

MOON ON THE WATER

Volume 8, Issue 4

Newsletter of the Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

August, 2006

Letting Go

Peter Neuwald, SDT

Recently I read a story by Joseph Goldstein that a friend on our GLZC mailing list sent out. In the story, Goldstein talks about an experience with a cat while practicing in India. He was meditating in a small hut with a canvas flap for a door. While he was sitting in meditation, a cat wandered in and sat down on his lap. He picked up the cat and threw him out. The cat came back and sat on his lap. Again he threw him out. This went back and forth for some time and Goldstein got more and more irritated. Finally, the cat's persistence wore him down; he gave up and let go of his idea of meditation and doing the work of "getting enlightened." So, when the cat came in and sat on his lap, this time Goldstein just sat there too. Thirty seconds later the cat got up and left the hut. His job of helping Goldstein let go was done.

This reminds me of an experience with my own cat, Tessie, who has since passed away. One day, shortly after I started practicing, I was sitting on my cushion and mat at home. I had a different idea than Goldstein. I "thought" it would somehow be cool to have Tessie sit with me, after all, cats do sit around a lot, right? Well, she wasn't very interested in sitting. I would call her over, but she seemed annoyed with me just sitting there "doing nothing." Finally, with a lot of coaxing, she started to come over. I thought "This is pretty cool!" I had a nice big mat so there was plenty of room for her to sit in front of me. She proceeded to step up on my mat, walk in a circle and squat down to urinate, which she did in fine form. POW! There went that idea. I couldn't be mad at her. She was just helping me let go of my idea of meditation that day. As any cat owner could guess, I had to throw the mat out along with my ideas that day. Oh, and I didn't invite Tessie to sit with me anymore.

There are so many ideas that we cling to; we can use the help of all of our teachers, furry and otherwise. Joseph Goldstein's idea of human meditation and my idea of cat meditation are relatively harmless ones. Deluded maybe, but not too serious. Other ideas cause much bigger problems, much suffering and pain, even wars and genocide. It's important to realize that our job is to work on letting go of all of our attachments, big and small. What are we attached to? It's not too hard to discover that. I find it useful to ask myself why I am doing what I am doing right now. For instance, if I'm in a meeting at work and I find myself getting worked up about something, if I stop, breath deeply, and ask myself why I am doing (or saying) what I am doing, it usually points to some attachment I have. For me, just recognizing these attachments and then doing more practice helps me to let go. When we let go of all attachments, then what?

Great Lake Zen Center Open House

Saturday, September 9, 1 PM - 4 PM

We will be opening our doors to friends, neighbors and families on this day. There will be treats, introductions and conversation. This will offer a chance for newer members to meet other members of the sangha, ask questions in an informal atmosphere, and provide a chance to get to know GLZC better. We are hoping that all sangha members can join us for the open house and bring your family members and friends, also.

Precepts Information

On Sunday, October 8th we will hold our annual Precepts ceremony at the conclusion of the regular YMJJ. To clarify the requirements for taking precepts, the pre-requisites are listed below. These pre-requisites are established by the Kwan Um School and are followed by the Great Lake Zen Center. If you have any questions pertaining to the taking of precepts that are not answered here, please feel free to ask any of the Dharma Teachers for further information.

Taking 5 Precepts:

Taking the five precepts means recognizing the importance of practicing and making it part of your everyday life. It means joining a family of other people who have made the same decision, practicing with them when you can. You must also agree to become a member of the Kwan Um School and pay membership dues quarterly. The requirements are:

1. It is appropriate to support the Zen Center by being a member of the Kwan Um School.
2. You must have attended a minimum of 4 days of retreat during the year preceding the ceremony.
3. Your application must be received by the Kwan Um School in Cumberland, RI 10 days prior to the ceremony date. If it is not received 10 days prior to the ceremony, a \$25 late fee will be applied.
4. You must buy a short gray bowing robe and kasa, the robe is \$85 and the kasa is \$40.

