



MOON ON THE WATER

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Newsletter of the Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

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Back to "Normalcy"?

*Peter Neuwald, DT,
Co-director, GLZC*

It's been six weeks since the tragedy of September 11th rocked our lives. Now that flags are again flying at full mast and the front pages of our newspapers are covering some topics unrelated to the events of September 11th, we are hearing that we need to return to "normalcy." What is this normalcy that we want to return to? Can we return to it? Should we even want to return to it?

On September 11th, we saw many examples of people helping others. We saw firefighters, police, and emergency medical personnel risking and, in all-too-many cases, losing their lives as they tried to help others. There were reports of passengers on the ill-fated jet that crashed in Pennsylvania giving their lives to help save the lives of people at some unforeseen target on the ground. There were thousands of people lining up to donate blood, and hundreds of thousands of people across the world were donating money to the various funds set up for victims' families. On a smaller scale, many of us noticed a change in how people treated one another in our daily lives. Little things like actually stopping at four-way intersections and letting others go first, more patiently waiting in lines at stores, being kinder with one another, talking with strangers more, and stopping to help others who were in trouble. These are small things that can have large effects. My daughter told me of the kindness of strangers as she walked across the bridge from her job in Midtown Manhattan to her home in Queens on September 11th.

Yes, we also heard of cases of people, fueled by ignorance and anger, verbally or physically attacking others who look "different," be they Sikhs with turbans or women with covered heads. Fortunately, these incidents seem to be fairly isolated. Just today, I heard that in one poll, most people now feel that human nature is basically good. This may not be surprising to Buddhists, since it is a basic tenet of our practice, but it was a change from the thinking of most Americans, at least according to that poll.

Do we really want to go back to the normalcy of the days prior to September 11th? Before that day, Americans seemed oblivious to the connections we have with other human beings in the world, including those who live right next door to us. We are all connected; this isn't a wish, it's a fact. Now more people realize this. The terrible act that took so many lives is not one we want repeated, anywhere in the world. Unfortunately these acts do occur every day against other humans throughout the world. They occur not only in isolated places far away. Americans now realize this too. The fact is that suffering caused by desire, anger, and ignorance occurs throughout the world, be it in Manhattan or the

neighborhoods of Milwaukee. It occurs among our families, our friends, and our communities every day. Just as the lives of the Afghani people are intertwined with the lives of the American people, the lives of well-to-do European-Americans in Milwaukee suburbs are intertwined with the lives of African-Americans in Milwaukee's central city and Hispanic-Americans in Milwaukee's South Side. To think otherwise is delusion.

In Zen Buddhist practice, we practice to remove all attachments to our desires, to replace our anger with compassion, and to extinguish ignorance by growing wisdom. Then, when confronted with difficult situations, we can act clearly and compassionately and truly help others. This sounds good, but achieving this takes work. At the root of this is a belief in our larger self, the big "I" that is already present in each of us. We have seen this operate, without thinking, by many people who responded to the tragedy of September 11th. We know it exists. When we act from our true nature, there is no attachment to ideas, opinions, or situation. When someone needs help, we just act, clearly and with no regard for our own safety or our own situation. This is a wonderful thing to behold. It was the beautiful lotus flower of clear, great love action that came out of the muck of the terrible events of that day in September.

No, let's not go back to "normalcy." Let us learn what we can be from that day. Instead of a delusional normalcy, we can wake up to those around us, be they Muslim, Christian, Jew, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist or atheist. When it comes right down to it, we are not Muslims, Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists and atheists; we are only human beings. Rather than starting to build and reinforce more boxes around ourselves, we can open ourselves up to our true human potential of great love, great compassion and helping this world. Does this sound like a pipe dream? It wasn't for those whose stories we have heard over and over of late. Through natural process, our true nature can operate more easily at the very moment of great crisis, but with practice and openness, it can also operate in each moment of our lives, moment to moment to moment, in ways large and small. This is a great opportunity to turn a tragic event into a new way of life, a way of life based on our true nature. With an open-minded and one-pointed spiritual practice, by looking at our own lives deeply, and by helping one another, we can have the courage and resolve to accomplish that.

Our Favorite “Stealth Zen” Movies

Many movies have a decidedly Zen theme, but they never mention Zen or Buddhism in the dialogue. We call this a “stealth Zen” movie. Below is a list of some of our favorite stealth Zen movies. Perhaps you might want to rent some of these videos if you have not already seen the movies. See if you can find the “Zen” in the movies!

