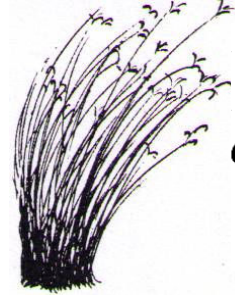


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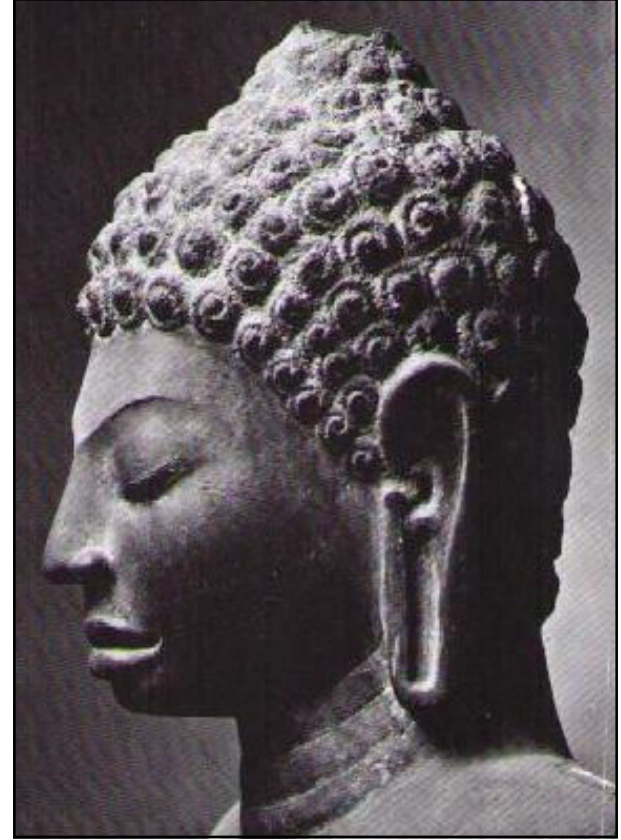
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Prairie Wind



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Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple is a Soto Zen Buddhist temple established for Zen practice. The center follows the tradition established in Japan by Zen Master Eihei Dogen in the 13th century and transmitted in this century by two Masters, Rev. Shunryu Suzuki, founder of San Francisco Zen Center and author of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* and Rev. Dainin Katagiri, who assisted Rev. Suzuki in San Francisco and later founded Minnesota Zen Meditation Center in Minneapolis. Rev. Katagiri was instrumental in establishing Nebraska Zen Center in 1975.

Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW, is NZC's Head Priest. He trained with Rev. Katagiri and was ordained by him. Rev. Chowaney also trained at Tassajara Zen Monastery in California and in Japan at Zuio-ji and Shogo-ji monasteries. He received formal Dharma Transmission from Rev. Katagiri and has been authorized to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan. Rev. Chowaney is the founder of the Order of the Prairie Wind. (OPW)

Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple is NZC's sister temple. ZCP also follows the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition established by Zen Master Dogen.

Rev. Kyoki Roberts, OPW, is ZCP's Head Priest and a founding member of the Order of the Prairie Wind. She is the senior ordained student of Rev. Nonin Chowaney and has trained at Hokyoji Monastery in Minnesota, San Francisco Zen Center and Green Gulch Farm in California, and Zuioji and Shogoji monasteries in Japan. Rev. Roberts received Dharma Transmission from Rev. Chowaney and was authorized to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan. She was appointed to serve as ZCP's Head Priest in 2001

Prairie Wind (© 2014 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

Cover: Thai Buddha

We **always** need material for *Prairie Wind*. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, etc. The deadline for publication in our **Winter** issue is **November 1st**.

Websites for **Nebraska Zen Center** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh** are at: www.prairiewindzen.org.

