

www.mnzencenter.org • 3343 East Calhoun Parkway, Minneapolis, MN 55408 • (612) 822-5313

Sitting Quietly and Doing Nothing by Guiding Teacher Tim Burkett

In meditation, we steep ourselves in a stillness that is beyond time. But people get discouraged because too often it feels like we're steeping in our constantly churning, constantly chattering mind: our worries, moods, regrets, and heartaches are sometimes all we experience as we sit. In the beginning and often for a long time, our thoughts come so fast they seem to trip over each other. If we do get a moment of quietude, it's fleeting and tentative; and then we're back, immersed in the chatter of a busy mind, wondering if it's even worth our effort. We all feel this way from time to time.

But if we stick to it, we begin to feel the underlying fear below our persistent mental noise. We begin to see how chatter, chatter, chatter covers up what we don't want to deal with. It is difficult to experience our deepest hurts, longings, and existential pain in a direct and undiluted way. With a sincere meditation practice, however, there is no avoiding our deepest feelings.

When we just see our persistent thoughts without engaging or indulging them, this is pretty good.

Eventually, the thoughts become transparent to us,

and we begin to see the patterns from which they arise.

This often begins with an elusive and indistinct sense that something important is happening, but the significance is just out of reach, like vague shapes just beyond the horizon of

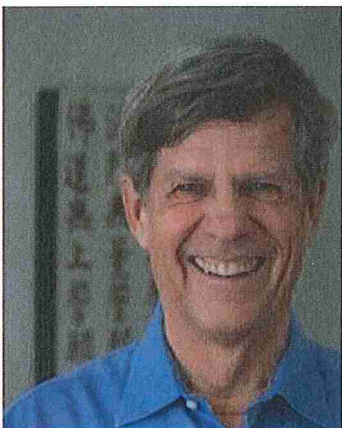
our awareness. It takes time for our inner eyes to adjust to the dark and to the sensation-based language of our inner teachers. We so quickly get caught up in regretting the past and rehearsing for the future.

People often tell me they can't meditate because their thoughts are too loud, too busy, too out of control. They are convinced that their meditative experience is different from that of others. But everybody says that. So if everyone says it, what is it really saying?

Our thoughts spin around and around, binding us to the wheel of reacting, regretting, and rehearsing. The wheel becomes the driving force of our life and it cuts us off from our true interconnected nature. It feels like we are stuck in what Zen teacher Joko Beck called "a substitute life."

When we step back from all our regretting and rehearsing just a little bit, we see that the world is much bigger and much warmer than we ever imagined. If we see the wheel of reactivity without judgment, there's a chance we can learn to dis-identify with it. But we can't do it by trying to dis-identify: if you're trying, then you're still caught on the wheel of should and shouldn't. You have just moved to a different spot.

Instead of getting distracted by the content of your thought dreams, look instead at the context within which they arise. What is the emotional environment surrounding them? Is it fear? Frustration? Worry? This is when our churning mind becomes our teacher, revealing fixations and patterns, while turning us toward the moment-by-moment cultivation of mental clarity, courage, and inner strength.



continued on page 3

Mission:

Our 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.

Guiding Teacher:

Tim Burkett

Asst. Guiding Teacher

Ted O'Toole

Dharma Heirs:

Ben Connelly

Guy Gibbon

Wanda Isle

Bussho Lahn

Susan Nelson

Ted O'Toole

Rosemary Taylor

Priests-in-Training:

Ann Bauleke

Stacy Lee King

Mark Turbak

Bill Woywod

Board Members:

Rebekah Anderson

Janet Brown

Karen Davis

Paul Gilsdorf

Jim Niland

Mark Turbak

Wayne Moskowitz

Randy Wedin

MZMC Board Update: Spring 2017

Zen Center's annual community meeting took place at the end of March. The Board reported on a healthy 2016, marked by growth in participation and revenue. Attendance at retreats and classes was strong, and there was a significant increase in the number of members and annual pledges. The community exceeded its budget for the year, and the surplus was placed in a capital improvement fund.

There were some important transitions to report on as well. The Board thanked outgoing board members Bussho Lahn, Deb Mielke, and Susan Nelson for three years of dedicated service to the community. They welcomed new Board members Rebekah Anderson, Janet Brown, and Mark Turbak.

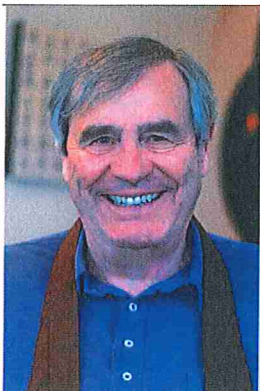
On the first Saturday of every June (June 3 this year), our East Calhoun neighborhood holds a day of family fun with yard sales, performances, and good food. The Board will sponsor a Zen Center open house, including tours, refreshments, and meditation instruction. Bring your family and friends for a walk by the lake and drop in to see what's happening at the Center. Details will be on the MZMC website.

Board meeting are on the third Sunday of each month and open to all!

MZMC Primer Series

The MZMC primer series has expanded, along with its popularity as a helpful resource for many. Written by senior teacher and dharma heir Guy Gibbon, the primers are composed of short overviews of topics of interest in Soto Zen Buddhism and in Buddhism more generally. The series is intended to give readers a comprehensive, but brief, introduction to a topic.

