



# Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

## *A Center for Mindful Living*

652 17th Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413 • Issue No. 55 • Summer 2021

## Zen in the Time of Zoom

Michael O'Neal

*Zen is making our best effort in each moment, forever.*

—Shunryu Suzuki

A little over a year ago, due to the pandemic, Compassionate Ocean stopped holding in-person programming and shifted entirely to Zoom. It was a big change for us. It was a new way to be together and carry forward our Zen practice, individually and as a community. But in many ways it has worked out pretty well.

Of course, meeting online is not the same as meeting in person. Even if the spoken words are the same, actual in-person contact is infinitely richer than meeting someone on a screen.

Still, there are advantages to Zoom. It's often easier for people to participate from their homes rather than needing to commute. And there are people who just couldn't come to the Center—for reasons of transportation, health, or because they live in another state or country—who have been able to participate, and are grateful.

But because people are participating from their homes, there can be diminished care and attention given to the practice itself. We have habits and expectations about what's appropriate to do in our homes that are different from what we would do at the Center, in an environment dedicated to formal practice.

A central part of our practice—both as Zen practitioners and as responsible human beings—is to bring forward, again and again, an intention to fully engage with what is unfolding now. This is not the same as the culturally-encouraged habit of making our priorities comfort, convenience, and casualness, all filtered through a lens of “what's in it for me.” Zen practice is encouraging something quite different—a habit of rousing and dedicating our life energy to fully engaged living, with a perspective larger than our personal interests.

So what does this have to do with Zoom?

“Making our best effort” doesn't just apply to rare and special circumstances—it is our practice “forever.” So, if we are practicing on Zoom, we want to bring our best effort forward in this environment. Here are some suggestions for how to make the most of our practice on Zoom.

When you come to a Zen activity on Zoom, think of yourself as coming to the zendo (meditation hall), rather than the zendo just appearing on your screen. Think of your space as an extension of the zendo, and act as if you were there.

Do your best to be on time (which means a little early), and to stay until the end of the session.

Dress as you would if you were coming to the zendo, with modesty and dignity.

Avoid eating and drinking during activities (except perhaps a sip of water if needed). Avoid walking around or adjusting your device unnecessarily. Avoid doing other tasks, including writing, that aren't related to our central activity. Maintain a wonderful upright sitting posture, and let your breathing be calm, natural, and unrestricted.

During a period of zazen (sitting meditation), try adjusting your screen so it isn't right in front of your face, which makes it tempting to watch zazen on TV rather than to actually practice it. Place it somewhat at an angle, or angle your seat so you're not facing directly into the screen. But leave your screen on. Zoom is a limited way to be together as it is, and when people turn off their video, it makes it that much more isolating. When we show up on Zoom, it's not just for our sake, but also to support others.

It's best to leave your microphone muted unless you're speaking to the group.

If you live with animals, they can come and go as they like, but it's good for them to learn that your sitting time isn't a time for petting or playing. Animals can learn, and come to appreciate, that a period of silent, still sitting is something that you do from time to time, and they can participate in their own way.

The main point of these suggestions is to encourage us to bring forward our “A” game to our formal Zen practice, even if we're in a home environment. There's no need for this to be a strain, even though it may be an adjustment from how we're accustomed to act at home.

# 2021 Spring Appeal

Dear Friend,

Generosity—the practice of giving—is a central practice in Buddhism.

Through the generosity of donors and other friends over the past year, Compassionate Ocean has been able to keep its doors open—albeit virtually. In a year of physical isolation, uncertainty, and tumult, we are grateful that we have been able to offer stability through online Dharma talks, sittings, Buddhist Studies classes, and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) classes—offering one or more of these activities six days a week.

**As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, we know more than ever that these teachings, this community, and our Guiding Teachers are precious to us.**

**This past year has been a challenge for our Center.** Going online with many of our programs has been a gift when in-person gatherings were not possible, but it resulted in a reduction of some important income. And this spring we took the important step of hiring a part-time Administrative Director, Tara Meade. This has been a long-time need of the Center. Tara is already turning her skills toward addressing important administrative needs that we just haven't had the capacity to take care of, including many that would have fallen on our Guiding Teachers, taking their energy away from their core duties leading practice. Being able to maintain this position is an important component of Compassionate Ocean's sustainability into the future.