Nebraska Zen Center's e-mail address is: heartland@prairiewindzen.org.
Zen Center of Pittsburgh's e-mail address is: kyoki@deepspringzen.org

ACCEPTING THE TRUTH WHEREVER WE FIND IT

by Nonin Chowaney

At Heartland Temple in Omaha, we have two study groups a year that last for four consecutive Saturdays. For the past few years, we've been looking at poetry that reflects the Zen Buddhist perspective and have gone over Japanese and Chinese poems in translation, most by Zen Buddhist masters and lay practitioners like Wang Wei, Chia Tao, Sengai, and Ryokan. We've also studied poetry by American, European, and Middle Eastern poets who have little or no connection with Buddhism, and we have found their work both illuminating and rewarding.

We've found that when people awaken to things as they are — not as how they think they are or how they're conditioned to experience them — they experience things the same way, no matter what their religious or cultural background. They see that all life is at its core the same, no matter where or when it's lived, that all beings, not only human beings, are impermanent, constantly changing, and are empty of anything fixed or permanent. They also see that human life is intimately connected with all other beings and that we can experience and live this connection if we see things as they are. They also see that ideas and written or spoken words are only representations; they are not reality but only reflect it. And, they see that past and future do not exist; the only place we have to live is in this present moment.

The importance of awakening directly to human reality is stressed not only in Zen Buddhism but in Buddhism in gen-

eral. However, many non-Buddhists also recognize this importance. Here's a short poem by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado (1875-1939). It's from his *Moral Proverbs and Folk Songs*, translation by Robert Bly:

*Beyond living and dreaming
there is something more important:
waking up.*

Another poem by Machado, translated by Robert Bly, indicates one aspect of what we awaken to:

*The deepest words
of the wise men teach us
the same as the whistle of the wind
when it blows
or the sound of the water when it is
flowing.*

This poem could have just as easily been written by a 12th century Zen Master.

Here's another poem on a the same theme, written by the Indian poet Kabir (c.1398-c.1448), also translated by Robert Bly:

The Holy Pools Have Only Water

*There is nothing but water in the holy
pools.
I know, I have been swimming in
them.
All the gods sculpted of wood and
ivory can't say a word.
I know, I have been crying out to
them.
The Sacred Books of the East are noth*

continued on page 4

Accepting the Truth

from page 3

-
ing but words.
I looked through their covers one day
sideways.
What Kabir talks of is only what he has
lived through.
If you have not lived through some-
thing it is not true.

A similar insight is expressed by the
Shiva tradition wandering Kashmiri
poet Lal Ded (1320-1392). The transla-
tion is by Jane Hirschfield and appears
in her collection, *Women in Praise of
the Sacred*:

*To learn the scriptures is easy,
to live them, hard.
The search for the Real is
no simple matter.*

*Deep in my looking,
the last words vanished.
Joyous and silent,
the waking that met me there.*

Eventually, in the words of Eihei Do-
gen, the 13th Century Japanese Zen
Master, we have to "sit down and look
within" for the answers to our ques-
tions. Our true search begins and ends
there, and Lal Ded's awakening oc-
curred there, for no one can awaken for
us.

Here's another poem by Lal Ded, also
translated by Jane Hirschfield:
*Coursing in emptiness,
I, Lalla,
dropped off body and mind,

and stepped into the Secret Self.*

Look: Lalla the sedgeflower

blossomed a lotus.

How close to the above is the following
advice in the poem by Han Shan (c. 730)
the Zen Buddhist wanderer (trans. by
Red Pine):

*Talking about food won't make you full
talking about clothes won't keep you
warm
only eating food will make you full
only wearing clothes will keep you warm
people who don't know how to reason
just say a buddha is hard to find
look inside your mind there's the buddha
don't look around outside.*

Awakening to and cultivating "no self" is
another important aspect of Zen Buddhist
practice. Because all beings are "empty
of anything fixed or permanent," There is
nothing inside any human being that can
be called "self." We are transforming
moment by moment, depending on our
actions, with nothing at the core. This not
only means that there is "no self" but also
that we are intimately connected to all
other beings, for they have "no self" also.

