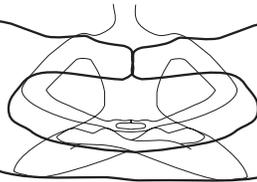


# Sangha Life



**The Missouri Zen Center**

**December, 2006 - January, 2007**

## **The Missouri Zen Center**

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



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## **Coming Events**

- Dec. 3- Jan. 7: MZC Board meetings
- Dec. 8-9: Rohatsu sesshin
- Dec. 31: New Year's Eve sitting
- Feb. 24: Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions workshop



*Address Correction  
Requested*

Visit Our Web Site:

[www.missourizencenter.org](http://www.missourizencenter.org)

## **Rosan Returns**

Our teacher Rosan will return to St. Louis on December 20 and remain here until January 9. We welcome him back and wish him a safe journey here and then back to Japan. Please come and sit with us while he is here, and while he isn't here as well.

## **Zen Center E-mail List**

All members and friends of the sangha are invited to subscribe to the Missouri Zen Center e-mail list. To subscribe, send an e-mail message from the address you wish to use for list messages to:

[missourizencenter-subscribe@buddhistcouncil.us](mailto:missourizencenter-subscribe@buddhistcouncil.us)

The message field should remain blank.

You will receive a message asking you to confirm your subscription. Follow the directions in that message and your address will then be added to the list. If you encounter difficulties, consult the list owner at this address:

[missourizencenter-owner@buddhistcouncil.us](mailto:missourizencenter-owner@buddhistcouncil.us)

**Please note:** we may lose our current e-mail server at any moment. To help us make the transition if and when we need a new list server, new subscribers should also please send their subscribed e-mail addresses to [joe@joethejuggler.com](mailto:joe@joethejuggler.com).

## **Rohatsu Sesshin Dec. 8-9**

We will hold a Rohatsu sesshin at the Zen Center on Friday and Saturday, December 8 and 9. In Zen, Rohatsu (December 8) is regarded as the day that Buddha awakened. Zen Centers all over the world commemorate the Buddha's awakening, and our own potential to awaken, by holding a sesshin on this date.

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The schedule for the Rohatsu sesshin is as follows.

**Friday evening, Dec. 8:**

7:00-7:40 pm zazen  
 7:40-7:50 pm kinhin  
 7:50-8:30 pm zazen  
 8:30-8:40 pm kinhin  
 8:40-9:20 pm zazen  
 9:20 pm chant, doan's choice

**Saturday, Dec. 9:**

6:20-7:00 am zazen  
 7:00-7:10 am kinhin  
 7:10-7:50 am zazen  
 7:50-8:10 am service (Sunday version)  
 8:10-8:50 am zazen  
 8:50-9:20 am long kinhin  
 9:20-10 am zazen  
 10:00 am Dharma talk, then samu  
 noon-2:30 pm oriyoki lunch, cleanup, free time  
 2:30-3:10 pm zazen  
 3:10-3:20 pm kinhin  
 3:20-4:00 pm zazen  
 4:00-4:10 pm kinhin  
 4:10-4:50 pm zazen  
 4:50 pm recite *Fukanzazengi*  
 5:00 pm tea and discussion

You may enter or leave the Zen Center quietly during kinhin, chanting, samu, or before or after lunch.

During the samu on Dec. 9 we will rake leaves and do other yard work as well as stuff zafus. If you cannot attend the entire sesshin, please consider attending one or more sittings in the morning, joining in the work period, and staying for the oriyoki lunch.

### **New Year's Eve Sitting**

On New Year's Eve the Zen Center offers a special sitting beginning at 9 p.m. with 40 minutes of zazen followed by 10 minutes of kinhin. Zazen and kinhin continue until shortly before midnight, when the bell is rung 108 times to mark the changing of the year. Following the bell-ringing we'll have a potluck vegetarian supper. In this way we can begin the New Year with a peaceful mind and heart (and a full stomach). We invite everyone to attend this sitting and to bring a vegetarian dish to share during the potluck afterward.