**If you are able, please help sustain Compassionate Ocean by contributing to our 2021 Spring Appeal.** A year ago a total of \$26,000 was contributed to our Spring Appeal by a large number of supporters, and this made a huge difference in our Center's financial health. Having similar support this year—when we are again being significantly impacted financially by the pandemic—is very important. Donations of any amount are welcomed and greatly valued.

In times like these we are reminded of our interconnectedness. We are deeply grateful for the strength of our community, and that you are part of it.

With deep appreciation,

**Ramona**

Ramona Advani  
Co-Chairs  
Board of Directors

**Mark**

Mark Ostrander

*Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center  
is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.  
Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.*





# Summer Programs 2021

## Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

652 17th Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413  
(612) 781-7640 • [www.OceanDharma.org](http://www.OceanDharma.org)

### What Is Buddha?

**Taught by Genpo Michael O'Neal and Joen O'Neal**

The word “buddha” means something like “enlightened being.” But what does that mean?

From the time of the Buddha, the term was understood as referring to something more than the body and mind of an individual person. The “Dharma body” of the Buddha was pointed to, and later Buddhist teachers expanded this understanding to include three “bodies” of Buddha.

When Zen became established in China a thousand years after the time of the Buddha, two short poems, famous in Zen history, presented two perspectives on the relationship of “buddha” to our own life and practice, in terms of dualism and non-dualism. And Zen Master Dogen also wrote about the real body of the Buddha.

In this course we will explore “what is Buddha,” grounded in the presentation of Dainin Katagiri Roshi in his book, *The Light that Shines through Infinity*.



**Wednesdays, June 9–July 28 (eight sessions) (#B98)**

**7:00–9:00 p.m.**

**\$185 • members \$165 (fee includes course text\*)**

*\*Deduct \$15 if you already have a copy of the course text *The Light that Shines through Infinity*.*

*Member rates apply to members of all local dharma centers.*

*Reduced fees are offered as needed; please contact the Center.*

**To register, go to [OceanDharma.org](http://OceanDharma.org), or call (612) 781-7640.**

**The fall Buddhist Studies course will be Wednesday evenings, Sept. 22–Nov. 10.**

# Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

## *A Thorough Introduction to Mindfulness Practice*

This program is a comprehensive, well-structured introduction to mindfulness practice in everyday life. It follows the nationally acclaimed MBSR model developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, presenting mindfulness as a universal practice for people of any (or no) religious background.

The program includes instruction and practice in sitting meditation, gentle yoga, body awareness meditation, and daily-life applications of mindfulness. It also includes practices related to stress and relaxation. The program enables participants to develop their own base in mindfulness practice integrated into everyday life.

**#607 via Zoom: Tuesdays**  
**June 8–July 27 • 6:30–9:00 P.M.**  
**Instructor: Joen O’Neal**  
**Location: Zoom**

The course includes eight weekly classes, an individual interview with the instructor, a Saturday retreat, the book *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, four mp3s, and handouts. 27 CEUs are available.

The course fee is \$350, which includes the above materials. Payment plans and some scholarship aid are available. Please contact the Center to discuss.

Enrollment is limited, and pre-registration is required. Please let your friends and colleagues know about this program.

### **Fall MBSR Course Dates**

September 21–November 9



## **Saturday Retreat**

This retreat is open to all current participants in the MBSR Course. It is also open to graduates of past Total Dynamic Living courses on a donation basis. People not enrolled in a current course should call the Center in advance to reserve a space.

**Saturday, July 24 • 9:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M.**

Location: Zoom

**27 CEUs available for nurses, social workers, educators, and psychologists. Contact the Center for details.**

## **Guiding Teachers**



Joen O’Neal and Genpo Michael O’Neal are the Guiding Teachers of Compassionate Ocean Zen Center. They practiced and taught for many years at the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center and Hokyoji Zen Monastery under the guidance of Dainin Katagiri Roshi. They have also practiced with Thich Nhat Hanh in France and the United States, and have completed a training for professionals in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction with Jon Kabat-Zinn. Joen was ordained as a Zen priest by Dainin Katagiri Roshi in 1980 and received Dharma transmission from him in 1989. Michael was ordained as a Zen priest by Rev. Shoken Winecoff in 2018.

