

MOON ON THE WATER

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Newsletter of the Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

Dec-Jan, 2008,2009

Blues or Bliss this Holiday Season

Andy Yench, DT

The ritual called the holiday season is now upon us and since Thanksgiving happened late the slide into Christmas and New Year's is shorter than usual. So we have less time to get ready for all the activities that traditions (cherished and not so cherished) call for this time of year. I'm referring to shopping and cooking and decorating and parties and visiting family and finishing year end projects at work, etc, etc. The list goes on. But this year more of us are probably cutting back on holiday preparations because the economy is in recession and it looks like this downturn has room to fall before it hits bottom. So two big trends are influencing our year end plans and preparations: We have less time to get ready and less certainty about what we can afford to spend. Are these two trends a net negative, a net positive or do they cancel each other out?

Our Zen practice has a wonderful saying that applies to what's going on this holiday:

A good situation is a bad situation and a bad situation is a good situation.

This phrase is a reminder that every situation, good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, happy or sad, exciting or boring, is encouraging us to wake-up and discover who we really are. So this holiday more people have less time to do the things they want to do. And if they are struggling to earn the money they need to match the level of spending they did last year their situation might be doubly worse. So these folks are experiencing a net negative as 2008 winds down, and being human, we don't like to suffer. What will these people do with this bad situation?

Other people might be silently breathing a sigh of relief as we approach the New Year because the poor economy and the shortened season mean they have fewer social engagements on their calendar and strong justification for reducing their normal holiday spending. For these folks, 2008 is strangely ending on a net positive: less time doing activities they don't like and less cultural pressure to use credit or savings on extravagant gifts. What will they do with their unexpected good situation? Finally, for some of us the year is winding down like it usually does. Having less money to spend is not to upsetting when you have less time for shopping and visiting anyway. So for these people, the trends partially cancel each other out and the holidays go on as usual. What will they do to with the stability in their life?

Like snowflakes, each of us will deal differently with the trends this season but no matter how we respond our life is unfolding at the same moment-to-moment pace it always does even if it seems out of our control at times. And even though we all want our holiday to be wonderful, our Zen practice teaches that judgments like, "it was a good holiday" or "it was a bad holiday" are only labels that guide our response to the world as it unfolds around us.

For me the holiday is shaping up to be a mixed bag of good situations and bad situations. On the good side I am spending the week between Christmas and New Year's Day at home. No traveling. Yea! And I like the shortened season because it means fewer social engagements and activities I don't care for. My mother will visit from out of state and my wife and I are looking forward to her company and free babysitting service. On the bad side, this economic downturn is the worst I have ever seen and I don't like the uncertainty surrounding it. My job as a state employee may be on the line next year so I'm part of the crowd that will spend less this holiday and I often wonder how bad this recession will be and when it will end. So is my good-bad life situation in balance? Who knows? As bad as life may get at times, it always seems better than the alternative if you know what I mean. Just being alive is pretty special. So I'll keep meditating and see how the holiday and the economy unfold. I hope you will, too and I hope your holiday season, good or bad, helps you find out who you really are.

“Everything is based on mind, is led by mind, is fashioned by mind. If you speak and act with a polluted mind, suffering will follow you, as the wheels of the oxcart follow the footsteps of the ox. Everything is based on mind, is led by mind, is fashioned by mind. If you speak and act with a pure mind, happiness will follow you, as a shadow clings to form.”
The Buddha

Heart Kyol Che 2009

The start of Heart Kyol Che at GLZC will be held on January 5, 2009. Kyol Che is a traditional Korean Zen retreat. The name means “tight dharma” or “coming together”. In Korea, it is the three-month winter and summer periods when monks and nuns do intensive sitting practice in the mountain temples. Providence Zen Center holds two Kyol Che retreats annually, with students sitting up to three months in the winter and four weeks in the summer.

The Heart Kyol Che is an opportunity for students who cannot sit the traditional Kyol Che, or who can sit only part of it, to participate by doing extra practice at home and participating in together practice as they are able. This will run concurrently with the traditional Kyol Che. By doing this Heart Kyol Che together, we strengthen our own practice, and provide support to our fellow students who are able to sit the traditional Kyol Che. We in turn can draw inspiration and energy from their commitment.

