

Cedar Rapids Zen Center

Newsletter

Volume 1, Number 3

Fall, 2000

Bowing

Before we sit down to do zazen, we bow toward our zafu, then away, putting hands together in front of face and inclining the body a bit, bending at the hips. This kind of bow is called a gassho bow. In the zendo, it's a greeting to our neighbors and to those across the room. "Hello. Thank you for your presence and your effort." We also greet the whole universe, which is sitting with us. "Hello. Thank you for sitting with me." So – we bow even when no other person is present.

But this is not the only time we bow. We bow when we enter and leave the zendo, when we do services, sometimes when we greet one another. Sometimes we just bob our heads. Sometimes we touch our foreheads to the floor and lift our hands in a full prostration. There's a good deal of it going on. What's it all about? Where does it come from?

Bowing is a salutation and an expression of respect. Shunryu Suzuki said we should bow to everything we meet. Jack Kornfield talks about how, in the Thai monastery where he practiced, he was expected to bow to all the other monks and how at first he resented having to bow to monks he didn't respect. He learned to find something in each person that he could bow to. He could respect each person – there was no longer "good person," "bad person." There was only "this person." Can we do that?

Bowing is also about making our spirits more flexible and gentle. It's about giving up obstinate, stubborn, dualistic mind that centers on ourselves as the most important thing in the universe and our ideas as the reality of how things are and should be. If we bow, gradually our hearts will follow. In Japan I heard the story of Kishizawa Ian-roshi, who was asked how low one's head should be in bowing to the floor. He answered that the forehead should touch the floor, adding, "I would like to bow even lower, but the floor stops me." He felt that he had much arrogance and selfish stubbornness to get rid of.

The meaning of bowing comes only through bowing. Blooming in the heart, it is a different flower for each of us. At Shogoji, we did about fifty full prostrations in the course of morning services. And all before breakfast! I used to think of them as Zen morning calisthenics, dutifully holding my robes and trying to do them in proper form. Then one morning as I knelt touching my head to the floor, I remembered that I had slept this way as a small child. Bowing was expressing the confident trust of a vulnerable four-year-old. It was trust in the Dharma as an innocent child trusts his or her parents.

So it's best just to give up all the ideas I've been talking about and just bow. Bowing is the same as zazen – just do it with no you, no bow, no "Did I do it right?" "Does it mean what it's supposed to?" When you do it completely, there is no need for anything extra.

Zuiko Redding, Resident Teacher Prison Ministry

Several inmates in the prison system have contacted us over the past year to ask for instruction and guidance. We have sent them books and other materials, and Zuiko has been making visits and talking with those who call.

In July, we began a Prison Ministry fund to cover the costs of books, Zuiko's visits, and collect phone calls. (Incarcerated people must call collect.) We have received a total of \$215, enough to cover our expenses for the next year or so.

We wish to thank all of you who contributed for your compassion. Acting from a deep vow to help others, you create peace. We bow to you.

There is other good news. One of our incarcerated sangha members was released six months early on September 29. We wish him well as he returns home, and we hope he continues to be part of our sangha wherever he goes.

Sesshin

Sesshin is a chance to sink more deeply into the practice. The daily schedule includes zazen, sutra chanting (service), a dharma talk, and work. Meals are eaten silently in the formal style using oryoki bowls.

To participate in sesshin is to throw yourself wholeheartedly into the rapids of practice. In zazen, eating, chanting and work we turn our lights inwardly, illuminating and investigating our egoistic habit of thought. The silence and attention to detail of sesshin point us away from self and toward the ground of being. To do sesshin, even for a

morning or an evening is to renew limitless mind.

ROHATSU SESSHIN

THE MILWAUKEE ZEN CENTER
AND
THE CEDAR RAPIDS ZEN CENTER

will jointly celebrate the Buddha's Enlightenment by offering intensive all-day sittings during the period of December 1-10. Dharma talks will be given at both locations by Rev. Zuiko Redding and Rev. Tonen O'Connor.

The schedule will be as follows:
Cedar Rapids: Dec. 1-3
Milwaukee: Dec. 7-10

For details, fees, housing, etc., please contact Cedar Rapids Zen Center, P.O. Box 863, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406. (319)247-5986, email: crzc@avalon.net

or

Milwaukee Zen Center, 2825 N. Stowell Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53211. (414)963-0526, email: tsoc@exec.

Tonen O'Connor

Tonen O'Connor has been a member of Milwaukee Zen Center since the mid-1980s. She was ordained by Rev. Tozen Akiyama. She trained in both Japan and the United States before receiving dharma transmission from Rev. Akiyama.

Rev. O'Connor is a dynamic, forthright teacher who carries on the unadorned and rather irreverent tradition of Kodo Sawaki-

roshi and Kosho Uchiyama-roshi, two great twentieth-century Japanese Zen teachers. We are sure you will learn much from her. In addition to her practice at MZC, she is translating a book of Sawaki-roshi's lectures and is also deeply involved in working with inmates in the Wisconsin prison system. To be lost. What joy!

What higher rapture
Can there
be?

To be absorbed so completely
in the task,
to be completely divorced
from self,
from
ego.

To be lost
is sublime,
is apothiostic.
How can I become lost?

I attempt superimposition,
becoming lost through ingestion.
How far out from one's self can you get-

Testing innersaneness,
testing outersaneness.

-Quent Duarte

Newsletter Submissions

Please share your thoughts, experiences, words of encouragement, poems, news and other items of interest. We appreciate and encourage your submission of material for the newsletter. The deadline for the next newsletter is December 15th. You may contact Ellen Wetzel at (319)341-9668 or

email: erw400@aol.com if you have questions or have items you wish to submit.

Rummage Sale

We will be holding a rummage sale next May, and we want to put out the word now so you can contribute items from your fall cleaning. We can store things in Zuiko's garage at Zen Center – just contact us to make arrangements.

OOPS! Membership Card Correction

In July, the newsletter included a pledge card inviting you to become a member of Zen Center. Many of you returned this card with your contributions and membership pledges, and we thank you.

However, half the cards mistakenly listed the costs for regular membership and out-of-town membership as equal. **Out-of-town membership contributions are actually \$15/month.**

Credits

Artwork	Tom Rauschke
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Cedar Rapids Zen Center

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Daily Schedule

Morning

Zen Center - 1651 34th St. SE #8

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

6:00 - 6:40 am	zazen
6:40 - 6:50	kinhin
6:50 - 7:20	zazen
7:20 - 7:40	sutra chanting

Sunday

9:00 - 9:40 am	zazen
9:45-10:45	dharma talk
10:50-11:30	tea
11:30-12:30	work period

Evening

Central Park Presbyterian Church
1700 B Ave. NE

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

6:30 - 7:10 pm	zazen
7:10 - 7:20	kinhin
7:20 - 8:00	zazen

Calendar

October	6 – 8 18	Sesshin Zazen instruction
November	5 15 26 30	Sangha meeting Zazen instruction Sangha meeting Sesshin begins
December	1 – 3 20	Sesshin (Rohatsu) Zazen instruction
January	17 21	Zazen instruction All day sitting
February	18 21	All day sitting Zazen instruction
March	4	Annual Board and Sangha meeting
	16-18 21	Sesshin with Shoken Winecoff Zazen instruction

Cedar Rapids Zen Center

P.O. Box 863
Cedar Rapids IA 52406-0863

"Sangha" means community. Everyone is welcome.