

MINNESOTA ZEN MEDITATION CENTER NEWS



Everyday Activity is the Whole Deal by Ted O'Toole

In Dogen's Kajo (Everyday Activity), he says that "the thoughts and sayings of the Buddha's Ancestors are the tea and rice of everyday life....Since this is so, we, for our part, do not need to rely on anything apart from the potency of this tea and rice of Theirs. Simply, we do not squander the strength of the Buddhas and Ancestors that resides within the partaking of this tea and rice."

This is a very important essay, because, if we look deeply, we can see that everyday activity is the whole deal. We want it to be something else. We so want it to be something more, something better, something different from what we have now. But it can't be. Let me explain.

I've been very fortunate this past three months or more, in that I've had a situation that has focused my attention: the reopening of MZMC after about 16 months of closure due to covid and construction. I've been able to put in long days, onsite, supervising work crews, vacuuming dust, watering the new grass, writing emails, and holding dokusans. I'm back with the sangha, in person,

and it's a joy. It's energizing. It's a lot like a sesshin (formal retreat), except it's almost all work period, all the time.

And what I'm seeing in the midst of this, and would like to express, is that it's the activity of this moment that matters.



This moment now. Being fully engaged in it. That's the whole deal. Turning the faucet. Hitting the switch on the shop vac. The bow prior to dokusan. Being present with the awkwardness of reinstituting the in-person forms.

That is practice. That is the expression of the Buddhas and Ancestors. We so want it to be more. We long for a state or condition. Something that continues beyond the moment that we can rely upon. Something that we can keep. We want to be someone different from who we are now. We think we can have something, as opposed to doing something.

But it cannot be. The expression of life, the being here in the world of form, with a simultaneous deep awareness of emptiness, can occur only now. By definition, being here can have no continuity. Because we give our full attention to the moment, nothing can exist beyond the moment.

It is only in retrospect that we may say to ourselves "I was really present today." That's fine, and it's good to say so, and it's nice when it's true. But in the moment of being, we can't link the moment to anything. If we're thinking one iota about being different, or about attaining some kind of continuing state, we can't possibly be in the moment.

So what do we do? Have a little faith, based on experience, that this is true. And bring ourselves back, again and again, to this moment, through practice. This takes some effort. Each one of us can do this. Each one of us can do it now.

Minnesota Intersangha Ethics in Leadership Summit

In early November, MZMC, with funding from the Hemera Foundation, hosted the Minnesota Intersangha Ethics in Leadership Summit. Six MZMC priests were among the twenty-eight Buddhist leaders representing eleven participating sanghas. The two-day gathering was focused on building healthy Buddhist communities through developing relationships and skills for ethical leadership.



Zen Initiation Ceremony

On Saturday, November 6, fifteen members participated in a Zen initiation ceremony. This ancient and beautiful ceremony (often called Jukai) is one of the sangha's favorite regular events. It is designed to allow a public expression of a very personal relationship with, and commitment to, the Buddhist tradition and Soto Zen practice. This lay expression of Buddhist practice goes all the way back to the times of the historical Buddha.

The initiates spent months preparing with classes, study, and meetings with their chosen preceptor. With the guidance and support of our sewing teacher Rosemary Taylor, each initiate also sewed a rakusu—a small version of the traditional Buddhist robe that is worn around the neck. The initiates received their rakusu during the ceremony, along with a dharma name and lineage papers.



Rohatsu Sesshin 2021

with Ben Connelly and Ted O'Toole
Sunday, November 28, 7 pm through Sunday
December 5, 4 pm

This year's sesshin will be **online only**.

Rohatsu (Buddha's Enlightenment) sesshin is arguably the year's most important event for Zen Buddhists. All over the world we sit in meditation, celebrating Buddha's awakening to an intimacy with all life as our own awakening. There are two options for attending: full-day and flexible attendance.

Full-day Option (5:45 am - 9:00 pm)

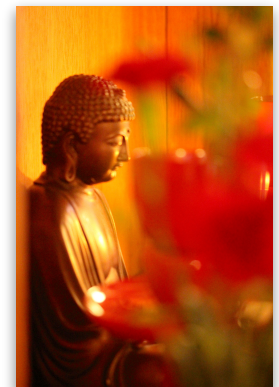
The full-day options for this retreat include zazen, kinhin (walking meditation), liturgy, dharma talks, meal breaks, dokusan (one-to-one meetings with the teachers), council practice, and work practice.

Flexible Option

Under the flexible option, students are welcome to come and go as they please.

Some parts of the retreat, including dokusan, will not be available to those who choose the flexible option.

We hope you are able to participate this year to celebrate Buddha's awakening. Please register online by Friday, November 26, if you plan to attend.



