

Bodhisattva Responsible Administrator

Unlike many Zen clergy I've encountered, over the years I've always enjoyed temple administration, and others have seemed to appreciate my willingness to take on these tasks that no one else wanted.

And they pitied me.

Poor Hôkô, working on the mailing list—can't someone else do that? Poor thing, managing volunteer schedules and annual appeals. After all, that's not fun. That's not practice. That's not *dharmā*.

One day, as a joke, I dubbed myself Bodhisattva Responsible Administrator. Bodhisattvas are beings who put off their own entry into Nirvana in order to help others enter first. In translations of the sutras, they often end up with names like Bodhisattva Jeweled Accumulation, Bodhisattva Constant Exertion, or Bodhisattva Immeasurable Strength. Why not Bodhisattva Responsible Administrator, someone who sees order in chaos?

A day or so after my spontaneous little joke, I started considering what it really meant to be a responsible administrator. I've found that peering into the roots of words often yields fascinating information about their original meaning, so I went to the dictionary. It turns out that being a responsible administrator is about living in vow. "Responsible" comes from the Latin *respondere*: "to promise in return." *Spondere* is "to pledge," and another word for "promise" or "pledge" is vow. To respond or to be responsible is to make a vow to others.

"Administer" or *ad minister* is "to

minister toward." *Ministrare* is "to serve," to take care of others and look out for them. All beings are supporting me, so as a responsible administrator, I vow in return to take care of them. The cold, colorless world of administration has a human face and heart.

Of course, I really only had to look as far as Dôgen's *Shushôgi* to discover that "the dharma is a resource, and resources are the dharma. Without coveting reward or thanks from others, we simply share our strength with them. Providing ferries and building bridges are also the perfection of giving. Earning a living and producing goods are fundamentally nothing other than giving."

Living in vow is not just for homeleavers. Householders who take the precepts also live in vow in a public way. Of course, when we chant the four bodhisattva vows after a dharma discussion or talk, we all renew our intention to do our bodhisattva work in the world as followers of Buddha's way, whether we've made a formal commitment or not.

One of the ways we carry out those vows is to approach our daily work, whether in an office, in the neighborhood association, in the home, or anywhere, as an offering to others. There's no need to get precious about this—our work is simply a response to our interdependence. Need and response arise together, moment after moment, so without inserting our egos into it, we just do what the circumstances require, taking responsibility for all beings. It's just the way things are.

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Upcoming events

January

16 Martin Luther King Day: Open Sitting 8a - 5p

There will be no schedule, no bells, no services and no meals provided—just an open door to the zendo. If you've got the day off and want to sit for awhile, arrive when you please and leave when you're ready.

21 & 22 Two-Day Sitting: Dogen Zenji's Birthday
January 29 is the birthday of one of the most important teachers in Soto Zen, Eihei Dogen (1200-1253). In honor of his life and teachings, we'll focus on what he considered the most essential practice: zazen.

February

5 Work Day noon lunch - 4 pm

After a pot luck lunch, we'll set to work on mail prep, cleaning or maintenance projects around the facility.

18 & 19 Two-Day Sitting: Nehan

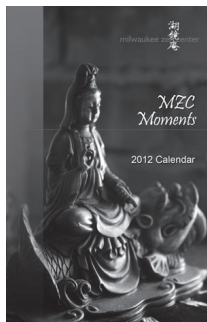
February 15 is the day we traditionally honor the Buddha's passing into Nirvana. All things, including ourselves, are impermanent. What can death teach us about our life and practice?

20 Presidents' Day: Open Sitting 8a - 5p

See January 16 Open Sitting above.

For complete and current information about our practice and events schedule, please visit us online at www.milwaukeezencenter.org.

Visit our online gift shop



Shirts, totes, mugs, mousepads and more! Don't miss our **2012 MZC Moments** calendar, featuring images of MZC and the dharma words of Tonen O'Connor. Go to www.milwaukeezencenter.org and click on **Gift Shop**.



Linda Gee is one of MZC's doans, facilitating chanting services.

New on MZC's schedule: Sunday morning practice

Practitioners have a new opportunity to practice at MZC with the addition of Sunday programming to the regular schedule.

The new activities are a response to sangha member input indicating that while people are busy during the week and can't easily get to MZC, they are generally more available on weekends.

