

For immediate release

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## Public Invited to “Blank Friday: A Zen Alternative to Black Friday”

The Minnesota Zen Meditation Center (MZMC) invites the public to learn about and practice mindfulness at a special event on Friday, November 25, 2022, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The event is open to all at no cost. This eighth annual “Blank Friday” event—to be held at MZMC’s historic and newly remodeled facility at 3343 East Bde Maka Ska Parkway in Minneapolis—provides an opportunity for Minnesotans to take a one-hour class introducing them to mindfulness. The open house will feature two 60-minute classes on “Introduction to Mindfulness and Meditation” at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. The classes will be held in the center’s main hall. We’ll also be giving tours of our newly renovated facility throughout the day, so stop in and visit! See the our website for further details. <https://www.mnzencenter.org/blank-friday.html>

An additional attraction this year will be the public’s chance to tour the new addition to the building, which was completed in August 2021. Funded by a successful capital campaign, MZMC expanded the building’s footprint, adding a new and larger zendo to accommodate the organization’s growing membership. As part of the renovation project, the building’s accessibility has been increased, and environmental stewardship of the grounds will receive enhanced attention. A notable new addition to the building’s beautiful and serene grounds and garden is a traditional Japanese gate, built from wood and stone using the techniques of Japanese joinery. Tours will be offered throughout the day.

Ted O’Toole, head teacher at MZMC, said, “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. Meditation gives us a tool to return to our original stillness, and allows us relief from an out-of-control mind that constantly rushes forward into the future or rewinds back to the past.”

“A growing body of evidence shows meditation has a range of benefits for all types of people—not just for insomnia and anxiety sufferers, but for anyone interested in health and wellness. Our Blank Friday open house provides a good introduction for those who are curious about all the recent media attention or want to learn how to meditate,” said O’Toole.

For experienced meditators seeking a place that day to practice *zazen* (Zen’s form of silent, seated meditation), there will be a meditation room, with a 20-minute sitting every half-hour, beginning at 12:00 p.m. and ending at 3:30 p.m. Members of the Twin Cities’ other practice organizations and the wider contemplative community are invited to participate.

For more information about Blank Friday, visit the website at <https://www.mnzencenter.org/blank-friday.html> or visit MZMC’s Facebook page.

## About MZMC

Minnesota Zen Meditation Center has been on the leading edge of promoting mindfulness and meditation for 50 years. It was the first Zen meditation center in the Midwest, founded by the widely respected Japanese teacher Dainin Katagiri in 1972, and ever since has promoted a style of meditation that encourages joyful, compassionate, altruistic living. MZMC's mission is "to help people experience a deep and quiet joy—a joy that arises whenever we are fully engaged in the work or play of this moment." More information about our history and founders, can be found in our *50th anniversary booklet*. <https://www.mnzencenter.org/50th-online-booklet.html>

At least 10 meditation centers across the United States have been founded by people who originally trained at MZMC. The Center was founded with a gift from Robert Pirsig (*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*) and has trained many widely published authors on Zen, meditation, and mindful living.

Mindfulness has moved from a niche interest in the United States and Europe to take a central place in psychology and wellness practices. It now also has a strong presence in the business world, many different educational settings, and popular culture. While MZMC has remained steadfastly committed to its mission, the center's teachers and members welcome the opportunity to introduce others to a practice that has been handed down for millennia.