



Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

A Center for Mindful Living

652 17th Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413 • Issue No. 57 • Winter 2022

The Beating Heart of Compassion

by Michael Genpo O'Neal

One time, during a visit of mine to relatives on their farm in Iowa, my great aunt Olena and I went to the church cemetery to care for the graves of family members.

While we were there, I noticed three side-by-side headstones for very young men, all with the same last name and all of whom had died in 1917–1918. I asked my aunt if she knew about them. She told me that the two older boys had died overseas in World War I. The youngest son, too young to go to war, had died in the flu pandemic.

It broke my heart to hear this—feeling the sorrow of that family. Standing in front of the tombstones I felt the pain as fresh and enduring. I thought of the boys growing up, playing and working and laughing, with no one imagining how soon and in what painful ways their lives would come to an end.

We're now approaching two years since another deadly pandemic began sweeping through the world, with no clear "end" yet in sight. Over five million people worldwide have died from COVID-19; as I write this, an average of over 1,100 people are dying every day in the United States. In a sense these are just numbers, but every single death is an entry into deep grief for the many people close to those who have died.

And the pandemic has many effects beyond deaths. There is "long haul" COVID, when debilitating symptoms continue indefinitely. There are the economic effects, very severe for many. There is the social isolation, bringing loneliness and depression. And there are the social strains brought by differing attitudes and behaviors in response to the pandemic.

This is a global pandemic, and we know that people throughout the world—virtually every person—is impacted in unwelcome ways. In a real sense, we are all infected by the pandemic.

In Buddhism there is a great bodhisattva named Avalokiteshvara—hearer of the cries of the world. In ancient India Avalokiteshvara presented as male; in China and Japan, as female—Guanyin or Kannon. Avalokiteshvara is the bodhisattva of compassion. He/she has the capacity to be open to the suffering in the world without being carried away in despair. The object of the bodhisattva's compassion is every being who suffers, including ourselves. We can be this bodhisattva.

Someone once summed up the basic message of the books written by a contemporary American Buddhist teacher as, "Life is so hard, how can we be anything but kind?" This is the beating heart of compassion.

Suffering is a Dharma gate, calling for an appropriate response. In Buddhism a buddha—a fully awakened being—is considered to be born when two qualities come together in full measure—wisdom and compassion. As we continue in this time of COVID as well as the myriad other sufferings in the world, may our hearts open to all who suffer, and may we find beneficial ways to act.

2021 Year–End Appeal

All we have to do is just live day by day. How we live is the most important thing. Practice is nothing but giving, day by day....The purpose of human life is just to plant good seeds day by day, that is enough. If we do this, we create human culture, not only for us and the people around us, but for people from generation to generation.

—Dainin Katagiri Roshi

Dear Friend,

Katagiri Roshi shared this insight decades ago, but what an important message it is for us now.

As we approach the end of a second year of living with large-scale uncertainty—a pandemic that continues to ravage lives, political confrontations that morph into enmity and violence, economic instability, and an unfolding climate crisis—many of us are feeling weary and demoralized.

In the midst of all this, Compassionate Ocean continues to put into practice the way Katagiri Roshi describes, providing support for a community to plant good seeds together, day by day.

Throughout 2021 Compassionate Ocean has continue to offer Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction classes, Buddhist Studies classes, weekly meditation and Dharma talks, and daily meditation sessions—all on Zoom, in response to conditions brought on by the pandemic. In addition, we invested in the Center’s future by hiring a talented Administrative Director who, every day, strengthens our ability to be of service.

We are so grateful to all who have given generous support in the past, which has made all of this possible. Thanks to people like you, the Center received \$23,000 for our Year-end Appeal in 2020. These funds, along with membership, other donations, program fees, and assistance from the Federal government through the Payroll Protection Plan, made it possible for us to energetically continue throughout 2021 without disruption.

Now, as we come to the end of one year and the start of a new one, we ask for your support. Our goal is to raise \$25,000 by year-end to provide a stable basis for the Center’s continuation. So far in 2021, our contributions and program fees are down compared to last year. Our plan for the new year is to continue to offer programming on Zoom, with an option for in-person activities as health conditions permit.



This year-end fundraising will provide support for our dedicated Guiding Teachers and Administrative Director as well as for program, building, and administrative expenses. **If you are able, please consider making a donation at this time to our Year-End Appeal.** Donations of every amount are welcomed and much appreciated.

Your donation can be mailed in the enclosed return envelope, or you can contribute online at www.OceanZen.org.

Thank you for being part of the Compassionate Ocean community; together we are nurturing a beautiful garden.