The 12th century Sufi poet Rumi (1207-
1273) expresses the realization of no self
in the following poem (trans. John
Moyné and Coleman Barks):

*One went to the door of the Beloved
and knocked.
A voice answered, "Who is there?"
He answered, "It is I."
The voice said, "There is no room for
Me and Thee."
The door was shut.
After a year of solitude and depriva-
tion he returned and knocked.
A voice from within asked, "Who is
there?"*

continued on next page

Accepting the Truth

from previous page

*The man said, "It is thee."
The door was opened for him.*

The "Beloved" in this poem refers to
the object of the spiritual search. Some
refer to this as "God," "Buddha," "The
Great Spirit" or "The One," but all refer
to the same thing. To experience this,
we have to drop the ego, the sense of
self that keeps us from realizing our
true nature and our intimate connection
with that which we are seeking. In an
earlier poem referenced here, Lal Ded
referred to this process as body and
mind "dropped off." In the following
poem, translated by Jane Hirschfield, Lal
Ded refers to the object of her search as
"the Truthful One:"

*I was passionate,
filled with longing.
I searched
far and wide.*

*But the day
that the Truthful One
found me,
I was at home.*

Another religious practitioner who
wrote on this subject was Angelus
Siliseus (1624-1677), a German Catho-
lic priest and well-known poet. He ex-
pressed the spiritual search and its out-
come this way:

*God, whose love and joy
are present everywhere
Can't come and visit you
unless you aren't there*

Angelus Siliseus also experienced prop-
er searching in this way (both
translations by Stephen Mitchell):

*God is a pure no-thing
concealed in now and here
The less you reach for him,
the more he will appear*

Awakening to the true self is our mis-
sion as Zen Buddhist practitioners, but
this is not the end of practice. Eventu-
ally, we have to "Return to the Market
Place with Bliss-bestowing Hands,"
which is metaphorically represented in
the tenth of the classic "Oxherding
Pictures," a blueprint of Zen Buddhist
practice. Another Zen phrase expresses
it this way: "Up for Enlightenment;
Down to Save all Beings." This is a
metaphor, of course. This "going up"
can occur anywhere, on our cushions
in the zendo, in cabins in the woods, or
in our bedrooms.

In Asia, there is a tradition of Zen Bud-
dhist practitioners going to the moun-
tains and either practicing with a teach-
er and other monks in temples or mon-
asteries or by themselves in seclusion
after completing their training with a
teacher.

In early Christianity, the "mountain
metaphor" was expressed as the "desert
metaphor." This is explored in the fol-
lowing poem by Mechtild of Magde-
burg (c. 1207-c.1282 or 1297). She
was a medieval *Beguine*, a lay Catholic
practitioner in medieval Saxony. This
poem is also translated by Jane Hirsch-
field:

The desert has many teachings

*In the desert,
Turn toward emptiness,*

continued on page 14

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

FALL PRACTICE PERIOD begins with a **Two-day Sesshin** on **September 13th and 14th**. Practice Period provides structure for intensifying one's practice and sangha connections for a specific period of time in three areas: **(1) daily practice at home** (sitting and devotional services), **(2) regular involvement at the temple** (e.g., specific morning or evening sittings, Sunday morning practice, or work practice, and **(3) attendance at special events** (e.g., sesshins, study groups, or precept ceremonies. Practice Period students will also keep a **practice journal** and will **meet with Nonin as a group** two or three times during the period, which will end with Rohatsu Sesshin (Dec. 1-7).



Joe Smolsky and Nonin
After **Lay Initiation** in
March. Joe's dharma
name is **Busshin** (Buddha
Heart). **Congratulations,
Joe!**

More photos on page 12

This Summer, sangha members have been **painting the exterior trim** on the lower story of the of the temple. **Anyone who can help** with this project should contact Nonin. We've hired a painting contractor to paint the trim on the upper story, and **the work should begin in a couple of weeks**.

Also, due to **hail and wind damage** to the asbestos shingles on our original building's roofs, our insurance company is **replacing the roofing**. **Work on this project should begin within a month**.

Many thanks to those who've been doing temple jobs this Spring and Summer. We've been able to keep the temple clean and bright, especially the practice areas, due to the work of sangha members. **Special thanks** go to **Shoju Pam Griffin**, who once again this year has put in a lot of time on the gardens and grounds. **Thanks also** to the many sangha members who have helped her.