The morning sitting on Monday, January 1 will be canceled. The regular schedule will resume with the evening sitting on January 1.

### **Empathy Practice**

*By David Hildebrand*

After many weeks of often stimulating dialogue and challenging practice, the energy for a Nonviolent Communication practice group at the Missouri Zen Center seems to have waned. We thus are led to let the group, at least in its present incarnation, come to a rest. John and I are grateful to the extended sangha for supporting the practice of right speech. We are humbled and encouraged through the effort to come to terms with our

own conditioning, the effort to relate to the world through this practice of giving of ourselves in honesty and receiving from others in empathy.

At this point — and we would love to hear from you! — we are thinking of two things: 1. Restarting the NVC group in the spring or summer; 2. Initiating an Empathy practice group once a month.

Empathy — the practice of listening without agenda and with one's entire presence of mind and heart — is at the center of compassionate communication with ourselves and others. I believe empathy is fundamental to the practice of kindness; that humankind suffers from the loss of countless opportunities for good relationships and emotional intimacy, because our default mode of interaction often does not entail empathic listening. Perhaps it is useful to start with an example contrasting empathy with sympathy, two often confused ways of being. After my father died I had many complex emotions swirling about: grief from my loss, relief that he didn't descend further into Alzheimer's, feelings of regret that our relationship wasn't what I would have wanted, gratitude for the parts of it that were rich and for what I learned from him, anger for the burdens...you get the picture. In talking about him to others, often it seemed people would think, he's remembering his father with pain, poor David. That's sympathy. If, on the other hand — and this was understood especially by my sister and closer relatives and friends — someone talked of remembering my father with pain, and also the richness and variety of what his life encompassed: that's empathy.

Empathy, sympathy, and for that matter, compassion, all have at their root "suffer". Compassion is often coupled with the impulse and action of giving support, aid, or mercy. Empathy doesn't connote action, other than active listening. It has the qualities of the "mirror", embodying acceptance, non-attachment and equanimity. Compared to compassion's "suffering with", or sympathy's focus on suffering, empathy has less ego involvement, more space which allows whatever is, to simply be, without the need to involve one's ego or fix anything.

Very briefly, what such a group might look like is this: folks would come together for an hour or so; instruction in practicing empathy could be by demonstration; people would then group in twos or threes and practice, each taking turns to talk, listen, or witness. Specifically, the talker can go anywhere s/he feels safe to do so; the listener mostly listens with his/her full attention, presence and acceptance, sometimes seeking clarification, never offering advice.

There are pitfalls to the practice of empathy. Is it possible, this side of enlightenment, to ever really drop the ego? Since we can't be in another's body or mind, can we ever truly say we understand the other? I am looking forward to how we might explore the practice of empathy together.

Please let us know whether you would be interested in a once a month Empathy group. You may contact us by calling the Zen Center, 314-961-6138 or by e-mail to [info@missourizencenter.org](mailto:info@missourizencenter.org).



## Reducing Global Warming At Home

*By Kuryo*

By now we realize that continuing to produce current levels of global warming gases will cause severe changes in climate that will threaten our survival. One of the gases of most concern, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), is produced anytime we burn fossil fuels: natural gas, coal, and oil, and products refined from them such as gasoline. Since most of our homes burn these either directly (natural gas) or indirectly (electricity from coal or oil powered generating stations), we have both a responsibility and an opportunity to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by reducing home energy use. Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) calculates that the total emissions from the roughly 101.5 million homes in the U.S. equals about 1,187 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, about 14.4% of total U.S. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Each of the 73.7 million single-family homes in the U.S. emits an average of 26,028 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> each year. RMI proposes a series of steps by which the average single-family home can reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to 8,316 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, a reduction of 68% over current emissions.

Meiku and I have been using various strategies to reduce energy use at home since the middle 1990s, when we read a book titled *Homemade Money* written by RMI staff. In 2002, after we'd purchased our current house, I found the Cool Citizens papers on the RMI website, [www.rmi.org](http://www.rmi.org). Using the information I found in these papers and our 1990 electricity and natural gas bills, I was able to calculate the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> we'd emitted in 1990: a total of 20,759 pounds. While this was less than the average household CO<sub>2</sub> emissions quoted above, it was about double the average emissions for a house of the same square footage as ours. We resolved to reduce our emissions, using the plan outlined in *Cool Citizens: Household Solutions* to achieve climate neutrality (no net CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from household energy use) by 2012.

