



Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

A Center for Mindful Living

652 17th Avenue NE, , Minneapolis, MN 55413 • Issue No. 50 • Fall 2018

Three Elements of Zen

by Michael O'Neal

People who take our introductory course in mindfulness are often curious about what else we do at our Zen center. What is Zen practice all about, anyway? In one sense Zen practice is very simple and straightforward; in another sense it is rather exceptional. In this article I would like to talk about three elements that I think are strongly characteristic of Zen.

The first is *dwelling beyond thought*. This is done most directly in zazen, which literally means “sitting zen.” It’s often translated as “sitting meditation,” but this can be misleading because there are so many ways to practice meditation. Also, everyone seems to have preconceptions about what “meditation” is.

Usually meditation involves concentrating on some object, or perhaps deeply regarding some aspect of our experience. Zazen can include this, but fundamentally zazen is about becoming familiar and at home with dwelling beyond thinking. “Beyond thinking” is a provisional way of expressing being free from being caught by thoughts, including all the various fabrications of the mind such as stories, beliefs, fantasies, worries, emotional states, etc., etc.

This doesn’t mean trying to “empty” or “clear” the mind; it’s not making an enemy out of any of the activities of the mind, but it does mean not taking it so seriously, as the all-important central focus of our being. Usually we are at least half-mesmerized by whatever the mind is cooking up at a given moment; we stare at our mental proliferations with an inner glazed eye, captivated by its endless variations.

In zazen, we practice opening the grasping hand of thought. When we do this, we discover that we are not left with nothing, but with “something” that is vivid, rich, and nourishing. It is our true home. If we are estranged from this dimension of our being, we are truly impoverished. So Zen practice is about claiming our homeland, becoming familiar with dwelling beyond thought.

But thinking is a central aspect of being human—a truly amazing accomplishment. Recently I looked up at the moon and was freshly astonished that we humans have visited there. What other species could even imagine such a thing? Our ability to travel to the moon is due to our capacity for thought. And yet, our thinking mind also causes untold suffering for ourselves and others. The ability of the thinking mind to divide the world up into pieces and then act on that basis is at the same time both enormously beneficial and enormously destructive. In Zen practice, through Dharma talks and other forms of study and discussion, we explore how to relate to our thinking mind skillfully and appropriately. We do this on an unexpected basis—through an intimacy with what is beyond thought. So these two elements work together—dwelling beyond thought, and dwelling with thought.

The third element I’ll mention here is *dwelling with others*. This is an absolutely central aspect of Zen practice, and one which people tend to overlook. After all, “meditation” seems like an individual activity, as does study and thinking about Buddha Dharma. But Zen practice really comes alive only in the context of sharing our lives with others—dedicating ourselves to something larger and more inclusive than our individual desires and preferences. There is something deeply moving when we accept ourselves as part of a community of practitioners, opening to a kind of love and loving appreciation of those we find sitting and talking and working beside us. Each of us is indescribably peculiar, and that’s OK—it’s actually wonderful. At a Zen center we are practicing under a very large intention, and it’s a treasure to discover that there are others who have come to dwell here as well.

So these are three core elements of Zen practice. We could talk about many others, but these seem to me to permeate our practice. As for what we actually *do* at our Zen center—please look inside this newsletter!

Buddhist Studies Series

Essential Zen Teachings

Fall 2018: Entrance to the Buddha Way

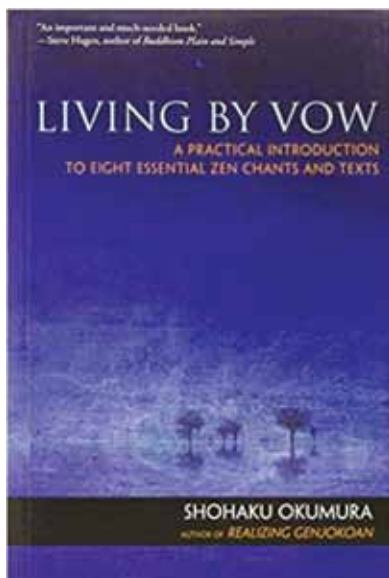
Winter 2019: Heart of Great Perfect Wisdom

Spring 2019: Branching Streams Flow in the Dark

In this year's Buddhist Studies program we will explore together a number of Zen texts that are a central part of practice at Zen centers throughout the world. These texts, all of them quite brief, express the intentions, practices, and insights of someone dedicated to living an awakened and engaged life for the benefit of all—that is, a bodhisattva.

Our core text for the year will be *Living by Vow: A Practical Introduction to Eight Essential Zen Chants and Texts* by Shohaku Okumura. After Katagiri Roshi's death in 1990, Okumura Roshi was the interim head teacher at the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center for three years. It was during this period that many local Zen students, including Joen and Michael, became acquainted with Okumura Roshi. Now residing in Indiana, Okumura Roshi is a deeply respected Zen teacher, writer, translator, and practitioner. He has an exceptional ability to bridge the history and culture of Zen in the East with contemporary America.

