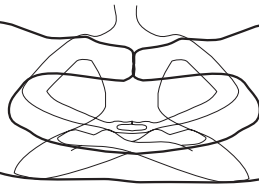


Sangha Life



The Missouri Zen Center

August-October, 2011

The Missouri Zen Center

220 Spring Avenue
Webster Groves, MO 63119
(314) 961-6138



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Coming Events

- Aug. 23: J-fest passes available
- Sept. 2: load J-fest supplies at MZC
- Sept. 3-5: Japanese Festival food booth
- Early December: sesshin & Jukai ceremony



Visit Our Web Site:

www.missourizencenter.org

*Address Correction
Requested*

MZC Featured in Zen in Midwest Project

Many of you will remember that August Kryger visited MZC a few times this past winter as part of his master's project concerning Zen in the Midwest. He recently sent us the following note to indicate completion of his project.

Hello everyone,

I couldn't remember if I ever let you all know that my project on Zen in the Midwest is completed (for now.) If you would like to see it, go to:

<http://www.zeninthemidwest.com>

Thank you all so very much for your kindness and hospitality. I hope to see you again soon.

Volunteer for MZC Labor Day Weekend

The Zen Center will again be operating a food booth at the Japanese Festival, held at the Missouri Botanical Garden on Labor Day weekend, September 3-5. We respectfully request your volunteer assistance to help us make this fund-raising event and opportunity to serve go as smoothly as possible and be as beneficial as possible. We gratefully acknowledge the Missouri Botanical Garden for allowing us to operate our food booth at the Japanese Festival and for providing excellent assistance toward making it a success for everyone involved.

We operate the food booth for several reasons. On one level, we are able to raise a significant fraction of the money needed for the Zen Center's yearly expenses in one concentrated weekend of work. On another level, because Zen is part of the Japanese cultural fabric, our presence at the Festival brings attention to the practice of Zen and its role in Japanese culture to Festival attendees. Some

Continued on Page 2

of the people who come to our booth, and all who come to Rosan's lectures, want to know more about Zen practice. We can answer their questions and direct them to the Zen Center to learn more and to try the practice for themselves. On yet another level, operating the food booth offers us the opportunity to serve all beings. We step off that 100-foot pole and serve the people who attend the festival by offering them delicious vegetarian meals. In this way we offer the fruits (and vegetables) of our practice to all beings.

We need lots of volunteers to run a high-quality food booth operation that doesn't overwork the volunteers in the process. We need as many people as possible to commit to at least one, and preferably two or more, four-hour work shifts during the course of the Festival so that we can have a minimum of 4-6 people each at the sales booth and in the food preparation area.

To volunteer, sign up on the sign-up sheets posted on the closet door at the Zen Center, or call or email the Zen Center, leaving your name, phone number, and choice of shifts. The shifts last from 8 a.m.-noon, 11:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., and 3-8 p.m. each day. The overlap in shifts is deliberate, so that volunteers can show each other what to do and to ensure there are enough volunteers at all times.

On the afternoon of Friday, September 2 we will be loading a truck with Japanese Festival supplies to take to the Garden. We will need volunteers to help with that process as well. The time will be announced on the email list and posted at the Zen Center.

Everyone who signs up to work at least one shift at the Festival receives a free admission pass good for all three days ... a \$15/day value to nonmembers of the Garden. In addition, parking passes for volunteers needing to drive to the Festival will be available. Once each kind of pass arrives at the Zen Center (August 23), volunteers can get the passes they need. We will notify the email list and post at MZC when the passes arrive.

All food service personnel must wear hats (city Health Department regulations). We may have a few hats available for purchase at the Zen Center, or you can wear your own hat or one of the paper caps that we'll have on hand at the food booth and preparation areas. If you have a Zen Center T-shirt, please wear it; if we are all wearing MZC T-shirts, it makes a more unified visual appearance at our booth. We have T-shirts available for purchase at the Zen Center. Some sangha members find it helpful to have one T-shirt dedicated for use at the Festival, because stains seem to be hard to avoid.

We welcome the help of responsible family members and friends who are willing to work one or more shifts, as long as we have extra passes remaining after all sangha members who are volunteering have received their passes. Please put their names on the sign-up sheet too, and acquire passes (volunteer and parking, if needed) for them. Check with the Zen Center about a week before the Festival to find out if we have extra passes available for family members and friends who are willing to volunteer. Please contact the Zen Center if you have questions or need more information on our food booth at the Festival.

