



## An Open Letter to Anthony Ray Hinton

**Dear Mr. Hinton,**

Last week I attended your presentation, *Reflections on Justice and Mercy*, at St. Thomas University. Afterwards I was able to meet and talk with you for a few minutes. I am very grateful for this opportunity.

Some years ago, I learned about you and read your book, *The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life, Freedom, and Justice*, which I recommend to everyone. Your story is deeply moving, inspiring, and instructive.

You spent 30 years on death row for a crime you didn't commit. It took many years of legal actions and a unanimous Supreme Court Decision to have your conviction overturned and your release from prison in 2015.

Your story—your life—is deeply inspiring, and frankly amazing, on many levels. One level is reflected in the title of your book. As a man sobbed in a nearby cell on death row, you made a choice for yourself going forward. You said:

*"I can't describe exactly what it is to have your heart break open, but in that moment, my heart broke wide open and I wasn't a convicted killer on death row; I was Anthony Ray Hinton from Praco. I was my mama's son."*

You reached out to that man, and it seems to me that you have been reaching out ever since. *"Despair was a choice. Hatred was a choice. Anger was a choice. I still had choices, and that knowledge rocked me.... I could choose to give up or to hang on. Hope was a choice. Faith was a choice. And more than anything, love was a*

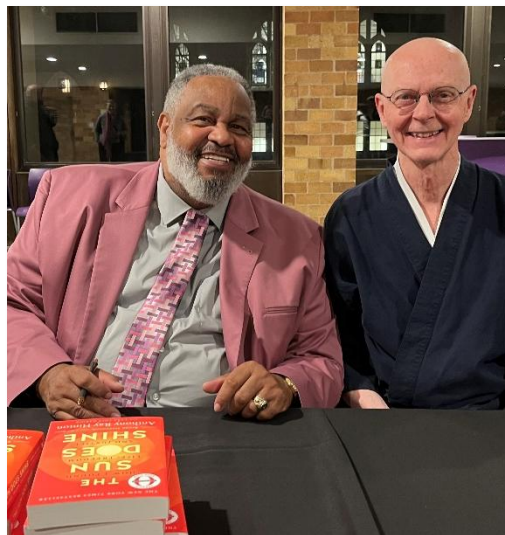
*choice. Compassion was a choice."*

Another deeply moving part of your life has been the sustaining power of love—that of your mother, your best friend, other people in prison, and many others. Their love for you, and yours for them.

Yet another inspiring part of your story is your continuing advocacy on behalf of people sentenced to death. At the end of your book you list the names of men and women on death row in this country as of the book's publishing. There are 27 pages of names, in small type—about a hundred names per page. You are asked in the book, "How do you spend your time since leaving prison?" And you reply, "Since I've left prison I spend my time feeling the rain on my skin, walking for miles at a time just because I can, cooking and eating delicious food, and of course, watching sports...But the majority of my time is spent talking about my experience on death row and doing everything I can to make sure that innocent men and women are not put to death. I do not believe we have a moral or a legal right to take a life—not even in exchange for another life. Murder is wrong—even when you are the State or doing it for the people."

I think you said during your talk that no one from the government of Alabama has ever apologized for what was taken from you. I accept responsibility for this world, and I offer my deepest apology. And I offer my deep gratitude for your continuing presence in this world.

With best wishes,  
--Genpo Michael O'Neal



Anthony Ray Hinton and Genpo O'Neal, April 2026

# 2026 Midyear Appeal

Dear Friend,

Another spring is awakening. Let's pause and appreciate nature's bounty—a burst of colorful flowers; the verdant smell of a spring rain; birdsong on a quiet morning. This moment's connection is a refuge in the midst of the difficult times we are living through, here in Minneapolis, and on a planet that is torn by violence, a rapidly changing climate, and widespread inequity. And we face our own individual challenges of illness, infirmity, and loss. May we have compassion for all beings.

**Compassionate Ocean exists to help all by sharing the wisdom of Buddhist teaching, by giving us a peaceful place to practice together, and by fostering a community of support.**

An important challenge Compassionate Ocean faces is to provide the financial foundation necessary to sustain our Center. This includes support for our teachers and part-time administrator, building maintenance, and the many other expenses required to offer the classes and programs that support our community.