The book *Living by Vow* is a commentary on eight Zen texts, and is based on a series of lectures Okumura Roshi gave at the Minnesota Zen Center during his residency there, with many references to our local Zen community and practices. "Living by Vow" is a translation of *Ganshoji*, the temple name of the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center chosen by Katagiri Roshi.



Shohaku Okumura in his study



Fall Programs 2018

Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

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

Essential Zen Teachings

Entrance to the Buddha Way

Taught by Michael and Joen O'Neal



This course will explore a number of ways the heart of Zen practice is expressed and actualized by studying six collections of short chants used at Zen centers throughout the world. Together, these texts express, in a deep and comprehensive way, how we can live in a deeply grounded, engaged, and satisfying way.

These chants include the Four Bodhisattva Vows, the Verse of the Robe, the Verse of Repentance, the Three Refuges, the Three Collective Pure Precepts, and the Ten Prohibitory Precepts.

The course will include meditation, lecture, and discussion, with a special emphasis on bringing these teachings alive in our day-to-day lives. Our texts will be *Living by Vow* by Shohaku Okumura and *The Good Life* by Cheri Huber.

Wednesdays, Sept. 26-Nov. 14 (eight sessions) (#B87)

7:00–9:00 p.m.

\$185 (members \$165) (includes course 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.

To register, use the form on page 6 or go to www.OceanDharma.org.

Center for Mindful Living: Programs in Mindfulness

Total Dynamic Living - An Eight-Week Program in Mindfulness and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Total Dynamic Living is a thorough, well-structured introduction to mindfulness practice in everyday life. It follows the nationally acclaimed mindfulness-based stress reduction (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 information about stress and relaxation. The program enables participants to develop their own base in mindfulness practice integrated into everyday life.

Note: All classes include a one-day retreat in Minneapolis.

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 CDs, and handouts. 27 CEUs are available for all courses.

The course fee is \$295 plus a \$35 materials fee. 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.

#197 Minneapolis: Tuesdays

Sept. 25-Nov. 13

Instructor: Joen O'Neal

Location: Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

652 17th Ave. NE, Minneapolis (in the Northeast Arts District)

#278 St. Paul: Thursdays

Sept. 27-Nov. 15 • 6:30-9:00 P.M.

Instructor: Michael O'Neal

Location: Clouds in Water Zen Center

445 Farrington St., St. Paul (near University Ave. and Western Ave.)

Total Dynamic Living: One-Day Retreat

This retreat is open to all current participants in Total Dynamic Living courses. 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, November 10 • 9:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M.

Location: 652 17th Ave. NE, Minneapolis



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

Guiding Teachers



Michael O'Neal and Joen O'Neal

Joen O'Neal and 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 with Jon Kabat-Zinn. Joen was ordained as a Zen priest by Katagiri Roshi in 1980 and received Dharma transmission from him in 1989. Michael was ordained as a Zen priest in May of this year.

The guiding teachers are available for individual meetings regarding life and practice. To set up an appointment, call the Center.

Volunteers are welcomed and needed to help sustain and grow Compassionate Ocean. Special areas for volunteer help are the Finance Committee, Publicity and Promotion Committee, and Fundraising Committee. People to help take care of our building (cleaning, etc.) are also needed. Please contact the Center for more information.

Meditation and Dharma Talks

Most Sunday and Friday mornings throughout the year Compassionate Ocean offers meditation practice (sitting and walking) followed by a Dharma talk and discussion, focusing on aspects of Buddhist teaching and their application to everyday life. Our practice is in the mindfulness traditions of Soto Zen and 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 Joen and Michael. Joen leads the Friday group.

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

Schedule: 9:00 sitting, 9:25 walking, 9:35 sitting, 10:00 dharma talk and discussion, 11:15 ending.

Fridays, 9:30-11:00 A.M.

Schedule: 9:30 sitting, 10:00 walking, 10:10 dharma talk and discussion, 11:00 ending.

Welcome Sessions

New people are always welcome at our Sunday and Friday morning gatherings. To provide a special welcome, welcome sessions that include an orientation to our practice are offered periodically. These are excellent opportunities to find out more if you are curious but haven't got around to coming.

Friday, Sept. 7, 9:30-11:00 A.M.

Sunday, Sept. 16, 9:00-11:15 A.M.

Orientation to Zen Meditation

Basic instruction in Zen sitting practice. No pre-registration needed.

Sunday mornings at 8:15 A.M.

Introduction to Zen Practice with Michael

A two-class introduction to Zen meditation and related practices. No fee; pre-registration required.

Mondays, Oct. 8 & 15, 7:00-8:30 P.M.

Weekday Meditation Sessions

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings
7:00 zazen (sitting), 7:40 chanting service, 8:00 temple cleaning (to 8:15)

Thursday evenings

7:30 zazen (sitting), 8:00 kinhin (walking), 8:10 zazen, 8:40 ending.

People are welcome to come for any part of the schedule.

