



## Practices for Connection and Compassion

Lisa Boesen

This past summer's *Engaging with Aging* class introduced a variety of practices to help us incorporate Buddhist teachings into our everyday lives. Since all of us have been aging since the moment we were born, these exercises can be beneficial whatever our age. Class members found the mindfulness practices below, which highlight our interconnectedness, particularly helpful.

### Gratitude Walk

During our Sunday meditation sessions, we perform *kinhin*—walking meditation—to cultivate awakening and mindfulness as we move. A variation of this practice is a gratitude walk. During this walking meditation, we bring awareness to things we encounter that spark gratitude.

Ideally, our gratitude walk would be outside, in nature: a bird's song, a gentle rain, a tree's shade on a hot day may all elicit our appreciation. If walking in the city, we may be grateful for the driver who slows down to let you cross the street, or for a playful puppy anxious to enthusiastically greet everyone. You may also begin to appreciate how good it feels just to be able to walk, to stretch your limbs; you may appreciate that your back isn't hurting today (even if your wrist does).

**You carry Mother Earth within you.... In that insight of interbeing, it is possible to have real communication with the Earth, which is the highest form of prayer.**

Thich Nhat Hanh

Often being in nature nurtures feelings of connection. I remember walking on the ocean shore one quiet night and noticing the rhythm of the waves, soft sand below, bright stars above. I felt the awe of both my

insignificance in our amazing universe and my deep connection to it.

### Just Like Me

This simple mindfulness practice reminds us how alike we humans are and helps us look upon others with compassion.

**When you produce a thought that is full of understanding, forgiveness, and compassion, that thought will immediately have a healing effect on both your physical and mental health and on those around you.**

**If you think a thought that is full of judgment and anger, that thought will immediately poison your body and mind and the people around you.**

Thich Nhat Hanh

The version the summer class used is described in *Wise Aging: Living with Joy, Resilience, & Spirit* by Rabbi Rachel Cowan and Dr. Linda Thal. When we discover ourselves judging others, we simply add "just like me sometimes" to whatever we are thinking. For example, "He can be so annoying...just like me sometimes." "She's so rude...just like me sometimes." Or even, "She is so kind...just like me sometimes."

As I have tried this practice over the summer, I've found that it increases awareness of my judging mind; it increases my empathy for the person I was judging; and by saying "sometimes," it reminds me that the person I'm judging isn't *always* annoying or rude. We can do this practice in any moment.

# Welcome to Compassionate Ocean

## Open House

Everyone is warmly invited to the Center's **Open House** on **Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>** from **1:00–3:00 P.M.**, to celebrate the start of our Fall programs. Compassionate Ocean offers opportunities for meditation practice, Dharma talks, Buddhist Studies classes, and courses on mindfulness practice (MBSR). We have an ADA accessible building.

- Tour the Center
- Learn about our programs
- Meet our guiding teachers and community members
- Enjoy refreshments

People who have a connection with Compassionate Ocean are invited to serve as hosts for this event, which will welcome newcomers and current participants alike. For information on volunteering, email or call the Center.



## Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Course

This is a two-session introduction to Zen meditation and related practices. This mini-course will be offered twice this fall:

**Mondays, Sep. 15 & 22, 7:00–9:00 P.M.**

**Mondays, Nov. 3 & 10, 7:00–9:00 P.M.**

Sessions are held in person at the Center. Guiding Teacher Michael O'Neal will lead this program, intended to be a starting point for those curious about or new to Zen. There is no fee; pre-registration is required. To register, email [admin@OceanZen.org](mailto:admin@OceanZen.org), call (612) 781-7640, or sign up on our website ([www.oceanzen.org/intro-to-zen](http://www.oceanzen.org/intro-to-zen)).

## Welcome Session for New People

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

**Sunday, September 14, 9:00—11:15 A.M.**

**Sunday, November 16, 9:00—11:15 A.M.**

*In-person and via Zoom*

## 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 and Genpo are ordained Zen priests. Both have received Dharma transmission.

**The Guiding Teachers are available for individual meetings regarding life and practice.**

To set up an appointment, please contact the Center.