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER WINTER EVENTS

SESSHIN

There will be two sesshins at NZC this Fall: a **Two-day Sesshin** on **September 13th and 14th** and a **One-day Sesshin** on **October 25th**. Fees: \$40 per day for members; \$50 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. **E-mail** us at heartland@prairiewindzen.org or call **402-551-9035** to register.

The October One-day Sesshin will be led by **Daishin Eric McCabe**, most recently of Mt. Equity Zendo in Pennsylvania, who will be re-locating to Eastern Iowa this Fall. Daishin is an accomplished young Soto Zen Buddhist teacher. This is a great opportunity to meet and practice with him.

FALL FILM SERIES

Instead of a Dharma Study Class this Fall, We'll be having a four-week film series. The films all have Buddhist themes and will be shown at the temple at 7:00 p.m. on four successive Friday evenings: Sept. 26th and October 3rd, 10th, and 17th. We'll be showing **Enlightenment Guaranteed, Why has Bodhidharma Left for the East?, Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter . . . And Spring**, and **Travelers and Magicians**. Google the titles and you'll find lots of info.

WEEKLY ZENDO SCHEDULE — NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER

Morning

Tuesday thru Friday and on Sunday
6:00 - 7:00 — Sitting Meditation
(Walking as Needed)

7:00 - 7:30 — Service
7:30 - 7:45 — Cleaning

Sunday Only

8:30 — Zazen Instruction
9:00 - 9:25 — Sitting Meditation
9:25 - 9:35 — Walking Meditation
9:35 - 10:00 — Sitting Meditation
10:00 - 10:10 — Service

Evening

Tuesday — Wednesday
7:00 - 8:30 — Sitting Meditation
(Walking as needed)

Thursday
6:00 - 8:30 — Classes as scheduled

Friday
7:00 - 8:30 — Sitting Meditation
(Walking as needed)

We are closed on Saturday & Monday.

If you are new to the temple, you must have zazen instruction before joining us. Please arrive by 8:30 on Sunday morning for instruction.

ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH SANGHA NOTES

If you want to receive monthly schedule updates and last-minute changes to events, join our e-mail list. Go to <http://www.deepspringzen.org/list.htm> and register. Or, e-mail ZCP at kyoki@deepspringzen.org. You will also receive our monthly e-Newsletter.

Deep Spring Temple continues its reduced schedule due to Rev. Kyoki Roberts's medical leave. The **current practice schedule** appears on the next page.

Our **new website** should be up and running when you receive this. Please take a look, and if you are not signed in, please consider doing so. We are at www.deepspringzen.org. A deep bow of gratitude to **Candace Belako** for her long hours of work to make this upgrade and to **Keisei Tony Roscoe** for his beautiful photos. The upkeep of the gardens you see in some of the photos are the work of **Jigetsu Kaethejan Bleicher**, who made many donations of plants and labor. Many thanks to her. Also, many thanks to **Jiun Dennis Moran** who has generously donated his time in maintaining our financial records.

This past July, we were honored with a **Writing Workshop** led by **Rev. Catherine Gammon**. In August, **Rev. Ryuzen Pellett** from Seattle led sesshin. Both of these teachers were also being interviewed for assuming the role of Head Priest here at Deep Spring. As of this writing, no decisions have been made by the Sangha. Please stay tuned!

Our **deepest bows of condolence** go out to Rev. Jisen Coghlan and her family at the death of Jisen's mother, **Julian Kurtz**. Julia was always a strong supporter of Deep Spring and of her daughter's role as a Zen Buddhist priest. Julia, always the most elegant and kind human being, will be missed.

Kyoki continues to struggle with the entrapped nerve in her left leg and wishes to offer her deepest thanks to Sangha members for their continued efforts to maintain the schedule and the property. A new drug has helped her condition, and she continues to consider treatment options.

Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple, 124 Willow Ridge Road,
Sewickley, PA 15143 tel: (412) 741-1262 e-mail: kyoki@deepspringzen.org website:
www.deepspringzen.org

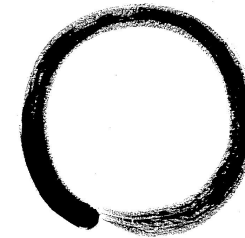
ZCP WINTER EVENTS

SEPTEMBER	25-29	— Zen Center Closed	
7	— World Peace Ceremony		
28	— Founders Memorial Service	DECEMBER	
		1-7	— Rohatsu Sesshin
OCTOBER		23-27	— Zen Center Closed
4	— Study Group (Song of the Grass Roof Hermitage) with Rev. Ben Connelly		[Sesshin is an intense period of practice consisting of sitting/walking meditation, services, work and dokusan (private inter- views with teachers). You must sign up for this event.]
5	— World Peace Ceremony		
NOVEMBER			
2	— World Peace Ceremony		

ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Due to Kyoki's current physical disability, we are only open on these days at these times:

Tues. & Thurs: Zazen and Service, 6:30 a.m.
Wednesday: Zazen, 6:00 - 7:15 p.m.
Sunday: Intro to Zen, 9:30 a.m.
Zazen, service, and dharma
talk, 10:00 a.m. till 1:00 p.m.



WHITE LOTUS SANGHA NOTES

The **White Lotus Sangha**, a group affiliated with NZC, meets on Friday evenings in four Nebraska prisons, **Nebraska State Penitentiary** and **Lincoln Correctional Center** in Lincoln, **Tecumseh State Correctional Institute** in Tecumseh, and **Omaha Correctional Center** in Omaha.

For further information, see **the Religious Coordinator** at either of the above institutions, e-mail heartland@prairiewindzen.org call (402) 551-9035, or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363.**

The Impermanence of Sangha

by Zenryu Vicki Grunwald

Over the past several months, I've had the pleasure of watching several sangha members be released from prison. While a part of me is proud and excited about seeing the men embark on new opportunities, another part of me is sad. Certainly, I will miss them, but it's more than that. The sangha is directly affected. With men changing prisons, going to solitary (the hole), being released, or just leaving the group, the sangha membership fluctuates.

Of course, the same thing is true on the outside. People move away, decide the religion is not right for them, or only come to learn what an Eastern religion is about for a school project. Attendance waxes and wanes depending on a multitude of factors.

We all know that everything is impermanent. So, nobody should be surprised to know that a sangha is also impermanent. Many Buddhist writings refer to sangha as a jewel, or part of the triple treasure — Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Several chants in our sutra book mention taking refuge in these treasures. One chant, "The Three Refuges" states "I take refuge in Sangha. May all beings support harmony in the community, free from hindrance." One of the vows we take when sewing a rakusu in preparation for Lay Initiation is to practice with a sangha. Obviously, sangha is critically important to the practice and living a life following the precepts.

With sangha being a cornerstone, its impermanence may seem to be a hindrance. But, I think the real jewel of the sangha is its impermanence because it's something we create and is therefore special. Each person contributes in his or her

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TENDING THE OX ZENDO SANGHA NOTES

A group affiliated with NZC meets weekly on **Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm** at **Branched Oak Farm, 17015 NW 70th St, Raymond, NE 68428-4041.** For further information, e-mail or call **Kanho Doug Dittman** at doug@windstream.net (402-783-2124). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

Tending the Ox will offer three **One-day retreats** on the following **Sundays: September 14, October 26th, and December 14th.** They will run from 9:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m., and a **mid-day meal** will be served. Attendance is limited to **10 participants**, and the fee is **\$30 per day.**



Mu (nothing)
Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

LAY INITIATION



Ring the Entrance Bell



Receiving Lineage Papers



Entrance Bows



Chanting the Heart Sutra



Preparing to Offer Incense

SANGHA MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER / ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH

Membership

While no one needs to formally join either temple to share in our practices, we invite you to become a member of either Nebraska Zen Center or Zen Center of Pittsburgh. Members are people who feel that Zen Buddhism is an important part of their lives and who wish to express that feeling by joining a community of practitioners.

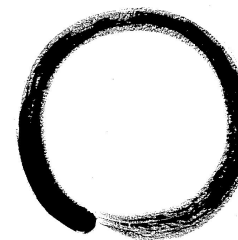
If you are interested in becoming a member, please speak with the appropriate person at either temple after Sunday services.