Retreats

These 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 retreats are excellent opportunities to strengthen and deepen the practice of presence, including benefiting from the support of others.

Days of Zen Practice

Saturday, Oct. 13, 7:00 A.M.-9:00 P.M.

Saturday, Nov. 17, 7:00 A.M.-9:00 P.M.

Led by Joen and Michael

The day will include sitting and walking meditation, a Dharma talk, body practice, and a work period. There will also be an opportunity to meet with a teacher. Includes three vegetarian meals. Fee: \$50 (members \$45).

Rohatsu: Buddha's Enlightenment Sesshin

Saturday, Dec. 1, 7:00 P.M.-Saturday, Dec. 8, 11:00 A.M.

Led by Michael O'Neal and Joen O'Neal

A sesshin is a multi-day period of dedicated Zen practice. 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 retreat with us, please call Compassionate Ocean in advance to discuss.

Full participation is encouraged; however, people can register for one to seven days. Registration will open on November 1 with fees and registration information available on our website. Space is limited; early registration is encouraged.



Breakfast, Rohatsu Sesshin, 2015

Fall 2018 Registration Form

Name _____

Address _____

Zip _____ Email _____

Phone

H: () _____

W or C: () _____

To register, please check the appropriate activities.

Total Dynamic Living – Introductory Program in Mindfulness (\$25 deposit)

- Minneapolis, Tuesday evenings (#197)
- St. Paul, Thursday evenings (#278)

Total Dynamic Living: One-Day Retreat

- Saturday, Nov. 10, 9:00 A.M.– 3:00 P.M.
(by donation for program alumni)
- “Entrance to the Buddha Way” Course
Wednesday evenings (#B87)
Sept. 26-Nov. 14 (\$25 deposit)

Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Course

- Oct. 8 & 15 (no fee)

Days of Zen Practice

- Saturday, Oct. 13
- Saturday, Nov. 17
Fee: \$50 (members \$45)

Facing Climate Change (no fee)

- Friday, Sept. 14
- Friday, Oct. 12
- Friday, Nov. 9
- Friday, Dec. 14

Awakening the Sage Within

Register for this event through the link on our website.

- Mindful Knitting Circle**
Wednesdays, Sept. 27-Nov. 15
Suggested donation \$50

Enrollment for these activities is limited, and early registration is encouraged.

To register, send this form along with the non-refundable deposit listed (payable to CODC) to:
Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center
681 17th Ave. NE, Ste. 210, Minneapolis, MN 55413
(612) 781-7640 • www.OceanDharma.org
Register online on our website in the Classes & Retreats section.

Facing Climate Change: For a Future to Be Possible

This ongoing monthly series focuses on the unfolding crisis of climate disruption and the many related issues facing us at this time, including how we can meaningfully engage.

Each evening begins with an optional vegetarian potluck at 6:00 P.M., followed by a program from 7:00-9:00. Programming includes guest presenters, films, information sharing, and dialogue. Anyone with an interest is invited to come to any of these gatherings.

There are no fees, but please sign up in advance by emailing the Center at admin@OceanDharma.org, indicating whether you will be attending the potluck. Also email if you would like to be added to the “For a Future to Be Possible” email list to be kept informed of future events.

Fall Schedule:

Friday evenings, Sept. 14, Oct. 12, Nov. 9, & Dec. 14



Wish List

- Graphic design help
- Assistance with marketing/promotion



You are invited...

...to become a Sustaining Member of Compassionate Ocean, joining others to make possible the continued life of our Center. For further information please go to our website or contact us to request a Membership Brochure.

Joan at our July yard sale, hanging out with resident chickens Patience and Hope



In May Michael O'Neal was ordained as a Zen priest at Ryu-monji Monastery in Iowa. In June our Center hosted a reception for him. Before the reception Michael gave a talk entitled "My Path to Ordination."





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admin@OceanDharma.org
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Fall Program Highlights

- **Buddhist Studies Course:**
Entrance to the Buddha Way
- **Introductory Programs in Mindfulness**
(MBSR) offered in Minneapolis & St. Paul
- **Retreats—one-day and seven-day**
- **Intro to Zen Mini-course**
- **Climate Change Action gatherings**
- **Ongoing Meditation and Dharma Talks**

Plus Awakening the Sage Within,
Mindful Knitting Circle,
Fall Zendo Music Night, and
Lay Ordination Ceremony
(see below)



Awakening the Sage Within, A Workshop on Conscious Aging

Led by Karen West

Saturday, Sept. 15, 9:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M., \$75

(To register for this event, see special link on our website.)



Mindful Knitting Circle, An Eight-Week Community Knit-Together

Led by Elektra Wrenholt

Thursdays, Sept. 27-Nov. 15, 5:30-7:00 P.M.

\$50 suggested donation



Fall Zendo Music Night

Organized by Adam Zahller

Friday, Oct. 26, 7:00 P.M.

by donation



Lay Ordination Ceremony

Joen O'Neal, Preceptor

Saturday, Nov. 17, 7:30 P.M.