  
9:40 am sitting  
10:15 am Dharma talk  
11:00 am walking  
11:15 am sitting  
11:50 am noon chanting  
**12:00 pm lunch**  
12:50 pm clean-up & rest  
1:50 pm work period  
2:50 pm clean up  
3:00 pm sitting  
3:30 pm walking  
3:40 pm sitting  
**4:10 pm tea**  
4:25 pm bath/exercise  
5:10 pm sitting  
5:45 pm walking  
6:00 pm sitting  
6:40 pm evening chanting  
**6:50 pm medicine meal**  
7:25 pm clean-up & rest  
8:00 pm sitting  
8:30 pm Refugees  
8:55 pm sitting  
**9:30 pm hot drink/late sitting**

Please Note: Due to the covid -19 pandemic and sheltering in your homes we are providing the full schedule should you wish to self directed at home observe more retreat time. **The sections highlighted in yellow will be when the Issan-ji temple/Hartford Street Zen Center will be live on zoom** to support each other and connect as best we can using technology including its limitations

**Final Day; Day 4 (Sunday Dec 6)**

Same as preceding days in the morning, until...

11:40 am ceremony set-up  
11:45 am Bodhi Day Ceremony  
**12:00 pm end of retreat**

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