With palms together,

Handwritten signature of Ramona Advani

Ramona Advani
Co-Chairs, Board of Directors

Handwritten signature of Mark Ostrander

Mark Ostrander

Compassionate Ocean Zen Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.



Winter Programs 2022

Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

652 17th Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413

(612) 781-7640 • www.OceanZen.org

The Practice of Generosity

Delight of an Open Heart

Taught by Joen O'Neal

No spiritual life is possible without a generous heart.

—the Buddha

In this eight-week course we will study generosity, supporting each other in the basic practice of letting go and opening to others, to ourselves, and to the situation of our lives.

The impact of this practice can be profound. As we cultivate generosity, our heart become less stuck as we open and loosen some of the shields we have erected around it. A sense of spaciousness comes into our life. As Pema Chodron says, "When you start to give of yourself, the way begins to unfold."

A dimension of generosity is to give ourselves to the present moment with full devotion. When we do this, the present moment responds, bringing the gift of vitality and transformation.

This course will include sitting and walking meditation, talks by the teacher, small group discussion, and home practice. It will include readings by ancient and contemporary Buddhist teachers, and is open to anyone who has some experience with mindfulness, Zen, or other Buddhist meditation.

Joen O'Neal is a Guiding Teacher of Compassionate Ocean Zen Center.

Joen's aspiration is to be an upright person, one who gives people confidence, comfort, and reassurance, and who encourages them in their own upright endeavor.



Wednesdays, Jan. 19–March 9

7:00–9:00 p.m. (eight sessions) (#B100)

This course will be offered on Zoom, with some in-person participation also possible as health conditions permit.

\$170 (members \$150) (includes course materials)

Member rates apply to members of all local Buddhist centers.

Reduced fees are offered as needed; please contact the Center at (612) 781-7640.

To register, go to www.OceanZen.org/buddhist-studies

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

A Thorough Introduction to Mindfulness Practice

This program is a comprehensive, well-structured introduction to mindfulness practice in everyday life. It follows the nationally acclaimed MBSR model developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, presenting mindfulness as a universal practice for people of any (or no) religious background.

Skills are introduced in class, practiced at home, and integrated to form new habits. The program enables participants to develop their own base in mindfulness practice integrated into everyday life, using the tools of:

- sitting meditation
- gentle yoga
- body awareness meditation
- daily-life applications of mindfulness
- stress and relaxation practice

What's included:

- an individual interview with the instructor
- eight two-and-a-half hour classes
- a six-hour Saturday retreat
- a copy of the book *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- four mp3 guided meditations
- weekly handouts

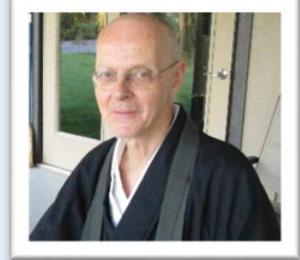
27 CEUs are available for nurses, social workers, educators, and psychologists. Contact the Center for details.

The course fee is \$350, which includes the above materials. Payment plans and limited need-based support are available. Please contact the Center to discuss.

Enrollment is limited, and pre-registration is required.



Instructor:
Michael O'Neal



Tuesdays,
Jan. 18–Mar. 8
6:30–9:00 P.M.
(eight sessions) (#608)

This course will be held via Zoom.

Day of Mindfulness Retreat
Saturday, Mar. 5, 9:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M.

This retreat is part of the MBSR program and is included for all current participants in the MBSR course. It is also open to graduates of past Compassionate Ocean MBSR courses on a donation basis. People not enrolled in the current course should contact the Center in advance to reserve a space.

What past participants have said about our Introductory Program in Mindfulness

"I feel more relaxed and centered, more accepting of myself and others."

"The eight-week mindfulness class is an excellent way to both introduce and deepen this practice. It helped lower my stress and alleviate some pain issues. My mother was so impressed by the changes in me that she signed up too!"

"The meditation taught in this class is invaluable, ideally suited for those who are skeptical or new to meditation."

"Very, very meaningful and wonderful instructors and classmates. Life-changing experience."

~ Gift certificates are available. ~

Future MBSR Course Dates

- Mar. 29–May 17, 2022
- June 7–July 26, 2022
- Sept. 20–Nov. 8, 2022

Meditation and Dharma Talks

Most Sunday mornings throughout the year, Compassionate Ocean offers meditation practice (sitting and walking) followed by a Dharma talk and discussion. The talks focus on aspects of Buddhist teaching and their application to everyday life. Our practice is in the tradition of Soto Zen, with inspiration from the mindfulness practices of Thich Nhat Hahn. Everyone is invited to participate. There are no prerequisites; people are welcome to come when they wish. There is no fee; donations are welcome. The Sunday gathering is co-led by Michael O’Neal and Joen O’Neal.

