

MILWAUKEE ZEN CENTER NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 1

January, 1986

EVERY YEAR IS A GOOD YEAR

A Happy New Year!

It is customary all over the world to observe New Year's Day. In Japan, New Year's Day is the happiest day of the year. Japanese people send New Year's cards, put up beautiful decorations, eat special dishes, visit Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples to pray for happiness, good health and prosperity of the new year and enjoy several days off to celebrate the beginning of the year. Even in the United States, where Christmas is much more important, people celebrate with New Year's Eve parties to welcome in the new year.

Is New Year's Day really happy?

New Year's Day is in fact only one of 365 days and is not essentially different from the other 364 days. Human beings attach special meanings to it for their own convenience. Should we not celebrate New Year's Day, then?

The bamboo is a strong plant. Strong winds cannot blow it down. A delicate branch bent by the snow straightens when the snow melts in the sunshine. The reason it is so strong is that it has joints. If it had no joints, it would not be so flexible and strong. Human beings may need some joints as a change in their lives. The celebration of New Year's Day is one of the joints to give their lives variety and refresh them. But, at the same time, we must realize that it is a joint created by human beings; it does not occur naturally.

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There is a famous koan in Hekiganroku with which you may be familiar. It goes as follows:

Ummon addressed the assembly and said, "I do not ask you about the days before the fifteenth of the month. Come and give a word about the days after the fifteenth." And he himself answered for them, "Every day is a good day."

We should not be concerned with days. Whether it is before or after the fifteenth of the month, every day must be a good day. Following his example, we should also say, "Every week is a good week," "Every month is a good month," "Every year is a good year." In other words, "Every moment is a good moment." If we live like that, we do not need to say, "Happy New Year!" But how can we make it so?

We usually think of "favorable or convenient to myself" as "good" or "happy" and that a day or a year full of events which are "favorable or convenient to myself" is "good" or "happy." However, unfortunately the world does not always go as we wish. We cannot live without "unfavorableness" or "inconvenience" at all. In order to be able to say even "unfavorable" or "inconvenient" times are "good" or "happy," we must accept everything and every situation we meet, whether "favorable" or "convenient" or not, just as it is. It is how to live every moment just as it is. "Every moment is a good moment" only when we live every moment just as it is.

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Zen is easy to talk about but difficult to practice, especially in our daily lives. If I am asked if I live every moment just as it is, I must honestly answer that I cannot. I just sit zazen every day and give my whole body and mind up to zazen, whether or not I am able to live every moment just as it is.

I came as the resident priest of the Milwaukee Zen Center last September. I have a family like some of you and try to live a Zen life in the same situation as yours. I came here not as your teacher but as one of your enthusiastic associates at the head of the parade of practicing. Please excuse me if you feel that I am trying to teach you something. I am also telling myself what I tell you.

Please help me study and practice together with you so we can make 1986 a good year, though it will be a good year anyway, and so the Milwaukee Zen Center will prosper.

Tozen Akiyama-sensei

1 9 8 6 S C H E D U L E

DAILY SCHEDULE

Morning

Monday through Friday
 6:00 a.m. Zazen (Sitting Meditation)
 6:40 Kinhin (Walking Meditation)
 6:50 Zazen
 7:30 Services

Saturday

6:00 a.m. Zazen
 6:40 Kinhin
 6:50 Zazen
 7:30 Service
 7:45 Cleaning
 8:10 Breakfast
 9:00 Zazen
 9:10 Teisho (Talk)

Evening

Monday
 6:00 p.m. Introduction
 7:00 Zazen
 7:40 Kinhin
 7:50 Zazen

Tuesday through Friday

5:30 p.m. Zazen
 6:10 Kinhin
 6:20 Zazen

People are welcome to attend only part of any day's activities.

YEARLY SCHEDULE

February 15	Nirvana Day	September 27	One-day sitting
February 22	One-day sitting	October 25	One-day sitting
March 22	One-day sitting	November 22	One-day sitting
April 5	Buddha's Birthday celebration	December 6-7	Buddha's Enlightenment One-day sitting and morning zazen
April 26	One-day sitting	December 24-5	No sitting - Christmas
May 24	One-day sitting	December 31	Three periods of evening sitting beginning at 7:00 p.m.
June 15-21	No sitting		
June 28	One-day sitting		
July 26	One-day sitting		
August 23	One-day sitting		

Changes or additional events will be announced from month to month. For more information, please write, or call the Center at (414) 272-8613 or (414) 963-0526.

LIFE INFINITE

Beyond words, this no-thingness within,
Which I've become. So to remain

Only one thing's needed: Zen sitting
I think, breathe with my whole body -

Marvellous. The joy's so pure,
It's beyond love-making, anything.

I can see, live anywhere, everywhere
I need nothing, not even life.

- Shinkichi Takahashi

from Afterimages: Zen Poems,
translated by Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Milwaukee Zen Center had its beginnings in 1980 when a few people interested in Zen came together to sit. It is associated with the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center, directed by Dainin Katagiri-roshi, a Soto Zen master. The Milwaukee Zen Center was incorporated as a non-profit institution in 1983. This past year Tozen Akiyama-sensei moved to Milwaukee to direct the Center.

This newsletter is published by the Milwaukee Zen Center, 2275 N. Lake Dr., Milwaukee, WI 53202. Our phone number is (414) 272-8613.

Board of Directors

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If you are interested in becoming a member, making contributions, or being on our mailing list, please fill out the form below and send it to the Milwaukee Zen Center at the above address. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Name -----

Address -----

Membership Categories

<input type="checkbox"/> \$20.00/month - Milwaukee resident	<input type="checkbox"/> Contribution \$ _____
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