You can participate in the Heart Kyol Che through your commitment to practice at home and by attending talks, sittings, and retreats at the Zen Center. During the Heart Kyol Che period the Great Lake Zen Center will offer extended sitting hours and an intensive practice week. During the Heart Kyol Che period you can participate by committing to extra practice to show your support in a variety of ways. Some ideas are as follows:

- 1 . An effort to do daily practice (suggested minimum is recitation of the Four Great Vows; bowing; chanting of the Heart Sutra; and sitting - fifteen minutes)
- 2 . Doing daily mantra practice (suggested minimum is one thousand Kwan Seum Bosals)
- 3 . A personal day of silence and mindfulness (optional)
- 4 . Long sittings (suggested minimum is one)
- 5 . Dharma talk s (suggested minimum is one)
- 6 . Yong Maeng Jong Jins and one day retreats (suggested minimum is one day)
- 7 . One or more weeks of Winter Kyol Che at Providence (optional)
- 8 . Winter Kyol Che ceremonies at Providence (optional)
- 9 . Work practice at GLZC

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Regularly scheduled events include Introduction to Zen on the First Monday of each month, Dharma talks on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Regular practice periods are Monday and Wednesday evenings, 7:30pm to 8:30pm and Saturday morning from 8:00am to 9:00am. Unless noted below.

January, 2009

Monday, January 5. Heart Kyol Che Ceremony. GLZC, 7:30pm.

Friday, January 9. GLZC Movie Night. GLZC, 6:30pm.

Saturday, January 17. Beginner’s Mind Retreat. GLZC, 9am – 12pm

February, 2009

Monday February 9 – Thursday, February 12 or Monday, February 23 – Thursday, February 26. Intensive Practice Week . GLZC, 7pm – 9pm.

Friday, February 13 or Friday February 27. Public Talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang. GLZC, 7:30pm.

Saturday & Sunday, February 14 – 15 or February 28 and March 1. YMJJ with Zen Master Dae Kwang. GLZC.

Public Talk and YMJJ Retreat
February 13 – 15 or February 27 – March 1
(Date still to be verified – watch website for final dates)

A YMJJ retreat is being scheduled February 14 and 15, 2009 or February 28 and March 1, 2009. The retreat will be held at GLZC. Zen Master Dae Kwang (or a replacement) will be leading this retreat and conducting interviews. The price of the retreat is being reviewed currently but will not exceed \$100 for both days, or \$55 for Saturday only and \$45 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 (or his replacement) at either 7:30 PM on Friday, February 13th or 7:30 PM on Friday February 27th. 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 all Zen teachers for taking time out of their busy schedules 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.

Precepts Ceremony

A Precepts ceremony is being planned for the February retreat. If you are interested in taking precepts, please ask for information from any of the dharma teachers. A precepts booklet is also located on the Kwan Um Zen website – www.kwanumzen.org. The precepts booklet will explain all the prerequisites for taking the precepts at all levels. The ceremony will take place following the Schedule retreat on either Sunday, February 15th or March 1st. The date will be verified and announced as soon as we know Zen Master Dae Kwang's schedule.

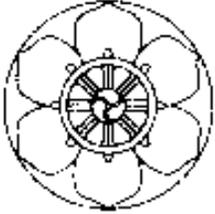
Beginner's Mind Retreat
January 17 - 9am – 12pm

This is a retreat purposely intended for newcomers to Zen meditation. No experience is necessary. If you have never sat a YMJJ and would like to find out more about the sitting, meditation, and formal meals that take place during a formal YMJJ; this short introduction to a Zen retreat will provide all of that information and answer any questions you may have. This is a short , instructional, less formal version of the longer YMJJ retreats. It is held at GLZC and run by GLZC Dharma Teachers.

GLZC Movie & Pizza Night
January 9 - 6:30 pm

Join us Friday January 9th for the GLZC movie, popcorn, and pizza night. We will start setting things up, ordering the pizza, etc. at 6:30 and the movie will start at 7:00. The only cost for the evening will be to chip in for the pizza and soda. Join Sangha members for an enjoyable and social evening - and a good movie to boot !!. There will be a sign up board at the Zen Center or email us at info@glzc.org if you are planning to attend so we can judge how many pizzas to order.

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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.