## Fall Programs 2025

### Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

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

## The Heart Sutra

*Opening to Great Wisdom and Compassion*

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

*Wisdom and compassion are the two main aspects of Buddhism and must always go together. Without wisdom, compassion doesn't work, and without compassion wisdom has no meaning. This sutra is about the wisdom that sees emptiness.*

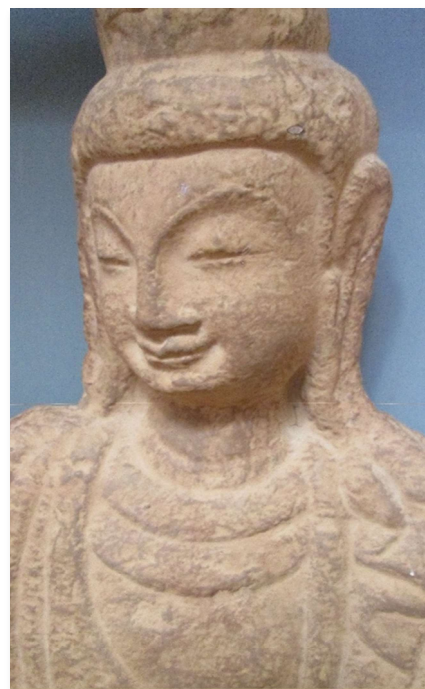
*The difference between ordinary and wise is not a difference in the quality of a person's intelligence. It's a difference in the attitude with which they meet things in their daily life*

—Shohaku Okumura, *Living by Vow*

One of the major presentations of Buddhist insight is the *Heart Sutra*. Only one page long, it is chanted daily at Zen centers around the world, including ours, and is deeply respected and studied in many Buddhist traditions.

In this course, we will explore this key teaching through two commentaries—one by a Japanese abbot writing a century ago, and one by a contemporary Zen teacher in America. Both emphasize the insight of emptiness as a central practice of compassion, manifesting in daily life.

**Course Texts:** *Living by Vow* by Shohaku Okumura and *A Second Zen Reader* edited by Trevor Leggett



**Wednesdays, Sep. 24 – Nov. 12**

**(8 sessions) (#B115)**

**7:00–9:00 p.m.**

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

[www.oceanzen.org/buddhist-studies](http://www.oceanzen.org/buddhist-studies)

**\$195 • members \$175  
(fee includes course texts\*)**

*\*Deduct \$25 if you obtain your own copy of the two texts.*

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

*Reduced fees are offered as needed; please contact the Center at (612) 781-7640.*

# 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.

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. Contact the Center for details.

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



**Tuesdays,  
Sept. 23–Nov. 11 (#622)**

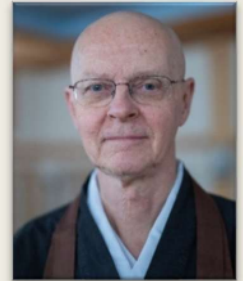
**6:30–9:00 P.M.**

**652 17th Ave. NE, Minneapolis**

*Offered in-person only*

**Instructor:**

**Michael O'Neal**



Enrollment is limited, and preregistration is required. Register early to enable scheduling of the pre-course interview.

## **Day of Mindfulness Retreat Saturday, Nov. 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](http://www.oceanzen.org/retreats) to register.

### *What past participants have said about this course*

*"I feel more relaxed and centered, more accepting of myself and others."*

*"The eight-week mindfulness class is an excellent way to both introduce and deepen this practice. It helped lower my stress and alleviate some pain issues. My mother was so impressed by the changes in me that she signed up too!"*

*"Very, very meaningful and wonderful instructors and classmates. Life-changing experience."*

*"One of the most important things I've done in years."*

If you know **someone who might benefit** from this program, please share this information and direct them to [www.oceanzen.org/mindfulness](http://www.oceanzen.org/mindfulness)

### ***Future MBSR Course Dates***

**Winter:** Jan. 20—Mar. 10, 2026 (Zoom only)

**Spring:** March 31—May 19, 2026 (In-person only)



## Meditation and Dharma Talks

### Sunday Meditation & Dharma Talk

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. No fee; donations are welcome.

**Sundays, 9:00-11:15 A.M.** (resumes Sept. 7 after an August break)

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

### Welcome Sessions

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

- **Sunday, September 14, 9:00—11:15 A.M.**
- **Sunday, November 16, 9:00 – 11:15 A.M.**

*In-person and via Zoom*

### Weekday 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; donations are welcome. In-person and via Zoom.

**Monday–Friday, 7:00-8:00 A.M.**

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

### Introduction to Zen Mini-Course

A two-part introduction to Zen meditation and related practices. Presented by Michael O'Neal. Free; pre-registration is required. In-person only.

**Mondays, Sep. 15 & 22 or Nov. 3 & 10  
7:00-9:00 P.M.**

## Sesshins (Retreats)

Retreats are open to community members as well as others who have had some experience with Buddhist practice and meditation. Each retreat 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 benefiting from the support of others. Sesshins are in-person only.