Sundays, 9:00–11:15 A.M.

- 9:00 sitting
- 9:25 walking
- 9:35 sitting
- 10:00 Dharma talk and discussion
- 11:15 ending

(Note: no Sunday gatherings on Dec. 26 or Jan. 2.)

Weekday Meditation Sessions

Five mornings a week, Compassionate Ocean hosts a forty-minute zazen (sitting meditation) period followed by a short chanting service. Everyone is invited to participate. There are no prerequisites; people are welcome to come when they wish. There is no fee; donations are welcome. The weekday meditations are led by Michael O’Neal.

Monday–Friday, 7:00–8:00 A.M.

- 7:00 zazen (sitting)
- 7:40 chanting service
- 8:00 ending

We are developing procedures for limited in-person participation for the above activities.

Zoom participation will continue to be available. The start date is subject to improved COVID conditions.

- Registrants must affirm they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to attend in-person.
- Masks must be worn by participants while inside the Center.
- Capacity is currently limited to six participants, plus the Guiding Teachers, by advance sign-up.
- Anyone experiencing illness should not visit the Center until it is certain they are not contagious, or that they have recovered from the illness.

Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Course

Health conditions permitting, this course will be offered at the Center.

• Mondays, Jan. 24 & 31, 7:00-9:00 P.M.

This is a two-session introduction to Zen meditation and related practices. It will consist of a combination of discussion about Zen and its place in Buddhism, some information about Compassionate Ocean Zen Center, and instruction in sitting meditation. Guiding Teacher Michael O’Neal will lead this program, which is intended to be a starting point for those curious about or new to Zen. There is no fee.

To register, visit www.OceanZen.org/intro-to-zen.

Retreats (Sesshin)

Health conditions permitting, these retreats will be offered at the Center.

A *sesshin* (literally, “to gather the mind”) is a time when formal Zen practice is the primary focus of what we do. Sometimes these are informally called “retreats,” but in actuality they involve going forward into the heart of our lives. Participation in sesshin is open to community members and others who have had some experience with Buddhist practice and meditation.

Weekend Sesshins

- Friday, Jan. 28, 7:00 P.M.–Sunday, Jan. 30, 11:15 A.M.
- Friday, Mar. 25, 7:00 P.M.–Sunday, Mar. 27, 11:15 A.M.

Led by Michael O’Neal & Joen O’Neal

These weekend sesshins will include sitting and walking meditation, a Dharma talk, a work period, and an opportunity to meet with a teacher. Each weekend sesshin also includes three vegetarian meals on Saturday. Fee: \$50 (members \$45).



Thank You to our 2021 Sustaining Members

Sustaining Members provide the bedrock of support for our Center. Membership is the largest source of contributions to the Center, providing about one-third of our total financial support. The donations of Sustaining Members help support our teachers, Joen and Michael, the Administrative Director, program expenses, and building expenses including utilities, maintenance, insurance, and supplies.

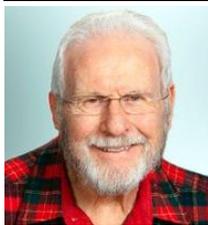
The Center depends on the support of Sustaining Members to ensure its current and long-term financial health.

Those wishing to become a member or renew their commitment of support are asked to fill out a pledge form each year. Pledge forms for 2022 will be mailed out early in the new year to current members. To become a Sustaining Member now, please visit www.OceanZen.org/membership. Members receive discounts on many program fees.

In times like these we are reminded of our interconnectedness. We are deeply grateful for the strength of our community.

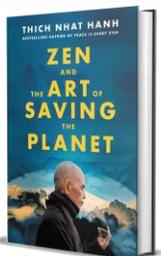
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Doug Follen	Rebecca Kraker	Jonelle Ringnalda	Ben Weisner
Angelique Frederiksen	Lars Larson	Alan Rodgers	Karen West

Community Announcements



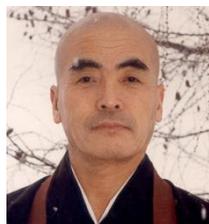
Bob (Robert) "Lars" Larson (1932–2021)

Lars was part of the Compassionate Ocean community for the last decade of his life, after returning to Minnesota following the death of his wife. He had practiced with a Thich Nhat Hanh group in Texas and sought out a Buddhist group here to continue his involvement. Lars manifested a warm heart, an open and engaged mind, a lively sense of enjoyment, and friendly appreciation for all. His positive, supportive way of being present was a light in our sangha.



