



Compassionate Ocean at a Quarter Century

Genpo Michael O'Neal

January 2025 marks 25 years since Compassionate Ocean was formally founded. We plan to celebrate this milestone with special events throughout the coming year.

Our Center is named after Jikai Dainin Katagiri, one of the great pioneer teachers who brought Zen to the West. Katagiri Roshi (“roshi” means something like “esteemed elder teacher”) was given the name “Jikai” when he was ordained as a priest. “Ji-kai” means “compassion-ocean.” It can be understood as “ocean of compassion;” it can also be understood as “compassionate ocean,” which is what is emphasized in the name of our Center. The ocean that is referred to is reality itself, and it is compassionate in the sense that it makes everything possible; it is constantly giving Being itself. It is worthy of our deep respect and appreciation. This is every moment of our lives.

Compassionate Ocean began informally about five years before we were incorporated. Joen had met Jon Kabat-Zinn when he came to town to lead a workshop. She told him about a little program she had developed, “Talk, Tea, and Meditation,” that was designed to help people who were struggling with difficult medical and life issues. Jon suggested she come to the Northeast and check out the program he and his colleagues had developed, called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Joen did just that at a weeklong training Jon gave, and greatly appreciated what she found. When she came back she offered MBSR at the First Unitarian Society as a benefit for the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center. The program was a great success, and several

of the participants wanted to continue to work with Joen. She told them, “Well, what I really have to offer is my Zen practice.” From there the group that is now Compassionate Ocean was born. The following year Michael did the same training with Jon Kabat-Zinn, and he also began offering MBSR. Since then Michael and Joen have taught the program more than 100 times each, and close to three thousand people have gone through the program with us.

From the beginning Joen and Michael felt the importance of practicing as a sangha (community). From that initial group of a few people came “graduate classes” in Buddhist teachings, weekly sangha gatherings with meditation and a talk, sesshins (retreats), lay ordinations, and other Zen practices. Joen and Michael also felt the value of having a grounded home space, rather than just using

borrowed space for brief periods of time. In 2002 the community purchased a building in northeast Minneapolis and began renovating it. The renovation was completed in 2014 and we have been practicing there since—ten years now. It’s a beautiful practice space, and we are enormously grateful to have it as our home.

Zen, as an expression of the Buddha way, is always bigger than we imagine. It is always “waiting” for us

to enter more deeply. When we do this, we ourselves become deeper and bigger and more whole. We come home to our true self, and live our lives on this basis. This is what a Zen center is for, and what Compassionate Ocean is dedicated to.

May our Center and our community be of benefit to innumerable beings, now and far into the future!



Joen and Michael O'Neal teaching at the First Unitarian Society, circa 2000.

2024 Year-End Appeal

Dear Friend,

As a turbulent year comes to a close, we find ourselves at a moment of reflection, much like the stillness that arises in meditation. If we were to reflect upon what Compassionate Ocean means to us, what would we see?

Maybe it is a sense of gratitude that such a place exists as part of our lives, a place where we are supported in our deep desire to cultivate wisdom and compassion. Maybe it is the memory of a particular class or a particular talk that lifted us in a time of real need. Maybe it is the way Compassionate Ocean's activities have enriched the life of someone close to us. Whatever your experience, we trust that it has been one you value for its impact and uniqueness.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we invite you to join in sustaining this precious place of practice. **Your generosity makes it possible for Compassionate Ocean to continue offering classes, meditation sessions, Dharma talks, retreats, and community events that benefit all who cultivate the path of awakening.**

At this time, would you make a donation to sustain Compassionate Ocean's offerings? Whether you are new to the community or have been part of Compassionate Ocean for many years, your support is truly important.

Our goal for this Year-End Appeal is \$30,000, a little more than we received last year. This year-end fundraising represents about a quarter of our total income for the year, and it is vitally important for the financial strength of our Center.

No contribution is too small, and every donation is deeply appreciated. Generosity is the lifeblood of our Zen Center, and *your* generosity will make it possible to continue sharing the profound benefits of mindfulness and meditation with all who seek it.

Thank you for being a part of our community and for your ongoing support!

