

# ZEN COLUMBUS SANGHA ORIENTATION CURRICULUM

8-24-2009



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- a. Names
- b. Zen Columbus Sangha (ZCS) is an **independent** community of Zen practitioners in Central Ohio. It is a **non-sectarian Zen sangha** whose members individually practice within a variety of traditions and with various teachers. We welcome anyone interested in exploring the Zen Buddhist path.
- c. Though the group itself **has no teacher**, we occasionally invite teachers to give Dharma talks to the Sangha. Each 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month, members of the Sangha gather and listen to or view recorded Dharma talks from various Zen teachers.
- d. Other Buddhist groups are listed on the Buddhism of Central Ohio website – [www.buddhismcentralohio.org](http://www.buddhismcentralohio.org).
- e. Our website is <http://www.zencolumbus.com>

## 2. The practice of Zen is primarily sitting meditation. (Have attendees try out sitting on cushions).

- a. Posture
  - i. Guidelines, not rules. Take into account your own body proportions and flexibility when selecting a posture. Extra height with cushions.
  - ii. What to do with your legs. Several options. Hips vertical. Maintain the lumbar curve.
  - iii. Straight back – opens the chest.
  - iv. Shoulders line up with ears.
  - v. Placement of hands – cosmic mudra or resting on the legs.
  - vi. How to sit on a chair. Don't lean on back of chair. Cushion under your feet if legs are short. Sit on a cushion if you have long legs.
- b. Breath
  - i. Breathe normally. Breath will deepen naturally.
  - ii. Some teachers start students off with counting the breath, some with following the breath, and some have students just breathe. If (when) the mind wanders, just come back to the breath.
- c. Gaze
  - i. Neck straight, tuck your chin, eyes half-closed, soft gaze (don't focus on anything). Imagine a string from the top of your head.
- d. Mind
  - i. Observe what your mind is doing.
  - ii. When your mind wanders, bring it back to your breath, or to the present moment.

## 3. Developing a home practice.

- a. Make it routine, like brushing your teeth.
- b. Start with a manageable amount of time, and make a commitment to sit for that amount of time each day. To maximize the chance that you will stick with it, don't try to sit for a very long time. Making a regular commitment and sitting every day is more important than sitting for long periods less frequently.
- c. Equipment, setting up a sacred space at home in an area of not too dark or too bright lighting.

## 4. What we do in our sits at ZCS.

### Setting up the space:

- We usually sit in the Fellowship Hall, but occasionally sit in the Worship Center. The church's event pillar in the main hallway gives our location.
- Everyone is encouraged to arrive early to help set up the zendo (meditation hall). Please arrive no later than 5-10 minutes before the start time to find your place. Tuesday evenings, we start at 7:00 pm. Saturday mornings, we start at 8:30 am.
- We create the zendo when we lay out the zabutons, chairs and set up the altar. Once the zendo is set up, we avoid casual conversation in the zendo area.

#### Before entering the zendo

- Hang up your coat. There is a coat rack just outside the Fellowship Hall. Remove your shoes and line them up neatly with the others. Purses may be brought into the zendo and placed on a table or chair.

#### On entering the zendo

- Bow after entering the zendo. Select your place and bow to your cushion or chair as a greeting to those sitting nearby. Bow to the center, as a greeting to those across the way.

#### Sit facing the center

#### Meditation periods

- The doors are closed at the start time. Those arriving late should hang up their coats and remove their shoes **before** entering the zendo, then come in as quietly as possible and find a seat.
- The jiki (time keeper) sounds the clappers. The ino (chant leader) offers incense and the jiki closes the door. The jiki puts out extra seating, if needed, then sits and strikes the bell three times to begin the first 25-minute meditation period.
- At the end of the first meditation period, the jiki strikes the bell twice to signal the beginning of kinhin (walking meditation).
  - If your legs have fallen asleep, don't try to stand. Wait until you can stand, then join the kinhin at the end of the line.
  - Walk at about an arm length from the person in front of you, with hands in shoshu position.
  - During kinhin, strive to maintain meditative awareness. If you need to use the bathroom, you may leave during kinhin to do so.
- At the end of kinhin, the jiki will sound the clappers. Staying in line, walk briskly back to your place. Remain standing until the jiki leads a bow to the center, then bow to your cushion and take your seat.
- The jiki strikes the bell three times to begin the second meditation period. At the end of the second meditation period, the jiki strikes the bell once to signal the end of the meditation period and the beginning of chanting.

Chanting and prostrations (optional). If you choose not to participate, just sit quietly.

- The ino leads the chanting, always ending with the Great Vows For All.
- At the end of chanting, the ino will do a roll down with the inkin bell. Stand and face the altar. When all are standing, the ino will strike the inkin once. Bow to the altar and do a prostration. Repeat two more times. The bell rings again, make a bow to the altar standing up. Go back to your seat and face the center. The ino rings the bell for the last time, bow again. End of session.

#### 5. Other items

- a. Membership – We encourage people to become member by supporting the sangha \$10 per month to cover expenses (rental and small purchases). Another option is to donate \$5 each session.
- b. Listserv – Sign in the guest book and your name will be placed on the listserv for any announcements. This is a very low activity listserv.
- c. Library – self-service library.
- d. Social gatherings – after the sits, usually at Panera (Saturdays) or Northstar Café (Tuesdays).

6. Questions and Answers. Be prepared to answer questions about Buddhism, not as a teacher, but as a practitioner.

7. Thank you for attending the Zen Columbus Sangha Orientation. Welcome back.