How have we done? By now we've completed 27 out of the 39 steps suggested in the Cool Citizens paper. During the past 12 months (October 2005 through September 2006), we emitted a total of 10,150 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>. This is a 51% reduction from our 1990 emissions! We are now well below the average of 14,820 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> for a house the size of this one. And we're not done yet.

To learn how to calculate your own CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and learn more about what you can do to reduce them, attend the workshop I'll be offering at Meiku's and my house, 1519 Twillman Ave. in Spanish Lake, on Saturday, February 24 from 1-4 p.m. I ask that each attendee make a suggested donation of \$5 per person to the Missouri Zen Center (please modify the donation lower or higher as your circumstances indicate). Attendees should bring fuel bills (electricity, natural gas, oil, propane, wood) for the past year so that they may calculate their current household CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Past electric bills may be obtained from AmerenUE's website, [www.ameren.com](http://www.ameren.com). I'll show attendees what we've done to lower our emissions. There will be plenty of time for discussions about possible approaches to take, cost issues, finding information on supplies and contractors, and so forth. Pre-registration is required, and attendees will need to print and bring a copy of the *Cool Citizens: Household Solutions* paper to the workshop (this will be our text for the workshop). To pre-register or for more information, contact me at the Zen Center or call me at home, 314-355-3505.

What if you're not able to attend the workshop? You can do the work yourself by getting the resources I've mentioned in the article. I may be able to hold another workshop if there is sufficient interest in it. If you'd like to attend a workshop but can't make it that day, let me know. Maybe we can form a "support group" of sorts to encourage each other to take actions. Let me know what you think about this idea. Happy reducing!

### Letter from the Board of Directors

Dharma Sisters and Brothers,

During 2006 the sangha continued to work together to enable the Zen Center to offer a full schedule of sittings and special events. We added zazen at 11 a.m. on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday to the schedule and maintained all other sittings from 2005. Thank you to everyone who acts as doan and who joins in zazen periods. Each such act reduces suffering for all beings.

The sangha continued its commitment to the Zen Center's two major fundraisers, the Plant Sale in May and the Japanese Festival food booth over Labor Day weekend. Thanks to strong volunteer support and excellent weather, the Japanese Festival food booth set a new gross sales record and made the second-highest net profit in its history. The Plant Sale resulted in a reasonable net profit as well. The sangha also cooperated to make zafus and zabutons for sale, to bottle and sell local honey, and to support many smaller-scale activities that also helped to raise funds to support the Center and aided the sangha and the wider community in their practice. Thank you to everyone who assisted in these activities.

The Zen Center completed all the remaining requirements

for the conditional use permit, and it was granted. Because the Zen Center is located in a historic district, at some point we will need to modify the back porch to conform to requirements of the Webster Groves Architectural Review Board. Investigations into how to do this continue.

In 2006 Inside Dharma, the project to bring Buddhist practice to all Missouri state prisons, achieved its certification as a separate nonprofit organization. The Zen Center continues to offer support to Inside Dharma's efforts through volunteers who travel to prisons to offer Buddhist practice and other volunteers who write to and sometimes visit individual prisoners. We also offer Inside Dharma's book, *Insights from Inside*, at the Zen Center and publicize Inside Dharma events to the sangha. Thank you to everyone involved in Inside Dharma for supporting the practice of people in prison and recently released from prison.

This year Rosan and others began the Global System and Ethic listserv and websites so that we may all understand how to save all beings. Rosan and others also began and sustained discussions on the Global System and Ethic at the Zen Center following Wednesday night sittings and during the Sunday tea and discussion period. Thank you to everyone involved in these activities.

