



## Elements of religion

There's a long-standing debate about whether or not Buddhism is a religion because it doesn't require that practitioners profess to believe in a deity. In the end, it doesn't really matter whether we label our practice a religion or not, as long as we commit to wholeheartedly taking up the Way and engaging 100% in our lives. We don't have to call Zen practice a religion—but we also don't have to be afraid to do so.

Theologian John Haught connects religion with the human quest to break through the limits we encounter on our quest for perfection. He writes that the function of religion is to fortify our trust that there is some way through the barriers that block the road to ultimate fulfillment.

According to Haught, a religion has four aspects:

*Sacramentalism:* gaining access to the ineffable through symbols and rituals, particularly associated with nature. Symbols and rituals abound in Zen, in everything from the liturgy and cosmology to the everyday actions surrounding putting on robes and eating meals.

*Mysticism:* awareness of the union of ordinary existence with ultimate reality. We begin to experience the transcendence of dualism as we sit and come to have some direct understanding of form and emptiness.

*Silence:* conviction that the deepest mystery of the universe lies beyond human words and thoughts. Silence has a central place in Zen practice as both a condition necessary for the concentration and insight that leads to the complete manifestation of awakening, and the only true expression of that awakening.

*Activity:* self-sacrifice and performance of transformative action in the world (e. g., charity and justice). Generosity and detachment from the needs of the ego are two of the most important characteristics of the bodhisattva.

While some religions and practitioners emphasize one or more aspects over others, all of them are necessary.

Haught writes, "Religion begins to disintegrate into something other than religion whenever any of the four paths is isolated from contact with the others." In other words, a group that does not offer all of these elements of practice in some way might be a community center, a support group, a book club or a self-help workshop, but it's not practicing a religion.

Haught also suggests that there are four main reasons why human beings turn to religion:

*Reassurance:* In the face of the continuing threat of disorder, practitioners want to know that order is still present in the universe, and will win out in the end.

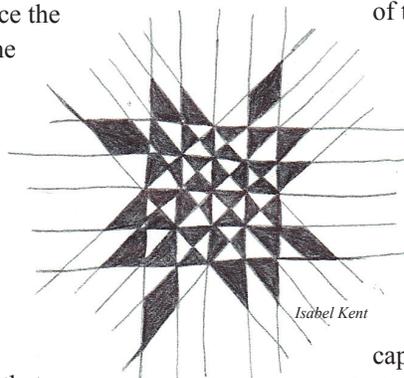
*Mystery:* Although the people and things of the world are fragile and perishable, practitioners want to find an underlying ineffable unity.

*Meaning:* The broadening and deepening of understanding is an adventure, and the goal of that adventure is beauty. Haught defines beauty as the intersection of harmony, order and unity with contrast, complexity and novelty; the center of that intersection is perfection that leads to peace.

*Morality:* When one person hurts another, practitioners have a sense that there is more to the situation than the harm done to one person—a "sacred order" has been violated.

Haught's elements of religion seem to capture the essence of our practice, our efforts to find a way through the barriers, hindrances and delusions that block the road to ultimate fulfillment and the complete expression of the True Self. You may recognize some elements with which you are already particularly comfortable. I invite you to choose one or two that make you *uncomfortable*, and investigate them deeply. You may find new practice territory which has not been available to you before.

—Hoko



## Upcoming events

Work Days 1-4 pm

We'll set to work on maintenance and administrative projects around the building and grounds.

*September 9, October 7, November 4, December 2*

Visit from Shohaku and Yuko Okumura,  
Sanshin Zen Community (IN)

There will be opportunities to get together and enjoy each others' company during this informal visit. Details posted as they develop on the *What's New* page of our website.

*September 16-18*

Two-day Sitting

Here's a chance to really dig into zazen practice by sitting for an extended time.

*October 20 & 21*

Sangha field trip to Toshoji in Okayama, Japan

Experience Soto Zen practice in its traditional setting by living in a training temple. It's a terrific opportunity to gain understanding of the context in which our practice arose and get a taste of Japanese Buddhist culture.

For more information, please contact MZC.

*November 12-19*

Rohatsu Sesshin

Within our tradition of Soto Zen, we celebrate the Buddha's Great Awakening each year on December 8. In honor and memory of his long seated meditation under the Bodhi Tree, we schedule a three-day sesshin on the weekend closest to December 8th. Rohatsu Sesshin is a time of re-dedication to our practice and of gratitude for the deep wisdom and compassion of the Buddha.

*December 7-9*

For complete and current information about our practice and events schedule, please visit us online at [www.milwaukeezencenter.org](http://www.milwaukeezencenter.org).

**Order our popular Eiheiji incense online or by mail**



The incense used at Eiheiji, one of the two head temples of Soto Zen in Japan.

Ingredients include patchouli, clove and sandalwood.

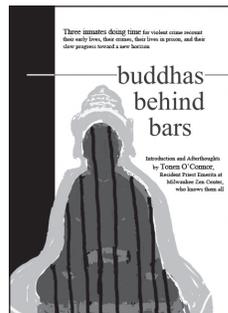
***\$8.00 per box***

Go to [www.milwaukeezencenter.org](http://www.milwaukeezencenter.org) and click on **Gift Shop** or see order form on page 4 of this issue.