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

### Weekend Sesshins

- **Friday, Sep. 26, 7:00 P.M.–Sunday, Sep. 28, noon**
- **Friday, Oct. 24, 7:00 P.M.–Sunday, Oct. 26, noon**

Led by Michael and Joen O'Neal, 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. By donation. Se

[www.oceanzen.org/retreats](http://www.oceanzen.org/retreats)

### Rohatsu: Buddha's Enlightenment Sesshin

- **Monday, Dec. 1, 7:00 P.M. – Mon., Dec. 8, 11:00 P.M.**

Led by Michael and Joen O'Neal

The December Rohatsu (“eighth day”) sesshin commemorates and reenacts the seven days of meditation culminating in the enlightenment of the Buddha, traditionally celebrated on Dec. 8. Rohatsu sesshins take place at Zen centers throughout the world at this time. This sesshin offers a special opportunity to touch the depth of human life, supporting and being supported by innumerable beings.

If this will be your first sesshin with us, please call Michael at Compassionate Ocean in advance to discuss.

Full participation is encouraged; however, there is the option to register for less than the full seven days. Please contact Michael.

To register for Rohatsu sesshin, go to:

[www.oceanzen.org/rohatsu](http://www.oceanzen.org/rohatsu)

# 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events

## Flowing Like a River *An Evening of Music and Poetry*

Last June, community members enjoyed a remarkable evening of music and poetry at Compassionate Ocean as we continued to celebrate our 25th anniversary year.



Adam Kuenzel and Davu Seru treat the audience to an impromptu duet.



Attendees were greeted by an exterior sound installation and a building bedecked in prayer flags.



Poet Wang Ping read from her new book, accompanied by her collaborator, Jeff Lambert.



Above: Sangha member Juhl Kuhlemeier-Sarao (left) and Megan Reinhardt were accompanied by Hunter Gibbons on guitar.

(Photos courtesy of Rebecca Pavlenko and Lisa Boesen)



Father-daughter duo Double Dragon was warmly received by the audience.



## Upcoming 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event: Community Dinner

All members and friends of Compassionate Ocean—from its inception to the present day—are warmly invited to attend the final celebration of Compassionate Ocean's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

A community dinner and program will be held Saturday evening, October 4 at the Zen Center. Admission is free; pre-registration is required.

Watch [www.oceanzen.org/banquet](http://www.oceanzen.org/banquet) for more information.



**Save the Date:**  
**Saturday, October 4**  
Community dinner and  
program

## The Zen of Oz

In early August, Compassionate Ocean presented “The Zen of Oz” at the Heights Theater in Columbia Heights. After welcoming remarks by event co-chair Hayley Poxleitner, guiding Teacher Michael Genpo O’Neal offered a short talk highlighting elements of Zen teachings reflected in the classic 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*. After watching the movie, attendees were treated to a catered reception in the theater lobby.



Michael Genpo O'Neal on stage at the Heights Theater



Event co-chairs Hayley Poxleitner and Rebecca Alex



Joan O'Neal and Sosan Flynn



Mark Ostrander socializes with others after the film.

(Photos courtesy of Rebecca Pavlenko, Zac Poxleitner, and Lisa Boesen)



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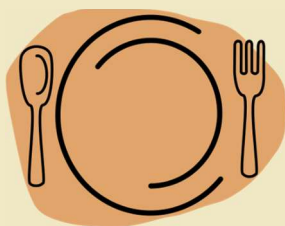
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# All are welcome.

## 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event

Saturday, October 4

Community dinner and program



No fee; registration required.



## Fall Open House

Saturday, September 13, 1:00–3:00 P.M.

*Tour the center, learn about our programs, meet our Guiding Teachers*



## Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Courses

Monday evenings, Sep. 15 & 22 or Nov. 3 & 10

*A two-part introduction to Zen meditation and related practices*



## Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Course

Tuesday evenings, Sep 23 – Nov. 11

*A thorough introduction to mindfulness practice*



## The Heart Sutra: Opening to Great Wisdom and Compassion

Wednesday evenings, Sep. 24 – Nov. 12

*Buddhist Studies course exploring key teachings from a sutra that is revered worldwide*



## Sesshins

Weekend: Sept 26 – 28 • Weekend: Oct. 24 – Oct 26 • Rohatsu: Dec. 1 – 8

*Special opportunities to deepen our practice*