Financial Support

Buddhist communities have always relied on the generosity of their supporters. For income, we depend on those who believe in the good of what we do and wish to nourish it. No one is refused temple membership due to an inability to pay. We do, however, encourage members to commit to our financial support through monthly pledges.

We also encourage members to exhibit this support through participation in work projects.

The amount of your pledge is your personal decision. We ask you to support the temple at a level appropriate to your means. For those who participate regularly, we suggest a monthly pledge that reflects one hour of your earnings per week, or four hours per month. Because we are non-profit religious corporations, all donations are tax deductible.



Accepting the Truth

from page 5

Fleeing the self.

*Stand alone,
Ask no one's help,
And your being will quiet,
Free from the bondage of things.*

*Those who cling to the world,
Endeavor to free them;
Those who are free, praise.*

*Care for the sick,
But live alone,
Happy to drink from the waters of sorrow,
To kindle Love's fire
With the twigs of a simple life.*

Thus you will live in the desert.

For Mechtild as for Zen Buddhist practitioners, awakening is primary, but after awakening, "saving all beings" by sharing our lives with them and helping them while living a simple life is equally important.

The Sufi poet Rumi addressed this giving of oneself in the following poem (trans. John Moyne and Coleman Barks):

The Image of Your Body

*You've made it out of the city,
That image of your body, trembling
with
traffic
and fear slips behind.
Your face arrives in the redbud trees,
and
the tulips*

You're still restless.

*Climb up the ladder to the roof.
You're by yourself a lot,
become the one that when you walk in,
luck shifts to the one who needs it.
If you've not been fed, be bread.*

Except for the one by Han Shan, the poems I've presented here were all written by poets with no connection to Buddhism that I know of. All of them, however, could have, with a few changes in vocabulary or other references could have been written by ancient or contemporary Buddhist poets, for the truths revealed in them are universal and timeless. I've learned to accept the truth wherever and however I find it, whether in daily life or in the poetry of Non-Buddhist poets.

Rev. Nonin Chowaney is the abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple.

Impermanence of Sangha

from page 10

own way in each moment. Over time, the sangha takes on a life of its own. The shared rituals, commitment, collection of experiences and how we manifest the practice influences how the sangha lives and breathes. To support harmony in the community as The Three Refuges chant instructs in this living, breathing community is a beautiful thing. I will certainly miss those who have moved on, but I am grateful for the beauty and harmony the sangha experienced because of their presence. I appreciate the sangha more, not less, because of its impermanence.

Vicki Grunwald serves as a Lay Minister for White Lotus Sangha.



Turning the Wheel of Dharma — India

CALLIGRAPHY FOR SALE ON OUR WEBSITE



Mu (nothing)

Nonin's calligraphy can be purchased through our website, at www.prairiewindzen.org. Click on **Nebraska Zen Center** and go to Nonin's calligraphy pages.

There are **over fifty items for sale**, one and two-character pieces, longer phrases, and specialty items. All are **signed and stamped originals** and are written on high-quality paper, either Canson watercolor paper, Rives BFK, or archival matboard.

Nonin also accepts **commissions**

to write temple names, individual dharma names, and specific characters or Zen phrases.

For further information, contact him directly at the following

e-mail address: heartland@prairiewindzen.org.

We sell and ship the calligraphy unframed. **Each piece can be mounted and framed by a good framer using traditional methods.**

All profits from website calligraphy sales go directly to Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple.

ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

In Soto Zen Buddhism, our core practice is zazen (sitting in Zen), manifesting our true self (no self) completely and wholly in the present moment. However, our true self can not only be manifested on our cushions but also in every moment of our lives. Zen Buddhist practice cultivates this manifestation and is not limited to sitting on our cushions.

Our practice also consists of walking meditation (kinhin), devotional practices (chanting, bowing, ritual, and ceremony), work practice, art practice, dharma study (academic and otherwise), meetings with the teacher, and ethical behavior. The last one, ethical behavior, is sometimes not stressed enough in contemporary Zen Buddhism, so we'd like to present here what it means to us by presenting some sections of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple's "Statement of Ethical Principles and Procedures."

Nonin Chowaney
Abbot, Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple

The Preface to this statement reads:

The intent of this statement is to nourish and protect the treasure of Sangha and to promote harmonious relationships among all its members and participants.