A new book published by Milwaukee Zen Center

## buddhas behind bars

edited by Tonen O'Connor



Three Wisconsin inmates describe their encounter with the teachings offered by the prison program of the Milwaukee Zen Center over a period of more than ten years. An Afterthoughts section offers insights from Tonen O'Connor on working within correctional institutions.

*"The men in this book have faced themselves in ways most of us can't even imagine."*

—Brad Warner, author of *Hardcore Zen*

Available now at  
**Amazon.com**

## Happenings

Contractor Eddie Gonzales has replaced the ceiling tiles in the second floor dorm area with upgraded fireproof tiles. Thanks to a thorough cleaning and the new fiberglass ceiling, the room has a fresh new look.

DeKalb, IL college students Yuko Nakano and her friend Yuki came by one Saturday afternoon for a look at Zen practice in America. Yuko's father is a Soto Zen priest in Yokohama, and Hoko enjoyed sharing experiences of practice in Japan and in the US.

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship of Milwaukee, of which MZC is a member, was shocked and saddened to learn of the shooting that took place at the Sikh temple in Oak Creek on August 5. In a news release written by Hoko on behalf of BPF Milwaukee, Tonen stated, "[These] events are completely contrary to everything we believe America should be as a country that welcomes the talents, individuality and religions of all those who choose to come here to strengthen our democracy." MZC is also a member of Milwaukee Area Interfaith Relations, a program of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee. MAIR, of which Tonen serves as chair this year, includes representatives from the affected Sikh community. We stand in sympathy and solidarity with them as they deal with this tremendous loss.

Following this year's Great Sky sesshin, Tonen headed for Los Angeles for the 90th anniversary of the founding of Zenshuji Soto Mission, while Hoko spent a week at Sanshinji in Bloomington, IN, working with her teacher, Shohaku Okumura, on her dharma transmission.

Great Sky sesshin:  
A matter of life and death

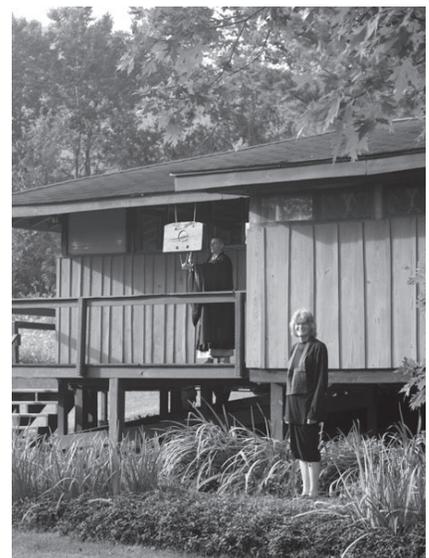
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After a year's hiatus, the 2012 Great Sky sesshin once again provided nearly 30 practitioners the opportunity to sit, study and work together for a week at Hokyoji Zen Practice Community in southern Minnesota. Tonen O'Connor co-organized the event with Zuiko Redding of Cedar Rapids Zen Center, and Hoko Karnegis served as tenzo.

In addition to Tonen and Zuiko, Great Sky teachers included Issho Fujita, Soto Zen Buddhism International Center, San Francisco; Rosan Yoshida, Missouri Zen Center; and Dokai Georgesen, Hokyoji. All lecturers took as their text the *Shoji* (Life-and-Death) fascicle of Dogen's *Shobogenzo*. Participants came from Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri and California.

*Photos by Carol Karo Anderson and Zuiko Redding*



# **milwaukee zen center**

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## **ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

### **What's new at MZC?**

Find out on the *What's New* page of our website.  
Events, visitors, photos, activities, and more.  
Go to [www.milwaukeezencenter.org](http://www.milwaukeezencenter.org) and  
click on *What's New*.

### **Weekly practice schedule**

Complete activity schedule: [www.milwaukeezencenter.org](http://www.milwaukeezencenter.org)

#### **Wed-Fri morning**

6:15 zazen  
6:55 kinhin  
7:05 zazen  
7:45 service  
8:00 end

#### **Wed-Fri evening**

6:30 zazen  
7:10 kinhin  
7:20 zazen

#### **Sunday morning**

8:20 *Introduction to Zazen*  
9:40 zazen  
10:20 dharma talk  
11:00 informal tea

#### **Saturday morning**

6:15 zazen  
6:55 kinhin  
7:05 zazen  
7:45 service  
8:00 breakfast  
8:25 work period  
9:15 break  
9:30 dharma  
discussion  
10:30 end

### **Contact MZC**

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### **I want to be a member of MZC!**

- Sustaining: \$30 or more per month
- Supporting: \$25 or more per month
- Maintaining: \$10 per month
- Contributing: any affordable monthly amount: \$\_\_\_\_\_

### **Eiheiji incense for sale**

**NEW: buy online!**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Qty.</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Tax*</i>	<i>Total</i>
Short (5.5")		\$8.00	.45	
Long (10")		\$8.00	.45	

Shipping:  
\$4.00 for first two boxes of incense,  
plus .50 per box thereafter.

- I'd like to make a one-time contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- Please remove me from your mailing list.
- Please change my mailing address.
- Please send this newsletter by e-mail instead of on paper.

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