Each primer includes pointers to issues of relevance in a topic and a list of suggested readings. As a rule, the primers are no longer than six pages in length. The primers are a comfortable and informative way to start an introduction to topics of interest in Buddhism.



Guy Gibbon

Primers presently available include overviews of Early Buddhism, Yogacara, Chan Buddhism, Madhyamika Buddhism, and koan study. There are also primers on a number of sutras such as the Heart Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, and the Vimalakirti Sutra. Most recently added are the Lankavatara Sutra and the Lotus Sutra, so check our website's primer page for these additions.

<http://mnzencenter.org/primers.php>

We're all so grateful to Guy for his hours of careful work on this, and the generosity of his offering.



Spring Moss
Photo by Karen Davis

continued from page 1

But you have to steep yourself in the practice of sitting quietly and being aware, again and again and again, to get a sense of what I am talking about. You have to put the teabag in the hot water, over and

Inside Vasubandhu's Yogacara: A Practitioner's Guide

MZMC Senior Priest Ben Connelly released his new book in December 2016, and is currently on a national book tour. For his tour schedule see:

<http://mnzencenter.org/connellybook.php>

Below is an excerpt about Vasubandhu's "Thirty Verses."

The "Thirty Verses" reveal a four-fold model of how to offer our effort: being aware of the tremendous power of our cognitive and emotional habits, practicing mindfulness of our body and emotional states, being aware of the interdependence of all things, and practicing meditation with no object. In simplest terms, we could say this is about learning to be intimate with both ourselves and everything, so that we may be compassionate, joyous, and free. This model of practice allows us to shed harmful emotional states and realize the completeness of our connection to each thing. We can learn to meet the surly, disheveled man on the street without fear or judgement; to meet a frustrated and exhausted spouse with kind, wholehearted listening; to meet our own aching heart with warm loving attention; to meet our suffering planet with changes in how we

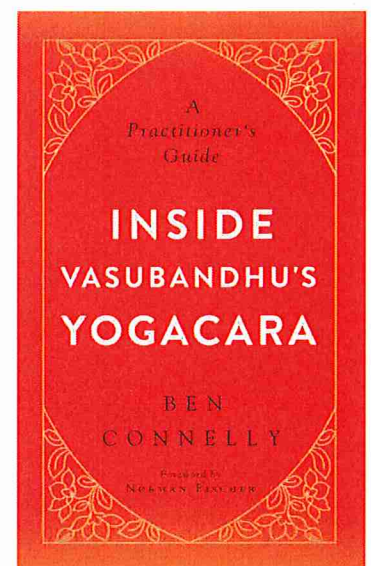
over. Eventually, the flavor of the water changes; it becomes sweet. And that sweetness bubbles up right in the middle of your churning mind and you find that you aren't getting so wigged out over things.

There's no need for despair if you only get a fleeting taste of this stillness, because it is not of time—but it completely permeates time. T.S. Eliot called it "the still point of the turning world." After a while, the still point begins to enter our consciousness when we least expect it. We taste it when we immerse ourselves in nature, when we feel a sense of intimacy with others or the world around us, and when we give ourselves fully to the simple activities of daily life.

Regardless of the speed of your churning mind, the still point is there, waiting for you to tap into it.

consume; to not even really meet anything, but realize we are all already completely part of one unknowable wholeness, to be the stillness of a lake unbroken by the ripples of a fallen raindrop.

Everything written in this book is rooted and arises from meditative experience and is designed to help us cultivate the peace and harmony found in devoting oneself to seeing things as they are while engaging in kind action. I heartily pray that my effort in writing this book, and your effort in engaging with these teachings, may carry forward both Vasubandhu's vision for how to give ourselves to the well-being of the world, and the central intention of all Buddhist teaching: the alleviation of suffering.



Join us for the 2017 Zen Initiation Ceremony

MZMC will hold a Zen Initiation ceremony on September 9 at 7:00 p.m.

This ancient and beautiful ceremony (often called *jukai*) has become a bi-annual tradition here at Zen Center and 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 and is both widespread and highly respected throughout the world.

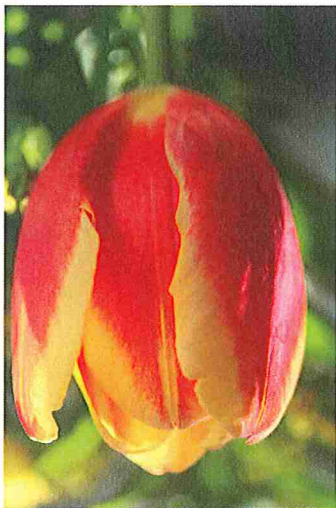
The initiates spend months preparing with classes, study, and meetings with their chosen preceptor. With the guidance and support of our sewing teacher Rosemary Taylor, each initiate also sews a *rakusu*—a small version of the traditional Buddhist robe that is worn around the neck. The initiates will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

If you're able, please join us on Saturday evening, September 9, for this elegant and inspiring event!



Shakyamuni Buddha

Photo by Karen Davis



NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
TWIN CITIES, MN
PERMIT 30308

Minnesota Zen
Meditation Center
3343 East Calhoun Parkway
Minneapolis, MN 55408
mzencenter.org • info@mzencenter.org
612-822-5313