A compassionate standard of behavior is expected from everyone who participates in NZC activities. This standard is based on respect for each person as a unique expression of Buddha nature regardless of age, race, gender, ethnic background, appearance, sexual orientation, physical abilities, political beliefs, social class, or occupation.

Then, the statement presents the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts, which Zen Buddhist practitioners aspire to as their ethical guidelines and which are formally accepted as our vows during Lay Initiation and Priest Ordination Ceremonies:

The Three Refuges:

We take refuge in Buddha
We take refuge in Dharma
We take refuge in Sangha

The Three Pure Precepts:

continued on next page

Ethical Behavior

from previous page

To do no harm

To do good

To live to benefit all beings

The Ten Prohibitory Precepts:

A follower of the Way does not kill but rather cultivates and encourages life.

A follower of the Way does not take what is not given but rather cultivates and encourages generosity.

A follower of the Way does not misuse sexuality but rather cultivates and encourages open, honest, and acceptable relationships.

A follower of the Way does not lie but rather cultivates and encourages truthful communication.

A follower of the Way does not intoxicate self or others but rather cultivates and encourages clarity.

A follower of the Way does not slander but rather cultivates and encourages respectful speech.

A follower of the Way neither extols self nor demeans others but rather cultivates awareness of the interdependent nature of self.

A follower of the Way does not attach to anything, even the teaching, but rather cultivates mutual support and shares the dharma with all beings.

A follower of the Way does not harbor ill will but rather cultivates loving-kindness, understanding, and forgiveness.

A follower of the Way does not turn away from the Three Treasures but rather cultivates and encourages taking refuge in them.

Appropriate action. We aspire to relationships that are characterized by appropriate action, relationships based on trust, cooperation, openness to differences, good communication, fairness, kindness, and respect. The Sangha cultivates these qualities as the practice of keeping the precepts and developing good dharma friendships.

The Ethics Statement then goes on to clarify what the spirit of Appropriate and Inappropriate action is based on the Precepts:

OPENING YOUR HEART

by Dainin Katagiri

from *You Have to Say Something*,
Shambala Publications, 1998

For anyone living a spiritual life, the most important practice is openheartedness. But dealing with life with compassion and kindness is not easy. We tend to live in terms of “me.” But if you’re interested in the spiritual life, you will have to consider more than just yourself.

All religions emphasize the importance of openness of heart. But very few of us actually practice it in our daily lives. So day after day, year after year, century after century, wise people point this out to us. They know how egotistical we are. But even one person practicing love and compassion is a great source of peace in the world.

Whatever the future brings, we have to continue to seek a world based on the practice of openness of heart. Perfect openness of heart brings into life flexibility, tenderness, and magnanimity. This can’t be fully explained conceptually. You can’t put your finger on it, but you can feel it. To live this way is what you’re really looking for.

Usually we live our lives only in terms of the world we can see. When we do, we emphasize ourselves. We place the “I” first. Even when we take up the spiritual life, we place the “I” first. In other words, we pull everything down to the level of our personal views and feelings. We never forget ourselves. This I why, at bottom, we’re often irritated or uneasy. And the more we

place the “I” first, the more irritation, uneasiness, suffering, and fear we feel.

What we tend to ignore is the world that sees us. This is not the world you think you see or hear. Nevertheless, you are supported by this world. It is actually the world as it is *before* you are conscious of it – before you form some idea about it. If you emphasize yourself, you will completely forget this world that sees, holds, and sustains you.

For instance, since I’m the head of a Zen group, even though my life is my life, my life is not really my life. My life is really the life of all of the group. So, very naturally, even though I don’t like it, we set up a schedule for zazen, and lectures, and retreats, and so forth – and I have to follow it. In other words, the group has set me in a certain way of life. In terms of my ego, I don’t like it. I’d rather do just what I want to do, and not always follow the schedule.

We all fell this way from time to time. We say, “Don’t tell me what I should do!” But we can’t take care of our lives very well just based on our personal preferences. There’s a big world that sees you. You can’t ignore this world. So, even though I might not like it sometimes, the group provides me with the great opportunity to sit zazen. So when the opportunity appears, I feel grateful that I can sit zazen with all beings.