Midwest Earth Holder Community Book Club

The Midwest Earth Holder Community will facilitate a book club to study the new book by Thich Nhat Hanh, *Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet*. The book club will meet every other Thursday from 7:00-8:30 pm (CT) December 9 through March 3 (seven meetings). All meetings will be on Zoom. Meetings will have a short meditation, a talk by the facilitator, a discussion in small groups, and a closing with Sharing the Merit. For more information, contact admin@OceanDharma.org.

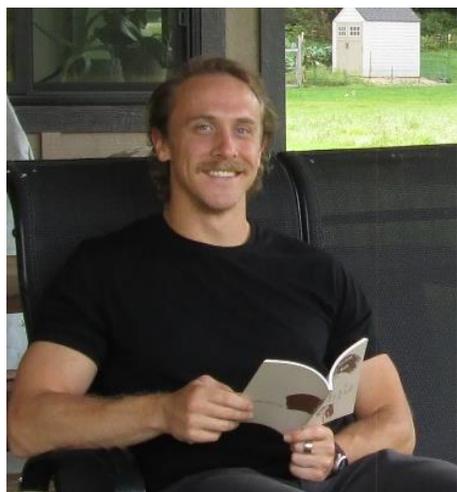


Special Memorial for Dainin Katagiri Roshi

The Compassionate Ocean community is invited to attend special memorial ceremonies for Dainin Katagiri Roshi commemorating the 33rd year (in the Japanese way of counting) since his death in 1990. The events will be held at Ryumonji and Hokyoji Zen Monasteries in northeastern Iowa and southeastern Minnesota on February 27 and 28. For more information, visit www.OceanZen.org.

August Practice Period at Hokyoji

by Josh Rice



Hokyoji is a beautiful Zen practice center nestled amongst the bluffs, valleys, and creeks of southeastern Minnesota. This fall I had the wonderful opportunity to experience my first Zen retreat at Hokyoji. I strive to always be involved in the investigation of my own mind, yet the opportunity to devote a full week without the typical distractions of technology and day-to-day life in the city was incredibly worthwhile.

Zen retreats follow a fairly strict schedule that oscillates between sitting (zazen), walking (kinhin), tea time (chosan), meals, Dharma talks, discussion, and rest. Within this Zen style of retreat, called sesshin, the schedule and procedures organize the physical world into a system of routines. There is great emphasis on form and posture! The mental world, however, is left relatively open and informal—allowing the participant to experience and embrace their corner of the universe just as it is.

During the first couple days on retreat I found myself wondering, "Why the heck am I doing all this bowing and reciting all these chants? I feel like all this stuff is here just to annoy me!" But, upon recognizing my mental response to the physical activities, I began to understand the importance of the practice. I wasn't at Hokyoji for a vacation. I was there to wholeheartedly accept, embrace, and learn from whatever showed up in my experience. Love for family and fascination with nature inspired me along the way.

By putting oneself into the program, countless things arise in consciousness. Then, those arising situations serve as the grounds for mental training. Zen sesshin encapsulates both the body and mind. Communication, cooperation, rest, food, and humor are integral to the experience. Tea breaks are nice, too!

Genpo, Joen, and Dokai (the Guiding Teacher at Hokyoji) were encouraging guides. Genpo gave the Dharma talks and taught us how to sit up straight. Joen was the tenzo (cook); she did a wonderful job of feeding us all throughout the retreat! Dokai told many funny and inspiring stories. I'm grateful that many years ago Katagiri Roshi had the dream to build a retreat center in the Minnesota woods—it serves as a truly remarkable setting for mindfulness practice. I highly recommend sesshin at Hokyoji for anyone looking to experience Zen practice more fully.





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admin@OceanDharma.org
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Winter Program Highlights

- **Buddhist Studies Course:**
The Practice of Generosity:
Delight of an Open Heart
- **Introductory Program in Mindfulness (MBSR)**
- **Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Course**
- **Ongoing Meditation and Dharma Talks**
- **Monthly Sesshins (*Days of Zen Practice*)**

Due to the COVID pandemic, these programs will be offered on Zoom, with some in-person participation also possible as health conditions permit.



Partial Reopening of Compassionate Ocean

Sign up in advance to attend meditation gatherings in-person at the Center.
For procedures and to sign up, visit www.OceanZen.org.
See page 5 for more information.



Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Course

A starting point for those curious about or new to Zen.
A two-session program on Mondays, January 24 & 31, 7:00–9:00 P.M.
See page 5 for more information.