The vast majority of the Center's income comes from contributions. At this time, **we ask that you consider making a donation**, joining with many others who together carry our Center forward. Your gift will make it possible for Compassionate Ocean to continue offering its teachings of upright action, mindfulness, and compassion.

Thank you for considering making a financial contribution, and for your support of Compassionate Ocean. May we all be filled with mindful awareness and loving kindness.

With deep gratitude,

*Lisa Ben*

Lisa Boesen and Ben Durrant  
Board Co-Chairs



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



# Summer Programs 2026

## Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

652 17th Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413

(612) 781-7640 • [oceanzen.org](http://oceanzen.org)

## Making Arrangement

Katagiri Roshi's Teachings on *Fukanzazengi*

Taught by Kikan Michael Howard



Dainin Katagiri Roshi, 1987. Photo by Jim Dildine.

Zen Master Eihei Dōgen's *Fukanzazengi* ("Universal Recommendation for Zazen") is a fundamental text of Sōtō Zen Buddhism. Composed in Japan in the 13th century, this short text explains both the *how* and the *why* of Zen meditation. It has meaning for practitioners in all walks of life, hence "Universal Recommendation." Traditionally it is recited every night during sesshin (meditation retreats).

Dainin Katagiri Roshi, the founder of Sōtō Zen in Minnesota, worked for decades to bring Dōgen's teachings to English-speaking Americans, giving hundreds of Dharma talks.

In this eight-week course we will survey Katagiri Roshi's teachings on *Fukanzazengi*, drawn from talks transcribed by course instructor Kikan Michael Howard.

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

**Wednesdays, June 10–July 29 (8 sessions)**

**(#B118)**

**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 study guide)**

*Member rates apply to members of all local Buddhist centers. Reduced fees are offered as needed; please contact the Center at (612) 781-7640.*

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



**Rev. Kikan Michael Howard** is an associate member of the Teacher Ryo at Clouds in Water Zen Center. He transcribes Katagiri Roshi's dharma talks at the Katagiri Transcripts website, [katagiritranscripts.net](http://katagiritranscripts.net).

# Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

*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. Gift Certificates are available. Payment plans and limited need-based support are also available. Please contact the Center to discuss.

Enrollment is limited, and pre-registration is required.



**Tuesdays,  
June 9–July 28  
6:30–9:00 P.M.  
(eight sessions) (#625)**



**Instructors:  
Joen O'Neal and Ekyo Nelson**

*Joen has been teaching this course since 1995. Ekyo has served on the teaching staff of the Minnesota Zen Center.*

*This course will be offered in-person only.*

**Day of Mindfulness Retreat  
Saturday, July 25, 9:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M.**

This retreat is part of the spring 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 [oceanzen.org/retreats](https://oceanzen.org/retreats) to register.

### ***What past participants have said about our MBSR Program***

*"Stress and anxiety lowered greatly. Falling asleep easily and staying asleep. Finding it much easier to calm myself when I become agitated. It has given me tools and helped develop habits that will keep me practicing meditation and mindfulness."*

*"[This course] has allowed me to really understand what it is to be with myself in a new way for the first time. I unequivocally felt supported from a place of non-judgement, which can feel difficult to find in community these days."*

*"This course taught me valuable skills of how to be in the present moment. I feel this is just the beginning, and I look forward to what's to come."*

### **Future MBSR Course Dates**

- Fall course: Sept. 22 - Nov. 10

[oceanzen.org/mindfulness](https://oceanzen.org/mindfulness)



## Meditation & Dharma Talks

### Sunday Meditation & Dharma Talk

Most Sunday mornings, Compassionate Ocean offers sitting and walking meditation 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. Everyone is invited to participate. There are no prerequisites or fees; donations are welcome. **There will be no Sunday gatherings in August.**

**Sundays, 9:00–11:15 A.M.**

*In-person and via Zoom*

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

### 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.

**Monday–Fridays, 7:00–8:00 A.M.**

*In-person and via Zoom*

7:00 sitting | 7:40 chanting service

## For newer people

### Welcome Session

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

**Sunday, May 31, 9:00–11:15 A.M.**

*In-person and via Zoom*

### Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Course

**Mondays | July 6 & 13 | 7:00-9:00 p.m.**

**To register: [oceanzen.org/intro-to-zen](https://oceanzen.org/intro-to-zen)**

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



### NEW: Zen Basics

**Thursdays in June | 7:00-9:00 p.m.**

**To register: [oceanzen.org/zen-basics](https://oceanzen.org/zen-basics)**

Zazen, instruction, tea and discussion. This informal four-week seminar is intended to support newer people who are seeking to deepen their connection with practice at Compassionate Ocean. Led by Jikan Evan Britzius. No fee.