*The Guiding Teachers are available for individual meetings regarding life and practice. To set up an appointment, please contact the Center.*

## Meditation and Dharma Talks

### Weekday Morning Meditations

Five mornings a week, Compassionate Ocean hosts a forty-minute zazen (sitting meditation) period followed by a short chanting service, via Zoom. Everyone is invited to participate. There are no prerequisites; people are welcome to come when they wish. There is no fee; donations are welcome. The weekday meditations are led by Michael O’Neal.

#### **Monday–Friday mornings, 7:00-8:00 A.M. via Zoom**

- 7:00 zazen (sitting)
- 7:40 chanting service
- 8:00 ending

### Sunday Gatherings & Dharma Talks

Most Sunday mornings throughout the year Compassionate Ocean offers meditation practice (sitting and walking) followed by a Dharma talk and discussion, via Zoom. The talks focus on aspects of Buddhist teaching and their application to everyday life. Our practice is in the tradition of Soto Zen, with inspiration from the mindfulness practices of Thich Nhat Hahn. Everyone is invited to participate. There are no prerequisites; people are welcome to come when they wish. There is no fee; donations are welcome. The Sunday gathering is co-led by Michael O’Neal and Joen O’Neal.

#### **Sundays, 9:00-11:15 A.M. via Zoom**

- 9:00 sitting
- 9:25 walking
- 9:35 sitting
- 10:00 Dharma talk and discussion
- 11:15 ending

**Note:** *The Sunday gatherings will not take place during the month of August.*

**To request Zoom contact information,  
please contact the Center.**

admin@OceanDharma.org  
612-781-7640

*We will return to in-person programming when  
the pandemic situation becomes truly safe.*

## Sesshin/Days of Zen Practice

### August at Hokoji Zen Practice Community

#### **Seven-day practice period:**

Monday, Aug. 30, 5:00 P.M.–Monday, Sept. 6, 2:00 P.M.

#### **Sesshin only:**

Friday, Sept. 30, 5:00 P.M.–Monday, Sept. 6, 2:00 P.M.

**Location:** Southeastern Minnesota, near New Albin, Iowa  
**Fee:** \$80/night (members \$70/night)

Led by Michael O’Neal, Joen O’Neal, and resident priest Dokai Georgesens.

This practice period offers participants an opportunity to practice mindfulness in community for an extended period. It will include sitting and walking meditation, Dharma talks, study time, yoga, deep relaxation, vegetarian meals, work practice, and Dharma discussion. There will be opportunities for individual meetings with teachers. We will be using the new dormitory and the new practice hall, completed in July 2019. To register, or if you have any questions, contact the Center well in advance.



### September Weekend Retreat

Friday, Sept. 24–Sunday, Sept. 26

Location: 652 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, Minneapolis

### October Weekend Retreat

Friday, Oct. 29–Sunday, Oct. 31

Location: 652 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, Minneapolis

### Rohatsu Week-long Retreat

Wednesday, Dec. 1–Wednesday, Dec. 8

Location: 652 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, Minneapolis

# Meet Our 2021 Board of Directors

## Ramona Advani, Co-Chair



My first introduction to Compassionate Ocean was around 2006 through the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) class taught by Joen. Maybe a year later I took a Buddhist studies class with Michael that sounded interesting,

and from there I've been taking classes steadily ever since. I was honored to join the Board in 2020. Outside of Compassionate Ocean, I am a lawyer, who finds her happy places in yoga, hiking, dancing, reading, writing and spending time with family and friends.

## Amy Knox, Secretary



I started with Compassionate Ocean by taking the Mindfulness class with Joen in 2010. I then took the MBSR class with my husband and daughter. I have been on the Board since 2019. I delivered babies as a midwife for about 20 years

and am currently working as a Women's Health Nurse Practitioner. I love reading, practicing yoga, taking walks, getting out into nature, and spending time with my family.