With deep gratitude,


Ramona Advani
Co-Chairs, Board of Directors


Mark Ostrander



Donations can be mailed in the enclosed envelope, or you can contribute online at www.oceanzen.org. Compassionate Ocean Zen Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Perception and Reality

Taught by Genpo O'Neal, with Joen O'Neal



“Within our store consciousness, we have direct access to reality, to suchness. At the root, the store, lies the basic wisdom in every one of us that has the capacity of directly touching reality in itself....But often, when we experience something with one of our senses, we have a preconditioned feeling of either attachment or aversion based on prior experience. We classify things according to the boxes we already have in our store consciousness....That’s why most of the time we don’t have direct access to reality.”

—Thich Nhat Hanh
Buddha Mind, Buddha Body

This course will explore the nature of consciousness and of mind states, using Thich Nhat Hanh’s presentation of classic Buddhist psychology as our guide. Topics will include perception and reality, habit energy, free will, and the cultivation of happiness. It will also include a study of the 51 mental formations, as developed in Yogacara Buddhism.

Each class will include zazen (sitting practice), presentations by the instructor, and discussion.

Course Text: *Buddha Mind, Buddha Body* by Thich Nhat Hanh.

Wednesdays, Jan. 22–Mar. 12

(8 sessions) (#B112)

7:00–9:00 p.m.

This course will be held in-person at the Center, with an option for remote participation via Zoom.

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

**Deduct \$15 if you obtain your own copy of the text.
Member rates apply to members of all local Buddhist centers.
Reduced fees are offered as needed;
please contact the Center at (612) 781-7640.*

www.oceanzen.org/buddhist-studies



Introductory Program in Mindfulness

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

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.

Skills are introduced in class, practiced at home, and integrated to form new habits. The program enables participants to develop their own base in mindfulness integrated into everyday life, using the practices of:

- sitting meditation
- gentle yoga
- body awareness meditation
- daily-life applications of mindfulness
- stress and relaxation practice

What's included:

- an individual interview with the instructor
- eight two-and-a-half hour classes
- a six-hour Saturday retreat
- a copy of the book *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- four mp3 guided meditations
- weekly handouts

27 CEUs are available for nurses, social workers, educators, and psychologists.

The course fee is \$350, which includes the above materials. Payment plans and limited need-based support are available. Please contact the Center to discuss.

Enrollment is limited, and pre-registration is required.



Tuesdays,
Jan. 21–Mar. 11
6:30–9:00 P.M.
(eight sessions) (#619)

Instructor:

Genpo O'Neal

Genpo has been teaching this course since 1995.

*This course will be offered **entirely on Zoom.***



Day of Mindfulness Retreat

Saturday, March 8, 9:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M.

This retreat is part of the MBSR program and is included for all current participants in the MBSR course. It is also open to graduates of past Compassionate Ocean MBSR courses on a donation basis. People not enrolled in the current course should visit www.oceanzen.org/retreats to register.

What past participants have said about this course

"This course helped me find tools and balance in a time in my life when I'm doing a lot of hard emotional work."

"The eight-week mindfulness class helped lower my stress and alleviate some pain issues. My mother was so impressed by the changes in me that she signed up too!"

"This course made me feel more comfortable maintaining a meditation practice, especially within a community setting. I in general feel calmer and am able to show up more fully throughout my life."

Future MBSR Course Dates

Spring: Apr. 1 – May 20, 2025

Summer: Jun. 10 – Jul. 29, 2025

Fall: Sep. 23 – Nov. 11, 2025

*These courses will be offered **entirely in person** at the Center.*

www.oceanzen.org/mindfulness

New to Zen?

Newcomers are always welcome to participate; the boxed activities are especially for you!

Meditation & Dharma Talks

Most Sunday mornings throughout the year, Compassionate Ocean offers meditation practice (sitting and walking) followed by a Dharma talk and discussion. 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.

Join us in person or on Zoom. Everyone is invited; there are no prerequisites. There is no fee; donations are welcome.

Sundays, 9:00-11:15 A.M.

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

Welcome Sessions for New People

Guided meditation instruction and a Dharma talk oriented to those newer to Compassionate Ocean or Zen will be presented at these Sunday morning programs. These welcome sessions provide extra orientation and are a great time to bring a friend to attend the Sunday morning program for the first time.