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Many special events were held at or sponsored by the Zen Center in 2006. These included visits and teachings by Ven. Thubten Chodron and Rev. Tonen O'Conner; participating in Buddhist Council activities including Vesak Day, Change Your Mind Day, and Mindfulness Day (the Zen Center is a member organization of the Buddhist Council of Greater St. Louis); and sesshins in January and December. The Back Yard Composter Training was held at the Zen Center in June, conducted by the St. Louis County Department of Health. During the fall several people participated in the eight-session Your Money or Your Life group discussion course to help them develop and extend their simplicity practice. A Nonviolent Communication Practice group met at the Zen Center for several weeks in summer and fall and helped people learn and practice nonviolent communication skills. One-day workshops on using wild edibles and composting with worms were offered in October. Thank you to everyone who organized, supported, or attended these events.

Many people continue to perform tasks to maintain our building and gardens, through ongoing efforts and at workdays. Others maintain our website and written communications such as this newsletter and respond to phone and e-mail messages. We thank all of you for your efforts.

The Zen Center offers all teachings for free. As people continue to sit and practice the Dharma at the Zen Center and in their daily lives, they often wish to offer whatever help they can to keep the Zen Center in operation and to bring the Dharma to all beings. This can take the form of helping with fundraising activities, serving on the Board, maintaining the building and gardens, acting as doan, and so forth. We are very grateful for all such contributions made by the sangha. Some sangha members are in a position to support the Zen Center financially, through member dues and special gifts. Dues and gifts are a significant source of income to the Center and help us remain in operation. While we suggest a contribution of \$25/month for dues, any level of support is welcome and accepted. Those who pay dues may check books out from the Zen Center library and vote in the Member's Meeting held in March; otherwise there is no difference between sangha members who pay dues and those who do not.

At the end of the year we express our gratitude for your contributions to the Zen Center in all their forms. If you are in a position to make an extra financial contribution to the Zen Center at this time, your contribution will be most appreciated! We encourage the sangha to continue your efforts to awaken in 2007 by devoting yourselves to the Three Pillars of our practice: zazen, voluntary simplicity, and the Global Ethic.

May all beings enjoy peace and true happiness in 2007.

### Live a Convivial Life

*By Rosan Daido*

The law of Dependent Origination means that all are related and relative systems in time and space. Every thing is a part and parcel of all. Our concept and conduct vivisect this limitlessly interrelated reality. This is the starting point of alienation and atomization into the small self and the dark dungeon. The reality of life is a symbiosis and conviviality in wholly wholesomeness. Let us live a convivial life with the flowers, butterflies, birds, mountains, moon, sun, stars, and so on.

### Record of Donations Available

Those of you who donated more than \$250 to the Zen Center in 2006 will receive a written record of your donations, per IRS regulations. If you do not receive this letter by the end of January, please give the Zen Center your name and address so that it may be prepared and sent to you.

If you donated less than this and wish to receive a written record of your donations, please contact the Zen Center and request this information; include your name and address.

### Regular Zendo Schedule

#### Sunday

6:20-7:00 am	Zazen
7:00-7:20 am	Service (sutras)
7:20-8:00 am	Zazen
8:00-8:10 am	Kinhin
8:10-8:30 am	Zazen
8:30 am	Talk/discussion, work period, tea

*You are welcome to come throughout the morning, but please do not enter the zendo during zazen. Enter quietly at other times.*

#### Monday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
11:00-11:40 am	Zazen
6:30-7:00 pm	Instruction*
7:00-7:20 pm	Zazen
7:20-9:00 pm	Writing Practice

#### Tuesday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
11:00-11:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen
7:40-9:00 pm	Tea/discussion

#### Wednesday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
11:00-11:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen

#### Thursday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen

#### Friday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen

#### Saturday

8:00-8:40 am	Zazen
8:40-9:30 am	Discussion
10:00-10:30 am	Family Sitting

*Work periods may be scheduled following zazen. \* Anyone bringing a class to the Monday Beginners Night, or wishing to bring a class at any other time to the Zen Center, should contact the Zen Center well in advance to ensure that accommodations will be available for the number of people attending.*