We all have memories and habits and

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Ethical Behavior

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Inappropriate action. Inappropriate action is harmful to ourselves and others. It may include physical violence, sexual misconduct or harassment, drug and substance abuse, malicious gossip, extreme or regular displays of anger, insults or demeaning comments, and manipulative or duplicitous speech or action. Persons who encounter inappropriate actions from any member of the NZC Sangha -- including its teachers and senior instructors -- or who themselves practice such conduct, should be aware that these actions violate the spirit of the precepts and the practice of appropriate action.

As a Sangha, we at Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple are committed to solving problems and resolving differences that may arise from inappropriate action. The rest of the Ethics Statement provides a Grievance Procedure by which such actions by Sangha members may be addressed and resolved. This procedure begins with Informal Resolution, in which the aggrieved person directly contacts the person (s) who has (have) acted inappropriately and tries to reach an understanding and resolve differences.

If such contact does not resolve the issue, the aggrieved person may request a meeting with the most senior priest not involved in the grievance, the President of the Board of Directors and the person who has allegedly acted inappropriately to resolve the grievance. If the issue is not resolved in this meeting, the aggrieved person may request a meeting in writing with all concerned parties and includes procedures by which processes instituted by a trained mediator are instituted to resolve the grievance. If the issue still remains unresolved, the aggrieved person may request the Board of Directors to form a Reconciliation Council to hear and resolve the issue. The Council shall then make a finding which will be binding on all parties. Any person who acts inappropriately is expected to make every effort to realign their conduct in accord with the precepts and to take the actions necessary to restore the harmony of the Sangha and to mitigate harm done. Such atonement is an integral part of our spiritual practice.

Copies of the Ethics Statement are readily available at the temple.



White Buddha
Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

Opening Your Heart

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patters in our lives, and sometimes, even though we feel good, they don't allow us to open our hearts. Intellectually we know we should, but emotionally it seems like we can't. Still, you can do it. Strictly speaking, openness of heart is beyond all speculation. It is the total picture of your life as you live it from day to day.

If you want to practice compassion, you must accept simultaneously the world you see and the world that sees you. You can't judge your life just in

compassion. We can't conceive of what real compassion and openness of heart are, but if you tap into them, you can feel them. If you learn to deal with your life with compassion, magnanimity, and flexibility, you will become very tender, generous, and kind. This all that is necessary.

We do not need an explanation. No matter how long we ask about why we are so egoistic, we will never find a clear answer. Nevertheless, right in the middle of this "no answer," your life goes on.

Compassion is like springwater under the ground. Your life is like a pipe that can tap into that underground spring. When you tap into it, water immediately comes up. So drive your pipe into the ground. Tap into the water of compassion.

terms of what you can see – that is, from your ego-centered perspective. You must practice patience, calmness of mind, and mindfulness. If you don't confine yourself to just your own view of things, these come up, naturally. When you just sit down in zazen, you can feel something. Even though you don't know what it is, it just arises, right here, right now.

Compassion is like springwater under the ground. Your life is like a pipe that can tap into that underground spring. When you tap into it, water immediately comes up. So drive your pipe into the ground. Tap into the water of

Even though we don't understand, we can all take a deep breath. We can all practice forgetting ourselves. Forgetting yourself does not mean destroying yourself. Forgetting yourself is just to see yourself from a different angle: the way the world sees you. Then you will see not just your little ego self but your true self, your big self, which includes all beings.

When I was fourteen years old my mother died. The world seemed completely dark. I felt there was no hope for me. Day after day, I cried in my bed. It seemed that the more I cried, the more I tried to reach for her, the further from

Opening Your Heart

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me she became. So I cried even more. I cried constantly. But, all of a sudden, I stopped crying. I felt my mother had come into my heart. I can't explain it in words, but there was no longer any separation between me and my mother. She was in my heart.

This goes for you, too. There is you and then there is the world. If there is even a small gap between them, we fill it with thought. As long as we create this gap, we will never understand. But in truth, there is no gap between you and the world. To become one with your object is true openness of heart. This is why we do zazen.

