

Southwind Sangha

7202 E. 21st, Wichita, KS 67206 – An Affiliate of the Atlanta Soto Zen Center

September, 2008

Greetings!

I would like to extend my personal invitation to you to come join the Southwind Sangha and me in our Zen retreat September 19-21.

For those who have never experienced an extended meditation retreat, it may seem intimidating. But the benefits are worth the effort.

In Zen, persistence pays. 'Don't give up!' is the way Matsuoka Roshi encouraged us. Through thick and thin, in sickness as well as in health, the most important thing is to not give up. Just keep coming back to meditation no matter the circumstance. Even if it seems that it is not working, or even making things worse. Just keep on sitting. Keep doing Zen meditation until you forget that someone is doing Zen meditation. In this way the profound effects of Zen will set in over time.

Persistence is more important than duration or frequency. More important than we sit for long periods is that we don't give up. More important than sitting frequently or regularly is that we don't give up. More important than having profound experience while sitting is that we don't give up. Aiming at the perfect posture, never imagining that we have achieved it. Sustaining our aspiration for awakening, never imagining that we have achieved it. Letting go of our expectations, but never giving up.

Even after his profound awakening under the Bodhi tree, Shakyamuni Buddha continued to sit in meditation. First there is self-renunciation; then self-awakening; then self-clarification. Even after awakening, this precious practice continues to clarify our experience.

Quality of meditation is enhanced by quantity of meditation on retreat. We are relieved of the burden of planning what we may be doing later on: we will be meditating. The distractions of everyday life are put on hold. Meditation goes deeper, deeper, deeper. A unique window of opportunity opens before us. We take a highly condensed vacation on the cushion. It is not a stay-cation, however — we are moving into the original frontier, a frontier first explored by the historical Buddha.

There will be breaks between periods of meditation, of course. Zen is not extreme. The 'Middle Way' connotes a pragmatic prescription for practice. Dharma will be discussed interactively, with opportunity for questions and answers — or deeper questions. During selected periods you will be invited to participate in *dokusan*, formal interview with the retreat leader, in this case yours truly. It is an opportunity to bring up whatever is uppermost — or deeply buried — in your practice and daily life at the time. In this way, you bring your own, unique and personal 'koan' to dokusan for clarification.

My relationship to the Southwind Sangha is as mentor and guide to the practice leaders and as a resource to their stewardship of the sangha. I visit Wichita only once a year, on average, and am always delighted and encouraged by the intensity and genuine Zen nature of the practice here. Please come and join in this rare opportunity to deepen your own practice, and to support the Southwind Sangha in its efforts.

The first stanza of Master Dogen's vow captures the driving force behind our practice, and at the heart of the effort we make in retreat: *We vow with all beings from this life on throughout countless lives to hear the true dharma; that upon hearing it no doubt will arise in us nor will we lack in faith; that upon meeting it we shall renounce worldly affairs and maintain the buddhadharma; and that in doing so the great Earth with all beings together will attain the buddha way!*

Come hear the true dharma; it is not expressed in words.

Deep bows,

Rev. Taiun M. Elliston, Abbot

Atlanta Soto Zen Center www.aszc.org

(Editor's note: See Retreat Schedule on page 2.)

SANGHA FINANCES

By Shindo Robert Glasmann, Treasurer

Below please find the Southwind Sangha's expenses from Aug. 1, 2007 to Aug. 1, 2008. I hope it will give you an idea where your contributions go to the support of the group. We are grateful to all who contribute to the Sangha, both monetarily and in-kind.

Website:	\$103.35
Contributions*	\$2,180.00
Insurance:	\$496.00
Licenses and Professional Fees	\$40.00
Postage, copying, postcards, newsletters, newcomer folders, printing supplies:	\$307.86
Lodging for Elliston Roshi:	\$142.04
Total Expenditures:	\$3,269.25

* (To First Unitarian Universalist Church, Fairmount United Church of Christ, Interfaith Ministries, and the Atlanta Soto Zen Center. This includes donations from the Southwind Sangha to the First Unitarian Universalist Capital Campaign Fund to support the new building where we now are located.)

It is our hope that the Sangha continues to operate with the motto, "No donation required. No donation refused." We want to keep our activities free to all, and that donations to us be free-will. If a monetary gift is within your means and you would like to contribute, please make a check payable to the Southwind Sangha. Your donation is deductible from taxable income as provided by law: the Southwind Sangha is recognized by the I.R.S. as a 501(c)(3) Religious Organization.

You can put your check in the "Donations" box outside the zendo door or you can mail it to the Sangha in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

We accept cash, too! (Let us know if you need a receipt.)

Thank you for your continued support of our activities.

RETREAT SCHEDULE

The Retreat Schedule follows:

Friday, September 19 – 7 to 9 pm

Saturday, September 20 - 6:30-am – 2:30 pm
(with breaks for silent breakfast and lunch)

Sunday, September 21 – 8 to 10 am

As Sensei notes in his invitation to the retreat on the first page, the benefits of the retreat are many and accrue with the extended sitting. However, we are aware that work and other responsibilities may make it impossible for all to participate in the full retreat. If that is the case, please plan to enter on the hour or half hour.

If you have questions about the retreat, please talk to Kathryn Riley, Senior Teacher, 684-8819.

SANGHA LIBRARY

A small lending library is maintained in the Zendo. If you wish to check out an item, please arrange to do so after a service. The library is located in the closet behind the folding screens and is not readily accessible before services.

We do ask that we have your phone number on record when you check out a book, magazine, video or recording. There's no time limit, but if you have a book checked out long ago, please return it as soon as convenient. (No late fee, either!)

MAILING LIST

The index card enclosed will help us keep our mailing list up to date and serve you best. Newsletters are sent to everyone for whom we have a mailing address. Monthly notices of schedules can be sent by e-mail if that is your choice. If you wish to be removed from the contact list, please let us know. Use the enclosed self-addressed envelope to return the card with your choice marked.

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