(In-person and via Zoom)

- Sunday, Jan. 19, 9:00–11:15 A.M.
- Sunday, Mar. 2, 9:00–11:15 A.M.

Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Courses

- Mondays, Jan. 27 & Feb 3, 7:00-9:00 P.M.
- Mondays, Mar. 3 & 10, 7:00-9:00 P.M.

This two-session introduction to Zen meditation and related practices is a starting point for those curious about or new to Zen. In it, guiding teacher Genpo O'Neal discusses Zen and its place in Buddhism and human life, information about Compassionate Ocean Zen Center, and instruction in sitting meditation. There is no fee.

To register: www.oceanzen.org/intro-to-zen

Weekday Morning Meditation

Five mornings a week, Compassionate Ocean hosts a forty-minute zazen (sitting meditation) period followed by a short chanting service. Everyone is invited to participate. There are no prerequisites; people are welcome to come when they wish. There is no fee.

Monday–Friday, 7:00–8:15 A.M.

(In-person and via Zoom)

- 7:00 zazen (sitting)
- 7:40 chanting service
- 8:00 ending (or stay for temple cleaning)



Sesshins (Retreats)

A *sesshin* (literally, “to gather the mind”) is a time when formal Zen practice is our primary focus. Sometimes these are informally called “retreats,” but in actuality they involve going forward into the heart of our lives.

Each sesshin offers an extended opportunity to settle the mind and body and open to the deep wisdom of human life. These are excellent opportunities to strengthen and deepen the practice of presence, including supporting and being supported by others. Sesshins are led by Genpo and Joen O’Neal.

Sesshins are open to community members as well as others who have had some experience with Buddhist practice and meditation.

Weekend Sesshins

- Friday, Jan. 24, 7:00 P.M.–Sunday, Jan. 26, noon
- Friday, Feb. 28, 7:00 P.M.–Sunday, Mar. 2, noon
- Friday, Mar. 28, 7:00 P.M.–Sunday, Mar. 30, noon

These weekend sesshins include sitting and walking meditation, a Dharma talk, a work period, and an opportunity to meet with a teacher. Each weekend sesshin also includes four vegetarian meals.

Fee: by donation. **To register:** www.oceanzen.org/retreats

Getting to Know Katagiri Roshi

Dainin Katagiri was a Zen master who helped bring Soto Zen Buddhism from Japan to the United States in the 1970's and '80's. He was the founding teacher of the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center (MZMC) in Minneapolis and Hokyo-ji Zen Practice Community in southeastern Minnesota. Compassionate Ocean's guiding teachers, Joen and Genpo O'Neal, were students of his.

If you are part of the Compassionate Ocean community, you are inheriting the results of Katagiri Roshi's great efforts to spread understanding of the Dharma in the Midwest and beyond.

Here are some online resources that enable you to learn directly from his teachings.

Katagiri Project: Audio Archives

mnzcenter.org/the-dainin-katagiri-audio-archive

The website of the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center offers free audio recordings of dharma talks that Katagiri Roshi gave between May, 1979 and January, 1989. In his talks he offered an extensive survey of Buddhist teachings, including talks on core sutras like

the Diamond Sutra, cases from the Blue Cliff Record, and talks on basic topics like karma, zazen, and impermanence. His core theme was the teachings of Zen Master Dogen.

Katagiri Transcripts

katagiritranscripts.net

In a multi-year project, Rev. Kikan Michael Howard is transcribing the dharma talks of Dainin Katagiri Roshi from the recordings available at the MZMC website. The recordings are a valuable resource, but they were originally recorded on cassette tape in the 1980s and can be difficult to understand.

The written transcriptions have only been lightly edited, so you can listen along to the recordings with the transcripts in hand, or just study the transcripts on their own.

Katagiri Project: Biography

mnzcenter.org/biography-and-lineage.html

Interested in learning more about the life of Karagiri Roshi? Andrea Martin wrote a biographical essay, *Ceaseless Effort: The Life of Dainin Karagiri*. This essay is available to download for free from the MZMC website.