Open Hearts—Open Spaces: Reopening and Moving Into Our New Space

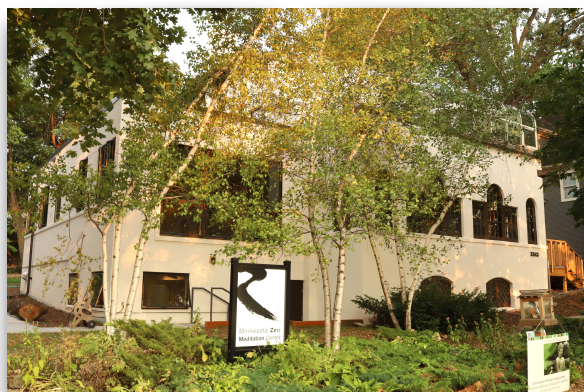
In June 2019, MZMC launched our "Open Hearts — Open Spaces" capital campaign. The purpose of this campaign was to renew and revitalize our century-old building. Due to the great generosity of our members and friends, we received the funds we needed to meet our renovation goals of stewardship, expansion, and accessibility.

Construction began in February and was completed at the beginning of August. We reopened the building and have been practicing together in person, in our new zendo for three months. It has been exciting and joyful to reestablish our connections with each other and develop routines in our new space.

The new zendo has a fine view of Bde Maka Ska and the back yard, as well as a simple, elegant design, and good light and ventilation. The project also

included adding a basement area under the new zendo (now the library), adding two handicap-accessible bathrooms, redoing the front entrance, and replacing the stucco and windows in the existing structure. There is now an accessible parking space and sidewalk leading to the back entrance. We also replaced the crumbling retaining walls around the garden spaces.

The MZMC Board of Directors would like to thank everyone whose contributions made this project possible. We were overwhelmed by the generous gifts of time, effort, and financial support. If you have not yet seen the new improvements, we hope that you will stop by and practice with us. There will be an open house during our Blank Friday event on November 26 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. We'd be pleased to give you a tour. (See page 4 for details.)



Blank Friday: A Zen Alternative to Black Friday

Learn about the healing power of facing a blank wall in meditation! Offerings are online and in person.

Open House November 26, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Drop in and tour the building during this time.

10:30 am: 60-minute class: The Healing Power of Facing A Blank Wall (No registration needed.)

1:00 pm: 60-minute class: Introduction to Mindfulness and Meditation (No registration needed.)

Meditation room: 20-minute sitting every half-hour, beginning at 10:30 am and ending at 3:00 pm (No registration needed.)



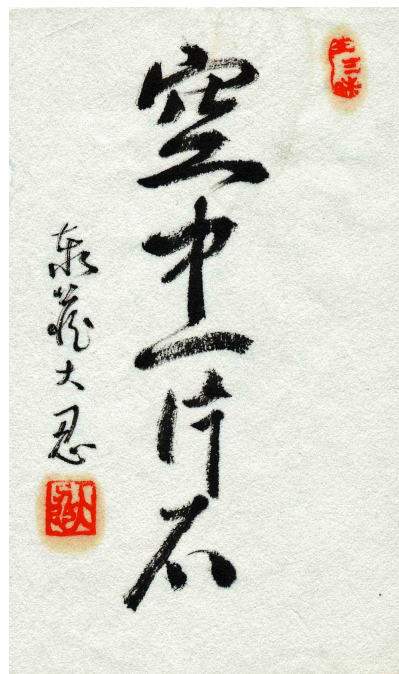
Our daily lives and routines have been upended during the COVID pandemic, and many people are using this time to find new perspectives as they rebuild and restructure their approach to life. On the day of the year that has become most associated with American consumerism and shopping, we'd like to offer people a respite and alternative that they can practice every day of their busy lives.

MZMC Celebrates 50 Years in 2022: Send Us Your Creative Expressions

As we move into our newly renovated space after sixteen months away, we are conscious of the fact that our community has been practicing Zen on this site for nearly 50 years. Next year will be our golden anniversary! To mark the occasion, and celebrate the sangha, we invite you to send us something you have created: poetry, essays, short stories, photographs—anything we can share in print form.

We will use your submissions in the materials we put together in the coming year: mailings, cards, electronic messages, and a booklet with a collection of your contributions. We will be sure to use your name, unless you let us know otherwise. Your submission could relate to your time at MZMC, or not. We just want to understand more about how you experience practice in our contemporary world.

Please send or deliver your submissions to the MZMC office. info@mnzencenter.org



"Within Emptiness,
One Practice, Sitting"
Calligraphy by Dainin Katagiri Roshi



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