Beginning January 8, Sundays will begin with *Introduction to Zazen* at 8:20 am, relocating that event from the first Wednesday evening of the month. One period of regular zazen will begin at 9:40, followed by a dharma talk at 10:20. (Zazen and the talk will happen on the same schedule as that of Sundays during a two-day sitting, making it easy for practitioners to establish a habit of Sunday attendance.)

A brief informal teatime will follow the talk so that folks can meet and get to know one another.



Sunday mornings will include a dharma talk.

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If you're like me, over the years you've collected an odd box of tools. Over and over I've learned to do something and then thought to leave it behind when the job was done or the situation changed. Yet, somehow, no learning was ever wasted. All of those strands of karma, all of those trajectories, all of those causes and conditions are present in every moment, every task, every action one is called upon to take. Thus it's really impossible to separate one's daily work from one's practice. We've been preparing for this job since the beginningless beginning.

We're all Bodhisattva Responsible Administrator, and that means we give it all we've got. All the tools and skills and experiences we have at our disposal we use in this life of vow. No job or task is outside of the dharma. Know how to fix a carburetor, defrag a hard drive, score a test, draw up a living will, or manage a supply chain? Buddha, dharma and sangha have a job for you.

Happenings

In November, Tonen spoke to two sections of a Comparative Religions class at Carthage College and made a pastoral visit to Felmers Cheney Correctional Center.

Rohatsu Sesshin was celebrated by our prison sanghas. Tonen led special periods of practice in honor of the Buddha's enlightenment at Green Bay Correctional Institution, Taycheedah C.I and Racine C.I. and led an all-day sesshin at Oshkosh C.I. Koshin Bob Hanson led special celebrations at Redgranite C.I. and Fox Lake C.I.

The Zen Center hosted a meeting of a Milwaukee Association for Interfaith Relations (MAIR) committee that is planning a special event to take place at the Hindu Temple in Pewaukee in June. Tonen is now serving as MAIR's chair.

Tonen was recognized at the annual luncheon of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee for her years of service to the Zen Center and the Milwaukee interfaith community. She was given a handmade ceramic bowl filled with wild rice, honoring our tradition of the begging bowl. Tonen incorporated the wild rice into one of the meals she cooked as tenzo for the MZC's Rohatsu Sesshin.

In December, Hoko and Tonen attended a meeting of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and on January 1, members of the MZC sangha attended the BPF-sponsored annual celebration of peace, hosted this year by the Mindfulness Community of Milwaukee.

Out of the box: MZC explores new practice venues for the new year

MZC's sangha and practice extends well beyond our facility and neighborhood. 2012 may bring with it some new opportunities to come together online or in the community for zazen, study and support from other practitioners. What are we exploring for the new year?

- A **satellite zazen group** that would meet weekly on the west side of Milwaukee, cutting travel time for practitioners who live at a distance from MZC.
- A two-month **sangha sit-along**, during which participants might sit at the same time but in different places, choose a teaching or concept on which to focus during the event, and do a weekly check-in with another sangha member for help and encouragement.
- An **online weekly study group** that would watch a short video presentation and then post comments and ask questions—in the mold of the existing Saturday dharma discussion, except that group members participate on their own time and consider presentations rather than a text.

As these ideas develop, the most up-to-date information will be available on our website.



Tonen in MZC's library

Dharma Book Fund

The Dharma Book Fund committee, consisting of resident priest emerita Tonen O'Connor and Lorraine McNamara-McGraw from MZC and Paul Norton from the Mindfulness Community of Milwaukee, has had its first meeting and as an initial activity will identify several books from different Buddhist traditions that the fund can distribute to prison chapel libraries. The committee also approved the purchase of books requested by Jim Bowker for the group he leads at Green Bay Correctional Institution.

The fund was established by MZC's board of directors in October 2011 at Tonen's semi-retirement to honor her work with prison sanghas and her interest in issues of literacy. The fund makes dharma books available to those who cannot acquire them on their own. Donations to the fund are gratefully accepted at any time.

milwaukee zen center

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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 and
click on *What's New*.

Weekly practice schedule

For a complete activity schedule,
visit us at www.milwaukeezencenter.org

Wed-Fri morning

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

evening

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

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

Sunday morning

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

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

| Item | Qty. | Price | Tax* | Total |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------|------|-------|
| 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.

Membership _____
Contribution _____
Incense and shipping _____
Total funds enclosed _____
*Please make checks payable
to Milwaukee Zen Center.*

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip+4 _____
E-mail _____