1. Phenomenon
2. Powder
3. Ground Hog Day
4. American Beauty
5. Ghost Dog
6. Harold and Maude
7. Wizard of Oz
8. Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory
9. Fearless
10. Matrix
11. The Seventh Seal
12. What Dreams May Come
13. Endless Summer
14. It’s a Wonderful Life
15. Frankenstein
16. Aguire, the Wrath of God
17. Kagamusha
18. The Apostle
19. Pay It Forward
20. The Cup
21. Disney’s The Kid
22. Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

And a couple of Non-stealth movies:

- ~ Little Buddha
- ~ Razor’s Edge



GLZC Guiding Teacher, Zen Master Dae Kwang

Buddha’s Enlightenment Day Ceremony Scheduled *Monday, December 3*

A ceremony to commemorate the day Siddhartha Gautama attained the great enlightenment and became known as the Buddha is scheduled for Monday, December 3, 2001, at the Great Lake Zen Center. This is one of only two holidays celebrated in the Kwan Um School of Zen. The ceremony will begin at 7:30 PM, and all are welcome. Tea and cookies will be served following the ceremony, so please plan to attend and bring your family and friends.

Extended Practice and Candlelight Vigil Held

A night of extended practice was scheduled for Friday, September 14. Following the tragic events of Tuesday, September 11, we decided to hold a candlelight vigil in the park across from the Zen Center. From 7:00 PM until 8:00 PM seven sangha members stood silently with candles glowing and were joined at times by various passers-by. Many others who drove past honked or shouted support. At 8:00 we went inside and continued with the extended practice, sitting in meditation until 10:30 PM at which time we adjourned. In these difficult times, perhaps we should all turn up the flame on our practice, develop a strong center and clear mind, find the great love and compassion we all possess, and help others discover true peace.

YMJJ Retreat Held at Wellspring October 5-7, 2001

On October 4th GLZC’s guiding teacher, Zen Master Dae Kwang, gave a public talk at the Great Lake Zen Center in Milwaukee. The following evening he gave another public talk at Wellspring Retreat Center in Newburg, Wisconsin. Following the talk those in attendance began a weekend of strong practice, together action, and silence known as a YMJJ retreat. The beautiful grounds combined with the crisp fall weather to create a wonderful atmosphere for peaceful contemplation. The retreat ended at noon on Sunday so that retreatants would have time to pack up and make the trek to Milwaukee for the precepts ceremony held at the GLZC (see follow-up story). We would like to thank Zen Master Dae Kwang for his excellent, clear teaching and also thank those in attendance for their strong practice.

Making Peace in Troubled Times: Buddhist Voices

Sunday, November 4, 2PM – 4PM
Milwaukee Mindfulness Practice Center
2126 E. Locust St. (near East Locust and North Maryland)

In the wake of the tragedies of September 11th, the Great Lake Zen Center is participating in a special forum sponsored by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. This public discussion will include representatives from the Greater Milwaukee Buddhist sanghas. It is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. Donations are welcome to support local initiatives of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship of Milwaukee.

Pick 'n Save We Care Program

GLZC is registered with Pick 'n Save grocery stores as a tax-exempt charitable organization in the We Care Program. Pick 'n Save will donate to our Zen Center a portion of all sales that are scanned on a Pick 'n Save Saver's Club card keyed to the GLZC number. So the next time you go into a Pick 'n Save, apply for a new Saver's Club card at the service counter and identify GLZC as the beneficiary by giving them this number: **#279415**. This money should be very helpful in offsetting some of our operating expenses.

Precepts Ceremony Held at GLZC

On Sunday, October 7, the Great Lake Zen Center sangha was pleased to hold its first precepts ceremony before a full house. The ceremony was led by GLZC co-director Peter Neuwald and presided over by Zen Master Dae Kwang. Taking five precepts was Angie Choren. Andy Yenchu took ten precepts and entered the Dharma Teacher in Training program. Susi Childress and Jeff Ligman from the Great Lake Zen Center and Dave Peters from the Isthmus Zen Community in Madison completed the Dharma Teacher in Training program and officially became Dharma Teachers. Tea and treats and a celebratory dinner followed the ceremony. Congratulations and thanks to all who have made the commitment to this practice and to helping others.



The Ten Precepts:

I vow:

1. To abstain from taking life.
2. To abstain from taking things not given.
3. To abstain from misconduct done in lust.
4. To abstain from lying.
5. To abstain from intoxicants, taken to induce heedlessness.
6. Not to talk about the faults of others.
7. Not to praise myself and put down others.
8. Not to be covetous and to be generous.
9. Not to give way to anger and to be harmonious.
10. Not to slander the three jewels (Buddha, dharma, sangha).

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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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 last Wednesday of each month. Both are at 7:30PM.