VOLUNTEER MONTHLY

SAN FRANCISCO ZEN CENTER

***First clean, then zazen.* — Suzuki Roshi**

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at SFZC's City Center and/or Green Gulch Farm. We have a variety of volunteer opportunities available and are happy to find one that aligns with your interests, talents, ability, and availability.

Your first step is to fill out the short application form on our website. Once we receive your Volunteer Application, we will connect you with a staff member who will provide more information, answer any questions you may have, and help schedule your first volunteer shift.

Volunteering is a wonderful way to step more deeply into community life and discover more about yourself and your practice. SFZC treasures our volunteers, several who have been coming for years (even decades!) to help bring practice and the teachings of Suzuki Roshi to all who seek them.

Featured volunteer program: Prison Outreach Dharma Friendship Correspondence Program

Contact: sheilasfzc@gmail.com to learn more.

Our Dharma friendship correspondence program is one of the few in the country, and we are receiving more requests than ever before. We need volunteer correspondents for incarcerated people. All correspondence is anonymous for safety.

While we answer every letter, we also strive to match each prison correspondent with a Dharma friend from our sangha to be their designated correspondent. Through this program, we are also able to provide Buddhist books to our incarcerated Dharma friends.

Garden Volunteer Program

Saturday, September 19, 11:20 am–2:30 pm, City Center

Contact: ccgarden@sfzc.org with questions.

For our upcoming volunteer days we'll combine landscaping work with review and testing of the irrigation system as well as maintenance. We will also discuss any future projects/efforts of interest.

Read More on the Blog

Save the Date: Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

Friday, September 18 from 6:30–8:00pm, City Center

Please RSVP to help us prepare.

SFZC will host a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on Friday, September 18, from 6:30–8:00 pm at City Center. All volunteers or those interested in becoming volunteers are warmly welcomed. Let us celebrate you and honor your contributions to the community.

Save the Date: Buddhist Book Sale with Richard Urban pottery

Friday, October 9–Monday, October 19, City Center

Our book and pottery sale is by donation with all proceeds going to fund our Outreach activities. Enjoy browsing the books and Richard Urban's pottery. Note: We are still accepting gently used Buddhist books for this sale—please drop off at the City Center front office.

Socks for Our Neighbors

Saturday, September 19 from 2:00–3:30pm

Join the SFZC Outreach Team in distributing socks and other helpful items. We will begin by unpacking and organizing socks into care kits. Then we will sit together and set our intention, followed by tea and cookies. Those who choose to do so will be paired with a buddy and head out to offer the kits and warm engagement to unhoused folks in the neighborhood.

New pairs of adult-size socks may be brought to this event, dropped at SFZC offices at 300 Page Street on weekdays between 9:30 am and 4:30 pm, or when attending any City Center event. Donated socks should be new and preferably white.
Socks and Hot Hands can also be donated via Amazon; please choose items from this selection of bulk socks and hot hands.

Send to
City Center Attn: Ellen
300 Page St
SF, CA 94102

Open Sangha

Contact: outreach@sfzc.org
Food and Meditation for Our Unhoused Neighbors
Third Monday of the Month, September 21
Food Preparation: 4:00–5:00 pm City Center (Conference Center at 308 Page St.)
Buddhist Service and Food Distribution: 6:00–6:45 pm Civic Center (Leavenworth at Macalister)

Open Sangha is a non-denominational outdoor Buddhist service, held monthly. Everyone is welcome. After service, there is fellowship and a meal. We invite people to participate at any level of comfort. People come as they are, in whatever state they find themselves.

Attendance at meditation is not required to receive a meal or private conversation. CIty Center Outreach hosts the meals and jointly facilitates the service with SF Night Ministry.

Open Sangha is on **Monday September 21**.

Doan Ryo

Weekdays at 5:30 pm and Saturdays at 8:50 am
Contact Michael at ccino@sfzc.org

The Doan Ryo is a collection of people who work closely with the Ino to take care of the meditation hall and help with service. They play the timing instruments, clean the altar, assist the priests, and lead the chanting. Dates and times depend on availability. All are welcome, especially people new to practice. No experience necessary!

Kitchen

Monday–Friday, 9:30 am and/or 4:00 pm
Contact: cctenzo@sfzc.org

We need help in the kitchen! Join the kitchen crew for meal prep and dish washing. Volunteers are welcome to drop in or reach out by email.

Summer Garden

Saturdays, 11:30 am–3:30 pm, contact us for September dates

Contact: ccgarden@sfzc.org

Do you have a green thumb? Or do you just like plants? Come garden at City Center and stay for lunch with the community. For more information, please reach out. This is a drop in event; come and bring a friend!

Saturday Lunch

September 5, September 19 and September 26

Contact: bryan.clark@sfzc.org

Assist temple staff with lunch prep for the sangha after the Saturday program.

Green Gulch Farm

Zendo/Meditation Hall – Spreadsheet & Claude Assistant

A few hours on Sundays, plus some online work

Contact: Reika Bonta, ggflno@sfzc.org

Are you a computer whiz with Claude expertise? We're looking for a skilled volunteer to help streamline our administrative work. A few hours on Sundays—you're welcome to join us for the Dharma talk and lunch—plus occasional online collaboration.

Zendo Care

An hour or two a week, or as available

Contact: Reika Bonta, ggflno@sfzc.org

We're looking for someone to help with the hands-on work of keeping our zendo beautiful and practice-ready: cleaning, assembling oryoki sets, mending zafus, and similar tasks. This role involves bending and occasionally carrying up to 20 pounds.

Kitchen

Wednesday–Sunday, 9:15 am–12:30 pm and 4:00–6:00 pm

Contact: ggftenzo@sfzc.org

Help out in the Green Gulch Farm kitchen. Reach out for more information.

Farm & Garden

Ongoing through the farm season

Contact: Sara Tashker, farm@sfzc.org or Carolyn Cavinaugh, garden@sfzc.org

The farm season has started and we'd love to have your help. You can find more information about volunteering on the farm and sign up for a shift online.

Outreach Opportunities

San Francisco County Jail Meditation

Contact: sheilaSFZC@gmail.com

Volunteers provide meditation instruction and guidance on site once a week. Orientation to the jail is provided by the county and an experienced volunteer is available for consultation.

We are seeking volunteers for this program. If you are interested in learning more and how you might participate, please contact hiro.ikushima@sfzc.org or Ellen Simpson, Outreach Coordinator at outreach@sfzc.org.

Teacher Quote:

““Work … without wasting a moment.”
—Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

For deeper and more intensive service experiences, you are welcome to apply to our residential Apprenticeship Programs such as:

- **City Center Kitchen Apprenticeship**
- **Green Gulch Farm Kitchen Apprenticeship**
- **Green Gulch Farm & Land Steward Apprenticeship**
- **City Center Temple Care Crew**

Or apply to volunteer at a Tassajara Work Period, held in April and September, for specialists in carpentry, plumbing, electrical, gardening, painting, and general maintenance.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering!

Last update: September 2026