The Japanese Festival is one of the premiere cultural events in St. Louis. Before and after your work shifts, you will enjoy the many different activities and demonstrations offered during the Festival. Or just enjoy a walk through the Japanese Garden or the other gardens. For a schedule of events and more information about the Japanese Festival, call the Missouri Botanical Garden at 314-577-9400 or visit www.mobot.org.

Zazen May Be Cancelled Sept. 3-5

In the past, we have cancelled all zazen periods taking place during the days that we are working on our Japanese Festival food booth. Although that announcement had not been made as of the time of writing this, please be sure to check the MZC email list or postings at MZC as it seems likely that we will again cancel zazen on those days and do food booth practice instead. In this case the regular schedule will resume on Tuesday morning, Sept. 6.

Taking the Precepts

by *Kuryo*

Many of you already know that Buddhist practitioners can elect to take a number of precepts as part of the practice. One way to understand the precepts is as a guide to living in a manner that ends the suffering of oneself and others. Another way to understand taking the precepts is as a public commitment to Buddhist practice, similar to confirmation in Christian traditions. You can learn more about the precepts by asking Rosan about them and also by looking at the books in the Zen Center's library and on the shelves of books for sale.

Soto Zen practitioners take a total of 16 precepts in a special ceremony called *Jukai*. As part of their preparation for the ceremony, participants study the precepts and sew a practitioner's garment called a *rakusu* by hand. The *rakusu* is a short version of *okesa*, the formal Buddhist robe.

Because taking the precepts represents a strong commitment to Zen/Buddhist practice, it is usual to wait to do so until you've been activity practicing for a couple of years or longer.

The next time MZC will be offering *Jukai* will be immediately following the Rohatsu sesshin this year. The Rohatsu sesshin occurs around December 8, the date in Zen tradition when the Buddha awakened.

For those of you who would like to take the precepts, the first step is to ask Rosan's permission to do so. It's best to ask him in person and to do this far enough ahead of time so that you will have time to sew a *rakusu* before the ceremony. People who work full time usually need a few months to complete the sewing, so now is the time to ask if you want to take the precepts this coming December.

If Rosan grants permission, the next step is to talk with Erin or myself so we can get you started on the *rakusu* as soon as possible, check your progress, and help you with any difficulties you may encounter. I can help people who attend on Tuesday evenings. Erin can help people who attend at times when she is present. Even if you have never sewn a stitch before, you can complete a

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

rakusu with help from us.

You'll also want to plan time to study the precepts. *Being Upright* by Reb Andersen is one book on the precepts that many people find helpful. There may be a copy on the sale shelves; if there isn't and you'd like one, let Erin or I know so we can let our book purchaser know to get copies.

You'll want to make sure you can sit the Rohatsu sesshin and be present for the ceremony, normally held on Sunday morning following conclusion of the sesshin. The exact date of the sesshin will be decided soon and announced at MZC and on MZC's e-list. Please contact MZC for more information.

Shogoji

by Erin

Last June I had the chance to spend 19 days at Shogoji, a training temple in Kyushu, Japan. The library where I work had recently asked for volunteers to take a month-long furlough, and I thought it would be a rare opportunity to do something practice-related for an extended period. When I spoke with Dr. Yoshida about possibilities, he suggested Shogoji's International Open Ango, held annually since its inception in 1993. It had never occurred to me that I could practice in Japan; I loved the idea and submitted my application.

Shogoji is located on a remote mountain covered with thick forest, mist, and terraced rice fields. It's breathtakingly beautiful there, and the various buildings of the temple complex fit in comfortably. The first part of my stay felt similar to my experience at the Great Sky Sesshin at Hokyoji in Minnesota. That was my first week-long sesshin, and I spent a good part of it just trying to figure out where to be when, and what I was supposed to do when I got there. Thankfully, the people at Shogoji (and Hokyoji, for that matter) were kind, helpful, and extraordinarily patient!

As I became more confident about the various procedures, I was able to notice more things, and they remain with me as deeply impressed sense-based memories. The way, for example, the sunlight came through the paper-covered screens of the sodo during morning zazen. The soft chanting of the robe verse, followed by the sound of the monks quietly putting on their okesa. The indefinable gray-green mottling of the sodo's concrete and stone walkway as we scrubbed it clean during a period of samu.

I think the thing that made the greatest impression on me, though, was the beautiful posture of Shogoji's resident monks. It's hard to describe, really – they just had such an elegant way of moving or standing or sitting in zazen. I had noticed this at some level from the beginning, but it only came to the surface, as it were, through a chance comment by one of the visiting teachers. Over the course of several days, Rev. Daiken Yoshitani from Myohonji was giving



Shogoji Hatto (Dharma Hall, left bldg.) and Sodo (or Undo, Monks' Hall, right bldg.) Photo by Erin Davis.