## Sesshins (Retreats)

A *sesshin* is a time when formal Zen practice is the primary focus of what we do. Each sesshin offers an extended opportunity to settle the mind and body and open to the deep wisdom of human life. *Sesshin* are held in-person only.

### Weekend Sesshin

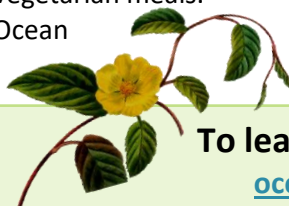
**Friday, June 5, 7:00 P.M.–Sunday, June 7, Noon**

*Led by Genpo O'Neal 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 sesshin also includes four vegetarian meals.

**Location:** Compassionate Ocean

**Fee:** by donation.



### July Sesshin at Ryumonji Monastery

**Friday, July 17, 5:30 P.M.–Sunday, July 19, 1:00 P.M.**

*Led by Rev. Shoken Winecoff, Abbot*

**Location:** Northeastern Iowa

**Suggested Donation:** \$200

### August Seven-day Practice Period at Hokyoji

**Monday, Aug. 31, 5:00 P.M.–Monday, Sept. 7, 2:00 P.M.**

*Led by Genpo O'Neal, Joen O'Neal, and Dokai Georgesen*

Weekend-only and other participation options are possible.

**Location:** Southeastern Minnesota, near New Albin, Iowa

**Fee:** \$100/night (members \$90/night)

**To learn more or register**

[oceanzen.org/retreats](https://oceanzen.org/retreats)

# Sangha News

## Annual Meeting—Highlights, Planning, and Elections

Compassionate Ocean held its 2026 Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 3. The meeting included a review of the past year, plans for the near future and beyond, a financial report, and sharing of sangha members' hopes and gratitude for our Center.

Jennifer Spees, Elizabeth Stranges, and Keith Kennedy were elected to three-year terms on the board of directors, joining continuing board members Lisa Boesen, Robin Bohumil, Chuck Caldarale, Ben Durrant and Frank Paraday. Michael and Joen O'Neal are also on the board as Guiding Teachers.

A major undertaking in 2025 was celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, which included four special events: an art tour at MIA, a music and poetry evening, the *Zen of Oz* film and talk, and a festive sangha banquet.

The board continues to work on strengthening Compassionate Ocean going forward, including planning for leadership at the Center beyond Joen and Michael. The board also closely stewards our financial health, which has historically been leaner than we would like, but sufficient to carry out our core undertakings.

There are many opportunities to get more involved at Compassionate Ocean, joining with others to take care of the tasks that are part of our ongoing practice. If you would like to discuss volunteering, please contact the Center—in person or at [admin@oceanzen.org](mailto:admin@oceanzen.org).

### Our new board members

**Jennifer Spees** lives in northeast Minneapolis and began attending Buddhist studies classes at Compassionate Ocean in 2024. Her interests include reading, journaling, gardening, and spending time with her two beloved kitties. She finds the ancient wisdom of Buddhism and Zen practice invaluable for navigating our times.



Jen Spees

**Elizabeth Stranges:** "On my arrival to Minneapolis in the spring of 2025, I started looking for a sangha and I was fortunate to find myself at Compassionate Ocean one Sunday morning. I felt welcomed into the community from the start. Sunday morning sangha and Wednesday Buddhist studies classes have helped me deepen my practice and kept me grounded during this turbulent time. I look forward to further involvement in Compassionate Ocean through the work of the Board."



Elizabeth Stranges

**Keith Kennedy:** "I started at Compassionate Ocean in 2001 with an MBSR class with Michael and, later, a Buddhist studies class with Joen. I continue to take classes today. Joen and Michael and the sangha have helped me to deepen my practice. I would like to do what I can to help Compassionate Ocean's mission to promote the awakening of all beings."