## Rebecca Kraker



I've been a practicing Buddhist since 2018 but have been on a spiritual journey my whole life. My hobbies are researching the paranormal and creating art on canvases. I'm also a makeup artist and former hair stylist.

## Mark Ostrander, Co-Chair



I have been a Zen practitioner off and on for 25+ years. I joined Compassionate Ocean after taking the MBSR class with Roshi Joen O'Neal in 2017. In addition to Board duties, I

volunteer for a Buddhist study group at the men's correctional facility in Rush City.

## Joshua Rice



My participation with Compassionate Ocean began with the MBSR course in the summer of 2019. My spare time is happily spent writing, reading, and listening to psychedelic rock music. I

enjoy getting exercise through various activities such as biking, climbing, lifting, hiking, and running. Also, I love coffee!

## Alan Rodgers, Treasurer



I joined Compassionate Ocean in 2005, after taking the MBSR course, which I thought was wonderful, from Michael in St. Paul. Recently I retired from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, where I worked as a data

analyst for the Medicaid program. I hope I will be able to make a contribution to Compassionate Ocean in exchange for the big benefit I feel I've received from my participation.

## Richard Sutton, Vice-Chair



My wife Jan and I took the MBSR course from Michael over 25 years ago. We did not become active members at Compassion Ocean until around 6 years ago. I have been a board member since 2016. I am a retired computer

professional, my hobbies are gardening, reading, and North American archeology.

## Joen & Michael O'Neal

The Guiding Teachers also serve on the Board of Directors. See page 4 to learn more about them!

## Meet Our New Staff Member



### Tara Meade, Administrative Director

I began working at Compassionate Ocean in 2021. I am trained as professional flutist and educator, and I enjoy using my creativity and problem-solving skills to support this wonderful community. My hobbies include yoga, biking, reading, minimalism, and attempting DIY home and garden projects.

*Do you have a special skill you are interested in volunteering for future projects (technology, accounting, building repair/maintenance, photography, marketing, music, fundraising, etc.)?*

Please contact Tara at [admin@OceanDharma.org](mailto:admin@OceanDharma.org) to discuss potential **volunteer opportunities**.



A behind-the-scenes look at sangha member Jeff's Zoom meditation space.



A spring MBSR participant practices sitting meditation.



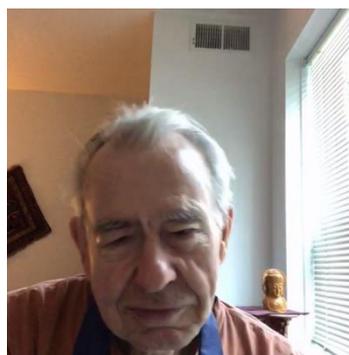
Board member Amy's dog Hazel attends the April Annual Meeting.



Community members wave goodbye to one another following the Dharma talk on Mother's Day.



Michael setting up for the chanting service during the weekday morning practice.



Kelly at the end of a weekday morning meditation.



Joan in the zendo for our Sunday morning gathering on Mother's Day.



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## Summer Zoom Programs

- **Buddhist Studies Course**  
*Wednesdays, 7:00–9:00 P.M.*  
*June 9–July 28*
- **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)**  
*Tuesdays, 6:30–9:00 P.M.*  
*June 8–July 27*
- **MBSR Saturday Retreat**  
*July 24, 9:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M.*
- **Weekday Morning Meditations**  
*Mondays–Fridays, 7:00–8:00 A.M.*
- **Sunday Meditation & Dharma Talks**  
*Sundays, 9:00–11:15 A.M.*

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## Compassionate Ocean During COVID-19

Compassionate Ocean shifted all programming to Zoom in March 2020. We will resume in-person programs when the pandemic situation is truly safe.

### Our current programs include:

- Sunday morning Meditation and Dharma Talks (see p. 5)
- Weekday Morning Meditations (see p. 5)
- Buddhist Studies classes (see p. 3)
- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction classes (see p. 4)

Plus monthly in-person retreats scheduled to begin in August (see p. 5)

To request Zoom meeting information, please contact the Center at [admin@OceanDharma.org](mailto:admin@OceanDharma.org).



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See inside to meet our Board members and our new Administrative Director,  
and to hear about our Spring Appeal.

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