Taking the precepts is not a requirement for your Zen practice, it is an individual decision. Each step, from 5 precepts to Bodhisattva Teacher is taken when the practitioner feels they are ready to take the steps. Once started, there is no pressure to continue along, for example, taking 5 precepts does not mean you have to become a Dharma Teacher in Training. Being a Dharma Teacher in Training does not mean you have to become a Dharma Teacher. You progress through the precepts as you feel comfortable.

Kido One-Day Retreat, Saturday, November 4, 10 AM to 3 PM

Kido means "energy path." Participants in the Kido play percussion instruments while continuously chanting "Kwan Seum Bosal." Bring a percussion instrument (this can be as simple as blocks of wood). Some additional ones will be provided. **You should also bring a bag lunch.** Newcomers are welcome. The Kido will be held at the First Unitarian Church, 1342 N, Astor St., Milwaukee. For more information, contact Peter Neuwald or email us at info@glzc.org.

Buddhist Conversation Series

The Buddhist Conversation Series continues with the next subject for discussion being the Buddhist View on the Death Penalty. In 1853 Wisconsin became the first state in the union to abolish the death penalty. This November, the question of reinstating the death penalty will be put on the ballot. This event will be very timely held prior to the election with a tentative date of October 21st. Watch for the October newsletter for the final arrangements or check the GLZC website for more details.

A monk went to the dentist for an exam. The dentist found a cavity and said he would have to give the monk a filling. "Do you want something for the pain?", asked the dentist. The monk replied, "No thank you, I transcend dental medication."

YMJJ Retreat

October 7 - 8

A YMJJ retreat has been scheduled with Zen Master Dae Kwang for October 7 - 8, 2006. The retreat will be held at GLZC. Zen Master Dae Kwang will be leading this retreat and conducting interviews. The price of the retreat is \$80 for both days, or \$40 for Saturday only and \$30 for Sunday only. The price includes vegetarian meals. Sleeping space can be arranged if required at no extra charge. Those needing sleep space should notify Peter (telephone number on last page) and should bring a sleeping bag, pillow, washcloth, and towel.

The retreat will begin with a free public talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang at 7:30 PM on Friday, October 6th. Please plan on joining us for some very strong practice. **You may register for this YMJJ by signing up at GLZC or by email at info@glzc.org.**

We are grateful to Zen Master Dae Kwang for taking time out of his busy schedule to visit us and lead the YMJJ's. We are only provided the opportunity to sit with and interview with a Zen Master three or four times a year. Please plan on attending and taking advantage of this opportunity.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

September, 2006

Monday, September 4 – No Introduction to Zen or Practice. Enjoy the Labor Day holiday.

Saturday, September 9 - Open House, GLZC, 1pm – 4pm.

October, 2006

Friday, October 6 – Public Talk by Zen Master Dae Kwang, GLZC, 7:30pm.

Saturday and Sunday, October 7 – 8. YMJJ Led by Zen Master Dae Kwang, followed by Precepts Ceremony.

Saturday, October 21. Buddhist Conversation Series - “The Buddhist View on the Death Penalty”. Details still being finalized.

November, 2006

Saturday, November 4 – Kido, First Unitarian Church, 10am – 3pm.

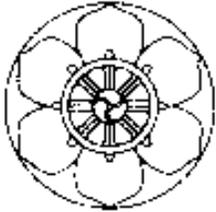
Wednesday, November 22 – No Practice or Dharma Talk, Enjoy the holiday with your family.

December, 2006

Monday, December 4 – Buddha’s Enlightenment Day, GLZC, 7:30pm

Monday, December 25 – No Practice, Due to the holidays there will not be practice.

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The Great Lake Zen Center is affiliated with the Kwan Um School of Zen.

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Regular Practice Schedule of the Great Lake Zen Center

Monday and Wednesday at 7:30PM;
Saturday at 8:00AM

Other special events as described elsewhere in the newsletter. Unless otherwise noted, all events are held at the Great Lake Zen Center.

Beginners Always Welcome!

Unless noted otherwise, *Introductions to Zen* are offered on the first Monday of each month. Dharma Talks are offered on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Both are at 7:30PM.