Keith Kennedy

## A Generous Bequest



Vince Grundman

In November 2024, sangha member Vince Grundman suddenly passed away from injuries sustained in a bicycle accident. Vince was a quiet, dedicated member of Compassionate Ocean for many years. He regularly attended classes and Sunday Dharma talks, volunteered his time when a need arose, and was a generous financial supporter.

In 2025 we learned that Vince had included Compassionate Ocean in his will. His bequest of \$100,000 opens a door of opportunity for our Center. The board of directors is considering how best to use Vince's gift, in a way that recognizes the special opportunities it presents, rather than treating it as ordinary income for operating expenses. It will make possible some important projects that we have not been able to afford in the past. We are deeply grateful, Vince.

*Bequests set up in advance are an important way that members and friends of Compassionate Ocean can continue to provide support for our Center, our community, and our practice after one's death.*

*If you would like to help in this way, please visit our website for more information at [oceanzen.org/bequests](https://oceanzen.org/bequests), or speak to a board member.*

## Receiving the Precepts: Lay Ordination

This year there will be an opportunity at Compassionate Ocean to formally receive the Bodhisattva Precepts (*Jukai*) from Rev. Genpo O'Neal. This is a practice, a process, and a ceremony often referred to as Lay Ordination.

The Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts include the Three Refuges, the Three Collective Pure Precepts, and the Ten Prohibitory Precepts. These are signposts of the Buddha Way as transmitted in Soto Zen. They have multiple levels of meaning, and can serve as a strong support as we navigate our lives in harmony with all beings and things.



Lay ordination ceremony, 1999.

Lay ordination involves a number of elements. The first is to meet with Genpo to discuss lay ordination and to formally request receiving the precepts. Over the following months there will be group and individual study of the precepts. There will also be hand-sewing of a *rakusu*, a small version of Buddha's robe, in a group with a sewing instructor. Finally, there will be a weekend practice time together that will include the formal *Jukai* ceremony, a sangha event.

A listing of the Bodhisattva Precepts can be found at [oceanzen.org/lay-ordination](https://oceanzen.org/lay-ordination). For further information, please contact Genpo.

## Haiku as a Spiritual Practice

A haiku is a three-line, unrhymed poem following a 5-7-5 syllable pattern. Often these poems include a direct or indirect reference to a season, and sometimes a surprise ending.

On a cold morning in January, members and friends of Compassionate Ocean gathered on Zoom to listen to and learn about this classic Japanese poetry form. Workshop leaders Mark Ostrander and Terry Miller shared poems from masters of the craft as well as poems they had written. Workshop participants had an opportunity to share their own haiku as well as favorites by others.

### HAIKU STUDY GROUP

This summer, Compassionate Ocean will begin an **online** group to read, write and discuss haiku. It will be a collaborative study group facilitated by Mark Ostrander and Terry Miller. No fee. For more information contact: [admin@oceanzen.org](mailto:admin@oceanzen.org)



a toddler, bundled  
up for Fall, bends over  
to pick up a leaf.

— Terry Miller

old garden Buddha  
surrounded by fallen leaves  
chickadee-dee dee.

— Mark Ostrander



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# Mindfulness

Come or refer a friend to our Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program.

## Summer 2026 Course begins June 9

(See page 4 for more information.)

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

If you know someone who might benefit from this course, please encourage them to visit:

[oceanzen.org/mindfulness](http://oceanzen.org/mindfulness)

**Thank you!**

## Summer and Fall Activities Calendar

	Introduction to Zen Mini-Course	Introduction to Mindfulness (MBSR)	Buddhist Studies	Sesshin	Special Events
<b>Summer</b>	July 6 & 13	June 9 – July 28 (Retreat: July 25)	June 10 – July 29	June 5 – 7  July 17 – 19 (Ryumonji)	<i>Open House:</i> May 15 – 17  <i>Zen Basics:</i> Four Thursdays in June
<b>Fall</b>	Sep. 14 & 21	Sep. 22 – Nov. 10 (Retreat: Nov. 7)	Sep. 23 – Nov. 11	Sep. 25 – 27 Oct. 23 – 25 Dec. 1 – 8 (Rohatsu)	<i>Open House:</i> Sep. 12

### Ongoing Activities

- Weekday Morning Meditation | 7:00-8:00 AM | Monday – Friday
- Meditation and Dharma Talk | 9:00-11:30 AM | Sundays (Except during August)