Inside of sodo. Photo by Erin Davis.

a series of lectures on Dogen's Regulations for the Auxiliary Cloud Hall (1239), the sixth section of which includes the sentence "Do not imitate others' faults; just cultivate virtue." In this context Rev. Yoshitani told us that one doesn't cultivate virtue by reading a book or listening to lectures; those things are merely in the realm of philosophy. Rather, he said, virtue is expressed with the body, and only when it is taken into the body does it become religion.

I have to say, I find the word "virtue" something of a stumper – I suppose the too-analyzing, defining, classifying, and predicting part of me starts to worry when I consider what it might be, exactly. But seeing those monks – true Assajis of the 21st century – was pretty inspiring. And as we angos participants became more familiar with each other, moving and interacting a little more quietly and comfortably, our activities came to feel more like a natural element of life on that mountain. That seems worth cultivating to me!

Why One Should Know Selflessness

by Rosan Daido

It is the determined minds of the living beings to know their selves.

Rare, however, are those who see the true self. Only buddhas know it.
—Dogen

Problems: We have all kinds of individual, social and ecological problems and sufferings: individual birth, sickness, aging, death, loss, parting with the lovable, meeting with the hateful, passion; social pollution, discrimination, disintegration; ecological depletion, deterioration, exploitation, extinction, etc. We now have the global problematique: globally intertwined problems such as global warming and nuclear disaster, which globally cause suffering for all. This may be called the civilization syndrome.

Causes: All the problems come from the “self” complexes and complications. The delusion of self is the starting point of all ensuing desires and divisions. Everyone, without awakening, believes in the separate, independent self and its natural right to pursue its interests and ideologies (egoism, terrorism, nationalism, capitalism, etc.). Thus all the above problems and others follow, in essence the five calamities of delusion, bondage, discrimination, exploitation and extermination.

Solutions: “Self” can never be self-existent without air, water, food, light, genes, communication, etc. All phenomena are in the Dharma (truth) of Dependent Origination. This means nothing is independent or eternal (entity, substance), but interdependent and impermanent in space and time (empty of entity). All are in intricately intertwined unity. The world is individual, social, and ecological unity in such names and phases. Only when we are freed from a fixed “self” can we attain genuine freedom and fearlessness. Only then can we attain limitless life, light, liberation, and love in unconditioned peace and unsurpassed awakening, freed from fabricated conceptions, emotions, and volitions.

Methods: The practical method of stopping the three poisons (delusion, desire, division) or karma is solid sitting, stilling karma (actions/habits), which frees anyone from fabrications and artifices, settling in holiness (wholesome whole), freed also from the four defilements (lust, becoming, dogma, etc.) and five coverings (agitation, sloth, doubt, etc.). The holy eightfold path starts with right view (no prejudice, delusion). Anyone can be awakened in such truth, peace, freedom, and holiness and should encourage others to become so.

E-mail List

Subscribe to our e-mail list at:

<http://groups.google.com/group/mzclist>

Once you are signed up, you can send messages to the list using this address:

mzclist@googlegroups.com

Regular Zendo Schedule

Sunday

6:20 am Zazen
7:00 am Service (sutras)
7:20 am Zazen
8:00 am Kinhin
8:10 am Short Zazen
8:30 am Lecture (Teisho)
9:30 am Work period (Samu) & tea
You are welcome to come throughout the morning, but please do not enter the zendo during zazen. Enter quietly at other times.
10:00-10:20 am Family Sitting
10:20-11:00 am Children's activities

Monday

6:00-6:50 am Zazen & Heart Sutra
Beginner's Night Registration required (at least 24 hours in advance)
6:30-7:00 pm Instruction
7:00-7:20 pm Zazen
7:20-8:00 pm Discussion/Q&A

Tuesday

6:00-6:50 am Zazen & Heart Sutra
7:00-7:40 pm Zazen
7:40-9:00 pm Tea/discussion

Wednesday

6:00-6:40 am Zazen & Heart Sutra
7:00-7:40 pm Zazen

Thursday

6:00-6:50 am Zazen & Heart Sutra
7:00-7:40 pm Zazen
7:50-9:00 pm Dharma Study
Group (call for details)

Friday

6:00-6:50 am Zazen & Heart Sutra
7:00-7:40 pm Zazen

Saturday

8:00-8:50 am Zazen & Heart Sutra