Katagiri Roshi surrounded by some of his students at one of the first practice periods at Hokyoji in the early 1980s. Compassionate Ocean founding teacher Joen O'Neal is to Katagiri Roshi's left. Others present include Reverends Myo-on Susan Hagler, Dokai Georges, Shoken Winecoff, and Byakuren Judith Ragir.

In Remembrance

Vince Grundman (1952–2024)

Vince Grundman, a long-time member of the Compassionate Ocean community, recently died from injuries sustained in a bicycle accident.

Vince became acquainted with Compassionate Ocean 25 years ago, when he participated in a meditation group led by Joen O’Neal at his church, Unity-Unitarian, in St. Paul.

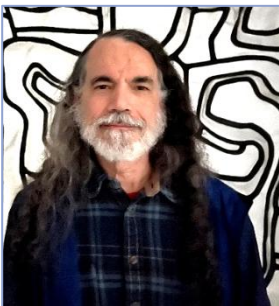
Over time Vince became more and more involved at Compassionate Ocean, regularly attending MBSR and Buddhist Studies classes, Sunday Dharma talks, sesshins, and volunteering in many ways whenever a need arose. Last spring, he was elected to the Board of Directors and had taken on the role of treasurer.

Vince had a steady, calm, generous presence that will be dearly missed at Compassionate Ocean.



Vince Grundman

Board of Directors News



Chuck Caldarale

The Board of Directors has selected Chuck Caldarale to fill the position left open by the passing of Vince Grundman. Chuck will also take on the position of Treasurer. He has been a friend of Compassionate Ocean for several years, and has been serving as bookkeeper and on the Finance Committee.

The board now consists of Mark Ostrander and Ramona Advani, co-chairs; Alex Murkve, secretary; Chuck Caldarale, treasurer; and at-large members Libby Donahue, Ben Durrant, and Lisa Boesen. Genpo and Joen are also on the Board in their capacity as Guiding Teachers.

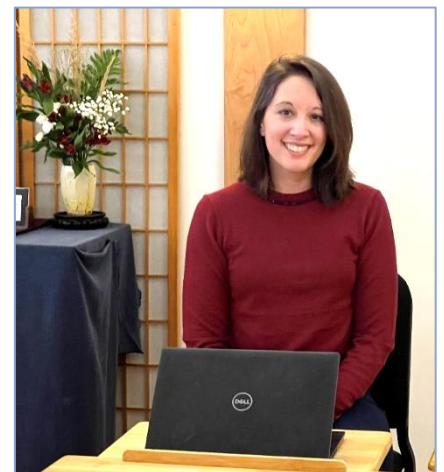
Great North Innocence Project

Hayley Poxleitner of the Great North Innocence Project (GNIP) was a guest speaker at Compassionate Ocean on Sunday, November 24. Hayley and her husband, Zac, took our MBSR class in 2023.

The Great North Innocence Project works to free wrongfully convicted people from prison and to prevent wrongful convictions from occurring in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Hayley’s talk featured the moving story of Cassandra Black Elk, a mother wrongfully convicted of killing her infant daughter. This case illustrates how such a thing could happen and the ramifications for Cassi, her loved ones, and for all of us.

Learn more about Cassi and the work of the GNIP at greatnorthinnocenceproject.org.



Hayley Poxleitner



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Get Involved

1

Participate in a program at the Center or via Zoom

2

Volunteer to help with a project or special event



3

Invite a friend to join you, or tell them about our Center

4

Donate to our Year-End Appeal

To report an address change, unsubscribe, or request an email version of the newsletter, go to www.oceanzen.org/mailings, or call 612-781-7640.

Mindfulness



Refer a friend to our **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)** Program.

Many long-time community members discovered Compassionate Ocean through our MBSR program. Referrals are a major way for people to hear about this exceptional course.

The **Winter 2025 Course** will be held **entirely on Zoom**, beginning **January 21**.

*(The spring, summer, and fall courses will be held entirely **in person** at the Center.)*

If you know someone **anywhere in the world** who might benefit from this course, please encourage them to visit

www.oceanzen.org/mindfulness

(See page 4 for more information.)